

Members Present: Gary Wells, Chair, Lisa Blazejewski, Ed Behn, Peter Allen, Tara Howard, Beth Blumberg, Hank Rauch, Jim Tepper, Sharon Kaiser.

At 7:00 p.m. Mr. Wells called the meeting to order in Room 23 of the Forbes Municipal Building.

Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee. Mr. Wells announced that there will be an extended Open Forum period on Thursday, February 12th, and Thursday, February 19th, after department presentations for residents to voice their opinion on the Town budget. This notice will also be posted on the Town website, Facebook, and Twitter.

Approval of Past Minutes: Meeting No. 13, January 29, 2015

Approval of the minutes was deferred to the next meeting.

Department of Public Works

DPW Manager, John Walden, Assistant DPW Manager, Rich Voutas, DPW Operations Manager, Dennis Cote, and DPW Business Administrator, Maria-Elaina Riggieri met with the AFC to discuss their FY2016 budget, DPW articles in the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting (ATM), and a deficit spending request for snow and ice removal.

FY2016 Budget Review: Ms. Riggieri began the discussion by reviewing their FY2016 snow and ice budget. She pointed out that there were no changes to next year's budget. Ms. Riggieri mentioned that last year they increased this year's snow and ice budget by \$100,000 (\$30,000 in wages and \$70,000 for expenses).

Regarding the water budget, Ms. Riggieri mentioned that wages increased due to contract agreements and step increases. The salaries and wages account has an increase of 1.94% from FY15 to FY16. However the operating expenses decreased due to the Veolia contract. Ms. Riggieri said that she went through the budget and any line items with a deficit they increased and any line items with a surplus they decreased to make the budget more actual. Ms. Riggieri reviewed the budget and highlighted those line items with changes for the Committee. Ms. Riggieri mentioned that since they don't receive the Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment until August, she uses 3.5% as a benchmark for budgeting purposes. Mr. Tepper asked about the electricity line item since that was overspent last year. Ms. Riggieri said they adjusted that line item upwards this year. Mr. Walden pointed out that they spend more in electric during the hot weather for the water treatment plants. Mr. Tepper wondered if there will be a spike in electricity in other budgets since he was under the assumption electric had decreased because we negotiated better rates in 2014. Mr. Wells suggested checking with Town Manager, Jim Malloy, when he meets with the AFC next week regarding changes in electricity. It was pointed out that even with the change to electric, the budget has remained flat. Mr. Walden said they should think about measuring kilowatts (kwh), then they could multiply the kwh by the electric rate to get a more accurate idea on usage.

Ms. Riggieri reviewed the sewer budget. The wage line item increased due to contract agreements and step increases. Regarding the operating expenses, Ms. Riggieri increased line items that were running at a deficit and decreased line items with a surplus, then reviewed those line items that had changes with the Committee. Mr. Behn asked about contract services and if that was to bring someone in to fix items. Ms. Riggieri said it was and that it also included meter readers. Ms. Riggieri mentioned that the water meter readers were given a 2% increase

to their wages since Mr. Walden felt their compensation was low. Ms. Riggieri noted that wages for the meter readers are paid out of both the water and sewer funds.

The general budget was reviewed. Ms. Riggieri mentioned that the wage line item, as with the other budgets, increased due to contract agreements and step increases. There was also a slight increase to operating expenses. Ms. Riggieri said that the low bidder for the ball field contract went out of business so they had to go with the second lowest bidder, but there was an increase in price. Mr. Rauch pointed out that one item he discussed with the DPW would be to move the cost of maintaining the fields to the Recreation Department's budget in order to economize since the DPW maintains the fields. By doing that, it would take the expense away from the taxpayers. Mr. Behn suggested that the Recreation Department could also increase fees for those sports using the fields to offset the expense. Mr. Wells asked about the cost for maintaining the ball fields and Ms. Riggieri said it was about \$75,000/year. Ms. Riggieri reviewed those line items with changes. Mr. Wells asked about police details and noted that expense was up and down. Mr. Walden and Ms. Riggieri said that police details are typically used for road projects or water main breaks. Mr. Cote pointed out that the more maintenance they do for road work, the more money that is spent on details. Ms. Blazejewski asked if they could use money from the water/sewer funds and Ms. Riggieri said they could if they are using details for that type of work.

Mr. Rauch informed the Committee about a conversation that he and Mr. Wells had with the DPW. They spoke about the State Hospital land and expressed concern that there is no cost shown for any work done on that property and nothing in the budget, yet there are a number of issues we could encounter. Mr. Behn asked about the \$50,000 that was approved, but it was noted that money was for FY15 not FY16. Mr. Rauch didn't think they've spent anything yet out of the \$50,000. Mr. Walden mentioned they have been plowing up there, but the charges have been going to snow and ice. Mr. Rauch felt there should be a better understanding of what we are doing for work on that property so they can account for expenses. Ms. Riggieri said that they've spent a little money on hot top and purchasing many "no trespassing" signs, but she's not aware of anything else. Mr. Wells suggested keeping track of costs for the State Hospital site.

Snow & Ice Deficit Spending Request: Ms. Riggieri informed the Committee that they've had an increase in salt and sand prices this year. Currently there is a balance of \$53,000 in the snow and ice account and Ms. Riggieri expects to pay out \$25,000 for the last storm with another big storm forecasted. The DPW is requesting approval to deficit spend in the amount of \$25,000 in wages and \$100,000 in expenses. They have some equipment down that needs to be repaired. Mr. Behn made a motion to authorize the DPW to deficit spend in the amount of \$25,000 for salaries and wages and \$100,000 in expenses for snow and ice removal. Voted: 9-0-0.

ATM Warrant Article Review:

Article 11 – Mechanical Sweeper – \$200,000 – Ms. Riggieri explained that the mechanical sweeper needing to be replaced is 21 years old. It is unreliable, parts are hard to obtain, and there's also excessive body rot. Ms. Riggieri said that the Capital Planning Committee supports the purchase and Ms. Blazejewski, a member of that Committee, confirmed this was approved by them. Mr. Walden said that they have two mechanical sweepers that pick up the bulk of materials in the road and then a vacuum sweeper works in between and sucks up any residual dirt. Mr. Allen asked if the sweepers were only used seasonally and if this was something that could be contracted out. Mr. Walden said the sweepers are used more heavily in the fall and spring, but they are also used to clean roads before re-paving, so they are used year round. There was discussion over why this wasn't included under Article 12, but then noted that Article 11 is looking for the authorization to borrow funds for this piece of equipment and then spread the payments out over a five-year period.

Article 12A – DPW Dump Truck Replacement – \$72,000 – Ms. Riggieri explained that they need to replace a 2001 Ford F450 Dump Truck that is unreliable, parts are difficult to find, has excessive body rot, and has had difficulty in passing state inspections. This truck is used in the cemetery, for trash pick-up, and also for snow removal.

12B – Replacement of Surveillance Cameras – \$31,220 – Ms. Riggieri explained that the DPW would like to expand and upgrade the security system that is currently in place. They need cameras on the front side of the building and covering the yard and gates. The funds requested would be used to add more cameras, and to change the system from an analog feed to a digital feed. Ms. Riggieri said that a digital feed would provide more detail, a longer recording time, and a clearer picture. Mr. Behn asked how long the new system would be able to record for and Mr. Walden said he wasn't sure but would check with MIS/GIS. Mr. Wells had questions about the new system that was installed about three years ago to track fuel used by various Town departments. He asked Ms. Riggieri if she has quantities on how much fuel is used by each department and she said she does have those amounts. Mr. Wells noted that the new system was installed to make access to fuel more secure and he remembered talking about distributing reports and charging back departments. Ms. Riggieri mentioned that they do charge back fuel consumption to certain departments.

12C – Mechanical Sweeper - \$46,000 – Ms. Riggieri explained that this is the funding for the mechanical sweeper noted in Article 11 and the amount requested would be the first payment.

12D – Utility/Crane for Sewer Department - \$100,000 – Ms. Riggieri explained that the DPW needs to replace a 2002 Ford F350 Utility/Crane Truck. This truck has approximately 131,000 miles on it, has become unreliable, parts are hard to find, has excessive body rot, and has had difficulty passing state inspections. This truck is used to check sewer stations and the crane is used for repairs. This truck is also used for snow removal. Ms. Riggieri noted that this purchase would be paid for out of the sewer fund. Ms. Howard asked what they do with the old vehicles and Mr. Walden said they sell them, or Ms. Riggieri said they keep them and use for parts.

12E – Service Van for Water Department - \$30,000 – Ms. Riggieri explained that the DPW needs to replace a 1998 service van that is used by the Water Department to monitor water stations and transport chemicals. This van has approximately 135,000 miles on it, has become unreliable, parts are hard to find, has excessive body rot, and has had difficulty passing state inspections. Ms. Riggieri said this van would be used by Veolia according to the contract the Town has with them. She noted that this purchase would be paid for out of the water fund.

18 – Town Water System - \$280,000 – Mr. Cote explained that this request would be used to cover a number of items. He said that a motor control system needs to be upgraded at the Andrews Street pump station, water mains need to be replaced in the Hillcrest Road area due to breaks, an upgrade needs to be done to the water mains in the Flanders Road/Hundreds Road/East Main Street area – again due to breaks, and they need to install a gate valve at the Route 9 and Otis Street intersection. Mr. Walden pointed out that the state is planning on re-paving Route 9 so they should perform the installation of the gate valve in the road prior to this occurring. It was noted that the funds requested for the Flanders Road area is for the design of converting the water main, and then the job would be bid out. Ms. Blazjewski asked if water rates would be bumped up for large jobs like this one and Mr. Walden said he would address that when speaking about Article 19.

Article 19 – Town Water Main and Water Source Debt Issuance - \$2,100,000 – Mr. Walden explained that they have had a major problem with the Indian Meadow well. As they have treated the water at this well, which had a high iron and manganese content already, the metal content has gone up instead of down. Mr. Walden said that 600,000 gallons of water are treated per day at this location. They were going to expand and upgrade the Oak Street water treatment plant and pipe the water from the Indian Meadow well there, but that project turned out to be too costly. Since more water is needed, they found that it would be less expensive to re-route the water to the Fisher Street water treatment plant. Mr. Walden said that they also need to install a pump station at the second well located on Otis Street so they can bring that location online. Mr. Walden mentioned that they need to get more water sources online so there are no deficiencies. They have hired Northeast Geoscience to verify that they haven't overlooked a site for ground water and that all avenues have been exhausted. Mr. Walden said that Mr. Malloy is looking for a hydrologist to help look for potential well sites. There was discussion about dredging Sandra Pond and making it deeper so capacity is increased. Mr. Walden mentioned that some of the monies needed for this project may come from increased water rates.

Article 20 – Town Sewer System - \$1,400,000 – Mr. Walden explained that the Otis Street Sewer Pump Station is in dire need of replacement. They were waiting for Boston Hill to be developed but that hasn't happened and they can't wait any longer. Mr. Walden noted that Westborough Village was built and they installed a larger pipe across the Assabet, but the pump station needs to be rehabilitated. They have a contract to bid out and they'd like to do that now. Mr. Walden mentioned that when Boston Hill is developed, they will recoup some of the funds spent on this project through connection fees. Mr. Allen asked if there would be an impact from Astra Pharmaceuticals leaving town. Mr. Walden said that would provide some relief but their hope is that someone else will step in and take over that location. Mr. Walden pointed out that this is a very old pump station and it's ready to fail. He also mentioned that this pump station is right next to the Assabet River and if raw sewage goes in to the Assabet the fine will be great – especially having known it could fail. Mr. Walden noted that this pump station was last upgraded in 1989 and the life span of a pump station is typically 20 years before rehabilitation is recommended.

ATM preparation and related items:

Mr. Wells mentioned that he has reserved Room 23 in the Forbes Building on the following Wednesday evenings - February 11th, 18th, and March 4th, if needed for extra meetings due to snow. He said that the February 9th meeting is under snow alert. Mr. Wells will monitor and make a final call around 3:30 p.m. If Monday's meeting is canceled, he will reschedule Police Chief, Alan Gordon, and Town Manager, Jim Malloy, to Wednesday night, February 11th. Mr. Wells also informed the Committee that the meeting on February 17th is back in Room 23 at the Forbes Building – and not at the Library – since the Planning Board canceled their meeting that evening in Room 23. Mr. Wells reminded the Committee that the School Department and School Committee will be in on February 23rd to discuss the Gibbons School renovations. Mr. Wells said that Jack Goodhall is scheduled for March 2nd to discuss the Waste Water Treatment Plant if necessary. Mr. Wells is still targeting March 5th to have the Report & Recommendation (R&R) booklet completed, with a drop dead date of March 9th. He emailed out the first draft of the FY16 Warrant Article Worksheet to the Committee. Mr. Wells said he is still double checking the numbers and has some questions for Mr. Malloy regarding transfers when he meets with the AFC. He also has questions regarding a possible large increase in the WRR (Worcester Regional Retirement) assessment, along with net metering credits and how these credits will be accounted for in the budget. Mr. Wells mentioned the Fire Department has a large electric bill from when power was switched over from the Contractor to the Town when the new Fire Station was completed. The Fire Department may come to the AFC to request a transfer since it would wipe out their electric budget for the rest of the year. Mr. Allen also pointed out that the Fire Department could come to the AFC for a transfer request for payroll costs associated with Fire Department personnel helping out with technology items at the new station. As a final note, Mr. Wells said that the budget for the R&R Booklet is almost done but he would like to receive any footnotes from department liaisons to explain to residents any unusual changes in expenses. He also mentioned that the Revenue and Expense Report and Available Transfer Report are in progress. Mr. Behn suggested showing the balance in the Capital Stabilization Fund.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Allen mentioned that he attended the last Municipal Building Committee (MBC) meeting. There was nothing major to report – just that the Contractors have been dealing with the snow. Regarding the Economic Development Committee (EDC), Mr. Allen said there was a breakfast meeting on Tuesday, February 3rd, celebrating the accomplishments of the EDC. The highlights were getting the word out about how friendly Westborough is for businesses and the commercial development opportunities available at the State Hospital and Astra properties. Mr. Allen said that Town Manager, Jim Malloy, is requesting a full time coordinator position for the EDC instead of part time.

Mr. Tepper reported on the Gibbons School Building Committee. They met yesterday to review the Power Point presentation that will be posted on Town websites and to go over the actual number that needs to be raised for the renovation project. The estimated cost of the Gibbons renovation project is \$26,770,881, which includes

construction costs and contingencies. The Town is expecting to get back \$11,640,868 or 43.8% from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). A major point is the school will have more space – approximately 110,000 square feet – after renovations. Mr. Tepper noted that if a new school were built it would be smaller since MSBA reimburses funds based on the number of students. Mr. Wells mentioned that the Town will have to authorize borrowing \$26 million, but after being reimbursed from the State, the total borrowing will be about \$15 million. Mr. Tepper referred to the handout he emailed to the Committee and pointed out that the project does not include air conditioning – and some of the fixes from the initial list aren't being done – but other items were added such as asbestos remediation, fire suppression, and upgrading the electrical. There was a discussion about how the costs for this project have escalated through the years. Ms. Blazejewski asked if Mr. Tepper could find out what the State reimburses per student for a new school. Mr. Rauch mentioned the possibility of needing a new school, and Mr. Behn pointed to the study that is being done to determine current capacity within the schools and projected student enrollment. It was also mentioned that some of the other, older schools may need renovations. Mr. Wells suggested taking on these projects ourselves similar to the new Fire Station and Town Hall renovations and coming in with a lower number, rather than getting the State involved. Mr. Tepper pointed out the timing – they expect Contractor filed bids to be in by early December. The project is anticipated to be complete in the summer of 2017. Ms. Howard asked if the cost of having the students moved to another school while these renovations take place was included in the cost and Mr. Tepper said that was incorporated in to the price.

Comments and Concerns – Committee Members

Mr. Behn mentioned that he put together a spreadsheet that Mr. Wells will forward to the Committee regarding the utilization of revolving funds. There are three accounts that seem to be well funded, with more receipts flowing through on a regular basis. Mr. Behn noted that the amount of money in these revolving funds would still increase even with the reduction of \$495,000 that Mr. Wells suggested when meeting with the School Department and School Committee last week. By decreasing the reserves held in these revolving funds, it would also decrease the school's FY16 budget increase from 2.56% to 1.44%. Ms. Blazejewski also pointed out the reserves held for special education tuition and thought that could be reduced as well. Transparency of information was discussed and Ms. Howard mentioned that Ms. Oliver with the School Department is providing more reporting. Mr. Behn said that this has been the second year in getting more detail on the school budget and the information being provided has been getting better.

Public Reminders for Viewers

A lost winter coat was reported in the Forbes Building. Please contact Town Accountant, Leah Talbot, for more details.

Adjournment

Mr. Behn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:38 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 9-0-0 in favor, with 9 being present.

Document List

Warrant Article Worksheet – Gary Wells
Gibbons Renovation Borrowing Analysis
Massachusetts School Building Authority Action Letter
Gibbons Total Project Budget

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Thomas
AFC Administrative Assistant