

Members Present: Ian Johnson, Chair, Carolyn Spring, Judy Lucas, Cliff Watts, Ronn Moody, John Arnold, Denzil Drewry, Brigitte Casemyr. Absent: Jo Lown.

At 7:07 p.m. Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Approval of minutes –Meeting No. 11, February 28, 2008, FY2008.

Ms. Lucas noted one typographical error on page 2 of the minutes. Mr. Watts moved approval of the minutes, with the noted correction, of Meeting No. 11, February 28, 2008, FY2008. The vote to approve the minutes was 5 in favor and 3 abstentions, with 8 members being present.

Budget and Article Review – Legal Department

Gregory Franks, Town Counsel, presented the Legal Department budget request of \$167,802, an increase of \$7,925 over last year's budget. The increased salary includes a step increase for Mr. Franks. The expenses have decreased \$365.

Line 5219A Legal Services, decreased by \$5,000 from last year, as Mr. Franks has not needed additional outside legal counsel.

Line 5243, Miscellaneous Services, increased by \$4,635 to include bar dues and association dues, increased recording fees, and seminars, and to purchase some books and a Westlaw subscription for the library.

Mr. Franks has reviewed the following articles in the draft Warrant dated 2/28/08:

ARTICLE 23. Adopt Stormwater Management and Erosion Control Bylaw (DPW Manager) and ARTICLE 24. Adopt Bylaw Governing Discharges To The Municipal Storm Drain System (DPW Manager).

These articles are in response to changes in Massachusetts regulations and will be presented by the DPW.

ARTICLE 19. Designate Manager for New Trench Regulations (Town Counsel)

This article is to comply with new State regulations. The Town can set permit fees, but the Town can only report violations to the State to enforce compliance.

The article covers trenches on all sites including on private property. A trench is defined as having a specific depth and width. It would apply to homeowners, but would only be needed for large jobs. The Town must get permits for DPW work.

ARTICLE 25. Accept Easements (Town counsel)

To accept access easements and snowplow easements related to Bay State Commons. The plans have been reviewed by an engineer.

ARTICLE 28. Department Head Employment Contracts (Board of Selectmen)

This would affect only those Department Heads appointed by the Board of Selectmen or the Town Coordinator, and needs Town Meeting approval as it is a change to the Town Bylaws.

Ms. Casemyr requested clarification of personnel affected (specific positions) in light of the Government Study Committee recommendations.

Ms. Spring (for Ms. Lown) presented questions for Town Counsel that have come up in prior AFC discussions:

- Why are the town department's insurance costs not included in the departmental budget?
Henry Danis, Town Coordinator, pointed out that the Massachusetts Insurance Statutes give control of the insurance budget for the town to the Board of Selectmen. The School Department is prohibited from control of insurance budget. These costs could be broken out, but for informational purposes only. The Town could give each department funds in their budget for the insurance costs but could not make paying this cost a financial obligation for the School Department. Mr. Johnson noted that the insurance expense was variable, as each individual employee is able to make changes on a yearly basis. Mr. Arnold would like to be able to give a "total cost of ownership" figure for each department, and feels this information may be useful in a case where the Town needs to decide which services and at what level the Town can afford.
- In light of the Inspector General's report on the finances of Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School, would it be possible to withhold payment until the accounting questions are settled?

Mr. Franks answered no, and explained that the relationship is based on an agreement that requires payment, and that if moneys are due to the town they will be returned.

- Is there an appearance that the role of the Advisory Finance Committee will be diminished under the Government Study Committee recommendations?

Mr. Arnold answered that the role of the AFC is not mentioned in the recommendations because the Government Study Committee did not feel any changes were needed with respect to the AFC. The AFC is still the sole body charged with making recommendations to the town's legislature (the Town Meeting).

Budget and Article Review – Conservation Commission

Edward Brady, Commission Chairman, and Joseph Inman, Conservation Officer, presented the Conservation Commission budget request of \$42,029, an increase of \$1,103 over last year's budget. There is a cost of living increase in salaries/wages, and expenses are level-funded. Fees collected mainly for advertising public hearings are expected to be \$16,239.

Budget and Article Review – Building Department

Joseph Inman, Building Commissioner, presented the Building Department budget request of \$298,714, an increase of \$9,589 over last year. Increases in salary reflect cost-of-living increases. Increases in expenses are mainly for costs for professional services (contracted services mainly for wiring inspector.)

Mr. Inman presented his annual report for 2007. Fees collected totaled \$892,892.45, and reflected the department's busiest year since 2000. The current building slowdown has not decreased the Building Department's workload. Many projects have been approved that have not yet been built. The Transit-Oriented Village is expected to begin construction in the spring. If commercial property occupancy rates pick up again there are six commercial office projects that have been approved. Permits are good for six months. Expired permits need to be re-permitted. Permit fees increased last year so higher fees will be owed. The building slowdown will affect fees collected in 2008, so the projection is for \$550,000.

The condos at Bay State Commons (44 units) are close to getting occupancy permits. The number of condo and townhouse permits has been greater than single family home permits for several years. In 2007, 5 permits for single family homes, 9 permits for multi family homes (44 units), and 1 permit for Condos (44 units) were issued.

Discussion and vote on transfer request – Building Department

Mr. Inman is requesting a transfer of \$8,400 to pay the cost of hiring a temporary Plumbing Inspector to cover inspections during a medical leave. Funds requested should be enough to pay for services until mid-May, when need will be re-evaluated. Mr. Drewry moves to transfer \$8,400 from the AFC Reserve Fund to budget

line 12513-5219, Building Department Professional Services. The vote to transfer the funds is 8 in favor with 8 being present.

Snow & Ice Budget Deficit Spending Requests

Committee reviewed a request from John Walden, Manager, DPW, to allow deficit spending on the Snow Budget, Wages of an additional \$30,000, and to allow deficit spending on the Snow Budget, Expenses of an additional \$40,000. Mr. Moody moved acceptance of this request, incremental to prior authorizations. The vote to approve the deficit spending request was 8 in favor, with 8 members being present. The total deficit spending authorization to date is \$200,000 for the Snow Budget, Expenses, and \$70,000 for the Snow Budget, Wages.

Liaison Updates

- Ms. Lucas encouraged committee members to read the clarification/rebuttal to the Inspector General's report that is published on the Assabet web site. Mr. Carlo will attend the Board of Selectmen Meeting on 3/25 to discuss the report. Ms. Lucas passed out an updated schedule of School Committee budget meetings. Ms. Lucas will attend the meeting on 3/5, and Mr. Watts will attend the meeting on 3/11.
- Mr. Moody noted the 'dba' name clarification on the Snow and Ice Budget.
- Mr. Johnson noted that the DPW is tentatively scheduled to present their budget on 3/10 at 8 p.m., and Ms. Bilodeau presents the town budgets.
- Mr. Arnold has scheduled meetings with the Treasurer and the Town Clerk.
- Mr. Drewry has met with all his assigned departments. The Zoning Board of Appeals does not need to present their budget.
- Ms. Casemyr verified with the Planning Board and with Youth and Family Services that their budgets are level-funded. She spoke with Paul McNulty who will present his budget on Thursday. There may be a new state regulation requiring towns to do Sharps Collections. The landfill contract cost has been even due to decreased volume, but there is also no revenue to the town from E.L. Harvey's use of the town's unused capacity as there was under the old landfill contract.
- Mr. Johnson is meeting with Ms. Bilodeau on Thursday, and will meet with the Town Accountant as well.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

No comments or concerns were voiced.

Adjournment

At 8:20 p.m. Mr. Watts moved to adjourn the meeting. The vote to adjourn was unanimous (8 members present and in favor).