

Members Present: Ian Johnson, Chair, Cliff Watts, Jo Lown, John Arnold, Brigitte Casemyr, Carolyn Spring (arrived 7:10 p.m., departed 9:55 p.m.), Ronn Moody (arrived 7:42 p.m.). Absent: Denzil Drewry, Judy Lucas.

At 7:06 p.m. Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

### **Open Forum**

Mr. Johnson read a letter from Denzil Drewry to Joe Harrington. Mr. Drewry has decided to run for town office and wishes to avoid any conflict of interest, so is resigning from the Advisory Finance Committee effective immediately.

### **Approval of minutes –Meeting No. 13, March 6, 2008, FY2008.**

Ms. Lown requested two changes to the draft minutes. Mr. Watts moved approval of the minutes, with the noted changes, of Meeting No. 13, March 6, 2008. The vote to approve the minutes was 6 in favor, with 6 members being present.

### **Budget and Article Review – Buildings and Grounds**

Frank Cornine, Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds, and Maryanne Bilodeau, Asst. Town Coordinator, presented the Buildings and Grounds budget request of \$383,624, an increase of 4.59% over last year's budget. The salary increase of 5.7% includes two step increases, one longevity increase, and negotiated cost of living increases. Expense increase of 3.67% is due to the increase in electricity and fuel costs, and the age and number of buildings covered. Necessary roof repairs at the Harvey Building are included in this budget. The town will continue to make necessary repairs on this building, but is not planning any extensive renovations. There are some repairs to town buildings that will be deferred, but emergency repairs should be expected to occur and need to be budgeted for.

**Budget and Article Review – ARTICLE 11. Various Town Buildings and Grounds Repairs (Asst. Town Coordinator)** Request for \$110,000 to rebuild front steps of the Town Hall (\$11,000); replace existing cast iron steam boiler in the Forbes Community Building (\$25,000); replace Spurr House roof (\$20,000); and replace portion of municipal fire alarm system (\$54,000).

The work on Town Hall is expected to take two weeks and will be coordinated with DPW sidewalk repairs. Access to Town Hall during the work will be available via the ramp on the side of the building. The steps are cracked and collect water, becoming hazardous during cold weather. The existing cast iron steam boiler in the Forbes Community Building is the original boiler installed in 1925. It contains asbestos, parts are difficult to find and repairs are costly, and it is only 50% efficient. Fuel costs at the building are \$700 per winter month. The Spurr House roof is 25 years old and leaks. Work on the Fire Alarm System is the second half of the project begun last year to install wireless alarm system tied directly to the Fire Station. Buildings included in this phase of the replacement plan are the High School, Armstrong School, Harvey Building, Town Hall, Spurr House, Nathan Fisher House, Library, and Wastewater Treatment Plant.

**Budget and Article Review – ARTICLE 12. Replace roof on the Senior Center (Asst. Town Coordinator)** Request for \$400,000 to replace the 25-year-old flat roof on the Senior Center with a pitched roof and to move the HVAC unit to a ground level cement slab near the existing deck. The Senior Center is an evacuation site, and the weight of snow on the roof in the winter is a safety concern. Currently workers must go up on the roof to shovel snow in the winter, to remove leaves in the fall and spring, and to service the

HVAC unit, which is also a safety concern. Shoveling snow and removing debris also tends to damage the roof surface causing leaks. The new pitched roof is guaranteed for 30 years. The project is expected to take 4 to 6 weeks, and the Senior Center will only have to be closed while the HVAC unit is being moved. The project uses all recycled materials.

#### **Budget and Article Review – Insurance**

Maryanne Bilodeau, Asst. Town Coordinator, presented the Insurance budget request of \$10,529,592, an increase of 9.91% over last year's budget, but below the expected 12% increase initially requested and the lowest increase in 8 years. Other insurance, which includes some disability cases and coverage for those injured on the job, is increasing 13%. The town is self-insured for Unemployment and this is level-funded. Medicare insurance has increased 11% per year and has historically been under-budgeted. This year's increase of 21.96% will correct this budget issue, and will include the \$50,000 in yearly Part B penalties. There are 860 people on the town's insurance plans. The average increase is 10%, while the Senior Plans are increasing only 1%. 71 retirees have switched to the Senior Plans and this has saved the town at least \$150,000.

Overall, 24% of the budget is for Town Departments and 76% is for School Department. Health Insurance (84% of the total insurance budget) for FY2009 is budgeted to cover 885 employees, of which 213 (24%) are Town Employees and Retirees and 672 (76%) are School Employees and Retirees. 77% of the cost of the health insurance is for Schools and 23% is for Town Departments. 76% of the FY2007 Medicare costs are for School Department employees and 24% for Town employees. 90% of the FY2009 Unemployment costs are expected to be for School Department employees and 10% for Town employees. For all other insurances (Property, Liability, and Worker's Comp IOD insurances) costs are split 48% for Town Departments and 52% for School Department. Budgeted figures are based on existing union contracts.

#### **Budget and Article Review – Street Lights**

Maryanne Bilodeau, Asst. Town Coordinator, presented the Street Light budget request of \$55,000, an increase of \$2,000 (3.77%) over last year's budget. This increase is mostly due to the increased cost of electricity. Additional lights installed last year near crosswalks add to the costs slightly, but have been effective in increasing visibility.

#### **Budget and Article Review – Communications**

Maryanne Bilodeau, Asst. Town Coordinator, presented the Communications budget request of \$41,500, level-funded. This budget only covers town equipment and bills, including land lines and cell phones. This does not cover the DPW cell phones.

#### **Budget and Article Review – Weights and Measures**

Maryanne Bilodeau, Asst. Town Coordinator, presented the Weights and Measures budget request of \$2,250, level-funded. This budget has not increased in the last 14 years.

#### **Budget and Article Review – Animal Control**

Maryanne Bilodeau, Asst. Town Coordinator, presented the Animal Control budget request of \$72,339, an increase of 2% over last year's budget. This request may change if personnel changes. This position is mandated by Massachusetts General Law.

#### **Budget and Article Review – DPW**

John Walden, DPW Manager, Joan Provost, Administration, Edward Wagner, Assistant Manager, and Dennis Cote, Operations Manager, presented the DPW budget request of \$2,171,608, an increase of 7.89% over last year's budget. The salary/wages increase of 6.62% does not include any new employees but does include step increases, negotiated cost of living increases, and an increase in the salary for seasonal workers in an effort to get more experienced workers. Seasonal employees work 10 weeks over the summer and 2 weeks over winter vacation.

Expenses increase of 10.56% is mainly due to the increase in fuel costs for all town vehicles. Fuel is purchased at state bid rates. Some supplies have also increased in price, especially the petroleum-based products used for road repairs. There is a \$5,000 increase to the budget line 5252C – Maintenance Materials-Drainage to deal with a beaver problem in the area. The DPW manages their budget closely, and if there are unexpected costs for repairs in a given year, other items will not be purchased to make up for the repair cost. Items not purchased will be included in the next year's budget request. Inventory is tracked, but the DPW does not have the staff to check equipment out and in each day. Some items are lost each year in the normal course of business, but this has not been excessive. \$5,000 is included in the budget to cover the cost of Police construction details. Ms. Casemyr requested information on the cost of civilian flaggers at construction sites.

#### **Budget and Article Review – DPW Snow & Ice Removal**

John Walden, DPW Manager, and Edward Wagner, Assistant Manager, presented the DPW Snow & Ice budget request of \$449,211, a 9.9% increase over last year's budget. The Snow & Ice Removal budget is done on a 5-year rolling average. This winter there were 38 full operations, 14 in February alone, which will increase the average used for next year's budget. Most of the increase is due to the higher costs for fuel and supplies, including \$12,500 for salt, \$6,482 for contractual services, and \$12,411 for gas/oil/lube. Repair and maintenance costs for snow vehicles and the sidewalk plow have gone down over the last 2 years with the purchase of new equipment.

For a full operation the DPW uses 15 contractors in addition to the town employees. An operation will begin salting and sanding with town crews. Contractors are called to begin work in 45 minutes. Each contractor paired with a town crew, and is given the same area to plow each time. Four lead men circle the areas plowing and monitoring the work done. Two supervisors also monitor plowing operations town-wide. Contractors are sent home first, and town crews finish up the operation. The contractors used this year have been very dependable and there have been no issues with no-shows or breakdowns. The rates for contractors are set in accordance with a survey of 10 surrounding towns. Westborough does not pay the highest rate, but pays a competitive rate. This year the rate was raised due to the increased cost of fuel. Contractors buy their own fuel. All contractors must have insurance and must pass equipment inspections. Any contractor caught doing private business on town time will be dismissed.

#### **Budget and Article Review – Sewer Operations**

John Walden, DPW Manager, and Dennis Cote, Operations Manager, presented the Sewer Operations budget request of \$903,557, an increase of 0.64% over last year's budget. Salaries and wages have increased by 3.34% while expenses have decreased 4.64% mostly due to decreased repairs needed at sewer stations. Electrical rates have been level funded until the rates are set.

#### **Budget and Article Review – Water Operations**

John Walden, DPW Manager, and Dennis Cote, Operations Manager, presented the Water Operations budget Request of \$2,134,070, an increase of 8.38% over last year's budget. There is a 10% increase in the Contract Operations line 5236J to adjust for Veolia electrical bill (see Article 5 in the draft Warrant dated 2/27/08) in addition to the negotiated 3% CPI increase. Contractual Services, Line 5236, includes The Dig Safe contract cost of \$1,000 per year, which results in additional permits for work projects being requested. Backflow Testing contract has increased to \$13,100. New trench regulations will require additional inspections, but the DPW already follows all regulations for securing trenches. Gate valve exercising has been added to the normal DPW workload. This change has worked well. Gasoline for next year is budgeted at \$3.00/gallon which is the current price. The DPW buys 8,000 gallons every 4 to 5 weeks.

#### **Budget and Article Review – ARTICLE 5. Prior Year's Bills (Town Coordinator)**

Requesting funds of \$93,237 to pay the electrical bill from Veolia Water.

**Budget and Article Review – ARTICLE 9. Regularly Recurring Articles (Town Coordinator)**

**I. (DPW)** Requesting \$23,798, for the fifth of five yearly lease/purchase payments for a bucket truck (final payment) for the DPW.

**J. (DPW)** Requesting \$53,751 for the third of five yearly lease/purchase payments for a sewer/water vacuum truck for the DPW.

**Budget and Article Review – ARTICLE 10. Reconstruction and Improvement of Town Roads (DPW Manager)** This is the yearly authorization for funding for road reconstruction and repair.

**Budget and Article Review – ARTICLE 15. Work on Town Water System (DPW Manager)**

These items have been unfunded in prior years, but need to be done.

**A.** \$625,000, to paint inside and outside the Route 9 Water Tank. This will be done in early spring or late summer (September to November) when water use is lowest. The last time the tank was painted the town water supply was not affected.

**B.** \$110,000 for the first phase of a five year program for the purchasing of radio frequency transmitters to convert from a touch pad system to a remote radio read for the water billing system. This would allow for drive-by meter reading on all homes. It currently costs \$32,000/year to read meters manually. The new units would have a 20-year battery, but when the battery dies the unit must be replaced.

**C.** \$750,000 to perform engineering and construction services, extend, rehabilitate, upgrade and or replace the municipal water system in East Main Street and adjoining ways from State Street easterly to Route 9. The water main is pitted and has broken several times over the last year, causing the nursing home to be without water until repair is finished.

**D.** \$70,000, to supplement the \$80,000 left over from exploratory work done, for analysis and potential well development on Smith Street. Exploratory work indicates a good possibility of a deep bedrock well at 800 feet below ground rather than the usual 40 feet wells currently in use.

**E.** \$200,000 for replacement of well pump equipment at Andrews I well. The current equipment is 30 years old and needs to be replaced.

**F.** \$47,500 for electrical control maintenance on the water system at Andrews II well and the Water Purification Facility, and replacement of the Variable Frequency Drive at Sandra Pond reservoir. The current Variable Frequency Drive has been problematic.

**G.** \$30,000 for pump replacement and/or pump installation at Wilkinson Well and Sandra Pond Reservoir. There has been a problem with the head design on the well, and installing a Variable Pony Motor will equalize the flow.

**Liaison Updates**

- Mr. Johnson went over some scheduling issues. The Committee determined it was not necessary for the Town Clerk to make a presentation as the budget has not changed appreciably from last year. Ms. Casemyr agreed to become liaison to the Council on Aging and to meet with them prior to their presentation.
- Mr. Arnold met with Joe Lawrence of the MIS/GIS Department.
- Ms. Lown requested that committee members forward to her their questions on the Wastewater Treatment Plant project.
- Mr. Johnson referred committee members to the response from Assabet Valley Regional Technical School District.
- Mr. Watts will attend the School Committee meeting on Tuesday.

**Adjournment**

At 10:05 p.m. Mr. Watts moved to adjourn the meeting. The vote to adjourn was unanimous (6 members present and in favor).