

Members Present: Gary Wells, Chair, Ed Behn, Lisa Blazejewski, Jim Tepper, Tara Howard, Jim Driscoll, Hank Rauch, Phyllis Jaffee, Beth Blumberg.

At 7:04 p.m. Mr. Wells called the meeting to order in Memorial Hall of the Town Hall.

### **Open Forum**

There was no one here to address the Committee.

### **Approval of Past Minutes**

There were no minutes to approve.

### **DPW, Snow & Ice, Water & Sewer Enterprise – Budget Reviews – DPW Manager, John Walden, DPW Assistant Manager, Rich Voutas, DPW Business Administrator, Maria-Elaina Riggieri, and DPW Operations Manager, Dennis Cote.**

Mr. Wells made introductions between the newest members of the AFC and DPW employees. Ms. Riggieri began with a review of the DPW's snow budget. She mentioned that there were no changes to wages or expenses. Ms. Riggieri pointed out that the snow budget was increased last year. They will monitor spending over the next few years to see if any changes need to be made, and noted that they are able to deficit spend for snow and ice removal. Mr. Wells referred to the report Ms. Riggieri sent out to the AFC for the FY15-16 budget and what has been spent to date. Ms. Riggieri mentioned that the Town received approximately \$116,000 for road repairs from the State that they needed to spend by June 30<sup>th</sup>. She said that these funds were used to fix pot holes and also for line painting. Ms. Riggieri also mentioned that the Town received back about \$132,000, in combination with the Fire Department, from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) due to last winter's storms, and those funds went back to Free Cash. AFC members clarified the rules related to the snow and ice fund and noted that it is the only account that can deficit spend. Mr. Behn added that any overages can be covered by a transfer from the AFC Reserve Fund. Mr. Driscoll asked about contractual services and Ms. Riggieri explained that they have contractors who come in and plow.

Regarding the Water account, Ms. Riggieri noted that there was a 1.85% increase to the wage line item for union adjustments, non-union adjustments, and step increases. She mentioned that they are still in negotiations with the unions. There was also a 2.76% increase in expenses due to an anticipated CPI (Consumer Price Index) increase to the Veolia contract. Ms. Riggieri pointed out the electric line item and mentioned an anticipated increase expected by the supplier, Trans Canada. Ms. Riggieri said that she decreased any account with a history of surplus funds and increased any account operating with a deficit. There was a question from AFC members as to why electric costs were going up since the trend has seen a decrease in electric costs. Mr. Wells pointed out that the Town's old contract with Trans Canada was at 6.6 cents per kilowatt hour and the new contract may be going to 9.6 cents per kilowatt hour. He mentioned that the Town Manager is hoping to negotiate a better rate but they won't know that until closer to the end of the contract. Ms. Riggieri reviewed what line items had increases and decreases. Mr. Wells noted that there was a half a percent increase across the board after these adjustments were made.

For the Sewer account, Ms. Riggieri said there were increases to wages similar to the Water account. She also mentioned a 7.23% increase to electric costs and pointed out that they used more electricity last year. Mr. Tepper asked why electric usage was up and Mr. Walden said it was due to a wet year and using the infiltration system (pumps ran longer). Ms. Riggieri reviewed increases and decreases to applicable line items. Mr. Rauch noted that debt service was up because of a capital project done at Crownridge Road.

Ms. Riggieri discussed the DPW general budget. She noted a 7.8% increase to wages due to contract adjustments for union & non-union employees, along with step increases. It was also noted that the DPW is seeking approval to fill two full time positions that were previously authorized but left open for years. Mr. Walden mentioned that they didn't eliminate these positions but also didn't fund them. However, he has seen the need for additional employees over the last couple of years due to having to clean every catch basin in town twice a year as required by the DEP (Department of Environmental Protection). Mr. Walden said that he currently has 12 full time employees and they are only able to clean about 40% of the catch basins once per year. Mr. Walden noted that the catch basins fill with sand and debris, and if not cleaned, can affect the pipes, which become more costly to fix. Mr. Walden mentioned that they looked in to contracting out cleaning the catch basins, similar to what the Town of Hopkinton does, however the quote they received was \$308,760 for cleaning the catch basins twice a year. Mr. Walden pointed out that they should be cleaning about 80 catch basins per week. The estimated cost for two full time employees would be about \$115,000 without benefits. Mr. Driscoll asked if there was a particular expertise required. Mr. Walden said there was and that the employee needs to be licensed to operate a crane. Mr. Rauch asked if the hiring of the two employees could be stretched over two years with one being hired this year and one next year. Mr. Walden felt he was at a crisis stage since he needs to get all of the catch basins cleaned this year. Ms. Blazejewski asked if there were any financial penalties from the DEP if the catch basins weren't cleaned. Mr. Walden wasn't sure but he pointed out that costs could triple if the catch basins aren't maintained since drainage systems can become clogged and operate less efficiently. Mr. Tepper noted that the cost for cleaning the catch basins once a year would be about \$154,000 (half of \$308,760). Mr. Walden said that was correct, however, he mentioned that the new employees could also be used in other areas such as for snow removal, during spring clean-up, when calls arise, and to help cover when other employees are out. Ms. Jaffee brought up step increases and payroll going up versus negotiating a contract that may get locked in for a few years. Mr. Walden said that the contract price for cleaning the catch basins isn't guaranteed to be locked in. He also noted using the new employees for snow removal where we'd otherwise have to contract that work out. Ms. Howard mentioned that the newer employees may come in younger and at less of a cost than the employees who have been there longer, and also rise through the ranks as older employees retire. Mr. Driscoll asked about overtime pay. Ms. Riggieri noted that overtime pay is sometimes for Saturday help at the cemeteries if there's a burial. Mr. Driscoll asked where we historically come in for overtime pay – over or under. Ms. Riggieri said that usually within \$400 of what is budgeted. Mr. Walden mentioned that there may be overtime hours for spring clean-up since he likes to have that done by Memorial Day and that can involve long days. Also for road work or line painting since that is done at night to avoid tying up traffic during rush hour.

Regarding expenses for the DPW, Ms. Riggieri mentioned that there was an increase of .43%. She noted that the line item for electric costs was eliminated since it is now paid out of the Town's electric account. Ms. Riggieri reviewed those line items with increases and decreases. Mr. Behn asked when the DPW can use flag men versus police. Mr. Voutas mentioned that they use Police Officers on the main roads but they can use flag men on the side roads. Ms. Blumberg asked if there were expenses associated with the State Hospital land. Ms. Riggieri said those expenses are allocated to the money set aside for maintenance of that land. Mr. Voutas noted that there are still funds left to cover any work done at the former State Hospital site. Mr. Rauch mentioned that there was a little paving work and some plowing done on the former State Hospital land, and that a minimum of work is being performed now but we may need more in the future. Mr. Tepper asked about the fuel line item and noted that the price of gas is down but they are still budgeting for the same amount. He felt it was reasonable to think that line item could be reduced. Ms. Riggieri pointed out that she completed the budget in November and she wasn't sure if gas prices would stay down. Mr. Wells asked Ms. Riggieri to send the AFC her report as to what the \$180,000 was based on. It was noted that the DPW is fueling all Town departments. Mr. Walden also mentioned that, due to the snow from last year, there were a lot of vehicles that ran due to plowing. Mr. Tepper pointed out the \$55,000 included for fuel under the snow and ice budget. Ms. Riggieri said that her fear is that gas prices go up again. A transfer from the AFC Reserve Fund was mentioned if that happens. Mr. Tepper noted that salaries and time are split between three major departments and asked if the work load stays constant. Ms. Riggieri said that it does and that only major personnel are split over the three departments. Mr. Wells asked about an outstanding article under water and sewer and Ms. Riggieri said she closed that out. She also found an article from 2007 for \$66,000 that

could be used for upgrades to the sewer monitoring systems. Instead of needing to increase the budget for this year, she was able to use money from this article to pay for the sewer monitoring system and turn the rest back to the Town.

### **DPW Articles**

Ms. Riggieri reviewed the capital requests that the DPW has in the warrant for the upcoming Annual Town Meeting.

CAT-IT Loader – Article 10A – from Free Cash. Ms. Riggieri explained that they need to replace a 1987 CAT-IT Loader for a cost of \$175,000. She mentioned that the 1987 Loader has gone through two refurbishing's, parts are hard to get, there's significant body rot, and the cost of maintenance has increased. She noted that the new Loader should last years since the DPW does an excellent job of maintaining their vehicles.

Utility truck – Article 10B – from Water Retained Earnings. There was discussion over which truck was being replaced. Ms. Riggieri mentioned that they are looking to replace a 2002 2500 Utility Truck, which is down more than it is working. The 2002 truck also has had difficulty passing state inspections. Ms. Riggieri said that the cost should be about \$60,000 for a new truck and they would put a plow on it. Mr. Tepper asked about old vehicles that are auctioned off. Ms. Riggieri said that the Town has done well at auctions and she has a report that she will forward to the AFC. She noted that the funds received at the auctions go back to either the Sewer or Water Enterprise Funds, or to the Town for the DPW.

Sewer grinder – Article 10C – from Sewer Retained Earnings. It was noted that the installation of a sewer grinder at the West Main Street Pump Station would help grind debris in to smaller pieces so it can pass through the pumps without clogging or damaging them. The cost would be \$50,000. Ms. Blumberg asked what the life expectancy was for a sewer grinder and Mr. Cote said they expect to get five years out of it but it depends on what goes in it. He mentioned that they have two sewer grinders right now and this would be the third. Ms. Blumberg asked how many they would like and Mr. Cote said they would like eight. Ms. Blumberg asked if the DPW is looking to add a sewer grinder each year and Mr. Cote said they would like to. He mentioned that fixing the older sewer grinders costs about \$8,000. Mr. Tepper pointed out that the funds to purchase the sewer grinder are coming out of the Water Fund's retained earnings. Mr. Walden noted overflow if pipes are clogged and fines for leaking in to the water. He also mentioned that if overflow backs up in to homes that the Town is responsible.

Mr. Behn mentioned Mr. Cote's upcoming retirement. The AFC gave Mr. Cote a round of applause and thanked him for his hard work.

### **Committee Liaison and Department Liaison Reports**

Mr. Wells mentioned that Mr. Malloy's slide presentation for the FY17 budget is in the AFC drop box and on the Town website. He also said that Mr. Malloy sent a preliminary copy of the warrant. Mr. Wells encouraged AFC members to review the warrant since there are 39 articles, and noted that the warrant will close February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mr. Wells pointed out that Mr. Malloy highlighted any changes in color in the warrant and asked if the AFC should have color print in their Report & Recommendations (R&R) book. Ms. Blazejewski said that the Charter Review Committee is considering having handouts at Town Meeting so changes can be compared. Mr. Behn reminded AFC members that the only obligation for the R&R book is to list the article and provide the AFC's recommendation. He pointed out that we don't even have to print the Charter in the R&R book. Ms. Blazejewski mentioned that the Charter articles will have the Charter language and the R&R book could just state what has changed and the vote. Mr. Behn felt it would be nice to hand out copies of the warrant in advance at Town elections so people are aware of what's coming up at Town Meeting. Mr. Tepper added that the warrant should be handed out at the Senior Center and Town Hall in order to get people engaged. Mr. Rauch noted that the warrant is on the Town website. Ms. Howard suggested posting a summary of the warrant at voting sites so it's easy to read. Mr. Wells mentioned that he is working on the article worksheet and should have it for the next AFC meeting. He noted that the AFC still needs to go through the various departments to determine who to invite in.

Mr. Wells pointed out that Town Treasurer, Joanne Savignac should be asked to meet with the AFC on Tuesday, February 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Pre-K to 3 School Building Committee:** Mr. Rauch asked Mr. Wells if the Pre-K to 3 School Building Committee will be seeking engineering money at Town Meeting. Mr. Wells said that they are looking for about \$250,000 for architectural and design studies so they can submit their request by April and get in line with the MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Authority). Mr. Wells said it may not be until 2021 before they start construction for a replacement school for Fales. Mr. Rauch asked if the \$250,000 would come out of Free Cash and Mr. Wells felt that would be the case. Mr. Tepper pointed out that they may not want to be involved with the MSBA since they only pay a portion of the cost of a new school. Mr. Wells said that was part of what the Committee will be looking at but they aren't at that stage of the project yet.

**Comments and Concerns – Committee Members**  
None

**Public Reminders for Viewers**  
None

**Adjournment**  
Mr. Behn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 9-0-0 in favor, with 9 being present.

**Document List**  
DPW Snow Budget for FY15-16 – Maria-Elaina Riggieri

Respectfully submitted,  
Jessica Thomas,  
AFC Administrative Assistant