

Members Present: Ian Johnson, Chair, Jo Lown, Cliff Watts, Judy Lucas, Carolyn Spring, Polly Howard, J. J. Malone (arrived 7: 07 p.m.) Absent: John Arnold, Ronn Moody.

At 7:04 p.m. Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Mr. Johnson called committee member's attention to the revised budgets for Assabet Valley Regional Technical School District, Westborough Sewer Treatment Plant, Westborough water and sewer treatment operation and maintenance, and street lights, an analysis of sewer rate impact of proposed treatment plant improvements, the snow budget expenditures as of 3/2/07, and an article addition (Article 39 in the draft Warrant dated 3/10/07) and Article 6 (Personnel Board) revision.

Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Approval of minutes – Meeting No. 12, March 12, 2007

Mr. Watts moved approval of the minutes of Meeting No. 12, March 12, 2007. The vote to approve the minutes was 7 in favor with 7 members present.

Budget Review – Police Department

Chief Alan Gordon presented the proposed budget for the Police Department of \$2,472,624. The opening of the new Baystate Commons facility will add to traffic and service calls so the department is looking to fill an empty position that has not been filled for the last 3 or 4 years. The collective bargaining agreement expires on June 30, 2007. At this time the budget includes only step increases and cost of living increases. Chief Gordon is expecting the department to grow in the future as the town continues to grow, although not too much more as the town nears build-out..

Expenses of \$99,609 (increased from \$94,409 for FY2007) include:

- Line 5203A mobile communications increase to cover updated cellular service for the Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) in each cruiser. The MDT units required faster communication service than the previous radio equipment provided, at a rate of \$50/month for 7 cruisers for an increase of \$4200.
- Line 5209/5210 Travel in-state and out-of-state: next year's Police Chiefs conference will be in New Orleans so more money is put into the out-of-state travel than the in-state travel. The total of the two lines remains at \$3,000, and is level funded from last year.
- Line 5241 Clothing Allowance is increased by \$1,000 (to \$35,875) to cover the allowance for one additional officer. This amount covers about what is needed for the first year of service including uniforms and leather goods (holster, boots, etc.) A dress uniform (\$750) is required but cannot usually be purchased in the first year on the job. Officers are responsible for equipment purchased with the clothing allowance, however damages to equipment that occur in the course of duty can sometimes be covered by the department and not charged to the officer's clothing allowance.
- Line 5203 Repair/Maint Equipment includes oil changes, brakes, and repairs and is level funded.
- Line 5237A Vehicles-Supplies/Materials includes tires, batteries, and other supplies that are bought in large quantities and stored until needed. This line is increased by \$1,000 to \$35,875.

Article 9. Regularly Recurring Articles. Section E. (in draft warrant dated March 10.)

The department is asking for \$94,251 to purchase three (3) new Ford Crown Victoria cruisers. Vehicle #25 currently has 107,275 miles and will probably have 127,000 by July 1. Vehicle #23 currently has 86,200 miles. Chief Gordon would like to trade in #25 immediately and keep #23 until spring 2008. This will increase the Police Department's fleet by one vehicle. The Police Department currently has 15 vehicles, 5 of which have over 80,000 miles of use. Of these, one is the Special Response Vehicle which is a 1986 ambulance that came from the Fire Department and is used to carry cones and equipment for major accident scenes, and another is the Patrol K-9 vehicle which is only used by the K-9 officer so does not accumulate mileage as quickly. The fleet also includes one motorcycle which was paid for through a federal grant and is in use by only two officers when weather permits. When in use, the motorcycle is better for traffic control and as a first responder to accident scenes as it is easier to maneuver around traffic. Cruisers do get traded in but they are of low value and need to be repainted before use. The cost of new vehicles has gone up as has the cost of necessary equipment. The MDTs are \$4,500, Bushmaster Rifle with accessories is \$1,000, and CDM Motorola Mobile Radios are \$1,814, bringing the total quote from MHQ to \$94,251 for the three vehicles.

The Department does get some grant monies from the Government Highway Safety Bureau and the Dispatcher Training Academy. Currently the department has four regular dispatchers with one secretary and one administrative assistant providing occasional coverage. The cooperative agreement with Shrewsbury allowing crossing of town lines has worked well. There are times when a Shrewsbury officer may be closer to a call on the west end of town, and officers do not have to end pursuit of vehicles at the town line but may complete the stop in the next town.

Chief Gordon was asked for his opinion on the plans for the Vee-Arc Building. The initial meetings looked at the combination of Fire and Police Departments to gain efficiency. The main issue is parking to accommodate all employees without impacting residents in the surrounding area. Currently the Fire Department is in worse shape as the building is falling apart. They have had water leakage issues recently. The Police Department is functioning but is maxed out for space. Any expansion will affect other departments (Recreation, Explorer Post.) Underground parking has not been considered due to the excessive weight of the fire trucks and the cost. They are looking at other options for parking. Chief Gordon would like to find a way to continue with the Public Safety Building.

Mr. Johnson asked about the Explorer Post's request to renew their lease. Chief Gordon notes they have been a good neighbor to the Police Department and do a lot for the Police and Fire Departments and the town. They do take up some parking spaces, but they are a good agency and are well run. Chief Gordon noted that if the Police remain at the Forbes building, they may need the space occupied by the Post for expansion.

Liaison Updates

Ms. Spring heard on the news that the town of Sharon is cutting all sports in the schools due to inadequate state funding. Mr. Johnson added that Stoneham has also made this cut.

Ms. Lucas and Ms. Howard will be meeting with Assabet Valley Regional Technical School District on March 27.

Ms. Howard will schedule the School Committee for budget review on April 23.

Mr. Johnson reports that Joanne Savignac, Town Treasurer, has been working on debt and interest payment figures and will have new numbers when she meets with the AFC on April 9. The DPW has been encouraged to only present project requests they can actually accomplish in the next year. Ms. Savignac will also present a five-year outlook on all debt.

Mr. Johnson has spoken with Paula Skog of the Historical Commission. There is one Article in the warrant about the Nathan Fisher House that is not sponsored by the Historical Commission.

Dr. Malone spoke with Leah Talbot about the electric bill for water purification. This is not an old (past-year) bill because it could not have been computed in the last year, and so can be paid from current year funds. Ms. Talbot has also done some research on the 30-year borrowing for the waste treatment plant and discovered that the 2% rate is only good for 20 years after which it reverts to a market rate. They are in the

process of recalculating the figures for a 20 year term. Mr. Danis will make up a matrix of all articles with recommendations for funding sources. They suspect approximately \$150,000 is available from prior years appropriations. Mr. Johnson asked if the Veolia bill could be covered even though it is from an enterprise fund and Dr. Malone believes that it could.

Ms. Lown noted that the Treatment Plant operations budget is now at \$2,958,560. She is trying to meet with them. The library site visit is scheduled for 3/17 at 10 am.

Ms. Howard has contacted Mr. Tashjian and Young Nam Lee to schedule presentations to the AFC. The School Committee, the Historical Commission, and the DPW have been scheduled.

Comments and concerns of Committee members

- Mr. Johnson reported on the School Committee meeting that was held last night. The public portion of the meeting went from 6 pm to 9 pm, with the Committee in executive session after that. Budget articles and presentations from the principals of Mill Pond, Gibbons Middle, and Westborough High Schools were heard.
- Mill Pond is requesting funds to update the Everyday Math materials and order the remaining ½ of the new 5th and 6th grade social studies books. They are also requesting 5 additional hires, including 3 teachers (2 Special Education and one Grade 4) and 2 Special Education paraprofessionals. There are two special education programs currently not offered which will be needed next year to accommodate students moving up from the elementary schools. The 4th grade teacher would bring the class size down from 22.5 to 20.7. The School Committee is asking very specific questions and keeping a focus on stated goals and the possible consequences of all actions.
- The Gibbons is expecting a drop in students as the 8th grade class that will be moving up to the high school is larger than the 6th grade class that will be coming into the middle school. Dr. Fredette would like to maintain current staffing to preserve the team teaching model currently in place. He is asking for level staffing and a 1% drop in expenses.
- The high school's goals are to maintain class sizes as they have had a good year. They would like to expand access to their electives and are asking for 0.2 FTE for Business, 0.6 FTE for Fine Arts, and 0.2 FTE for CAD. They are also asking for 3 additional staff including one in the library, one security guard, and a Wellness Program teacher. The Wellness Program they propose would incorporate health and wellness into the Physical Education curriculum each year with a ½ year course in health required for all 9th grade students. They have found that their student population is experiencing increasing problems with stress and anxiety and with substance abuse, and they are attempting to proactively deal with this issue before there is a major incident. The incoming principal, John Smith (currently principal at Nashoba Regional) and John Pierce both attended the meeting.
- Ms. Lucas stated that the Wellness Curriculum needs review for system-wide use. She pointed out that contract negotiations have not yet been completed so the budget can't really be finalized at this time. Ms. Lucas also reminded committee members that the budgets being presented are the administration's budget not the School Committee's.

Adjournment

At 8:37 p.m. Mr. Watts moved to adjourn the meeting. The vote to adjourn was unanimous (7 present and in favor).