

Members Present: Jo Lown, Chair, Bill Linnane, Judy Lucas, Cliff Watts, Ian Johnson, John E. Arnold, Brigitte Casemyr, Michael Meachen. Absent: Christine Hirsch.

At 7:00 p.m. Ms. Lown called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

FY10 Budgets and Articles

Building Department

Joseph Inman, Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer, presented the budget request for FY10. The Building Department enforces state codes for building, plumbing and gas, and electrical work, enforces zoning bylaws, and performs inspections, to protect public safety. The budget includes mostly salary and wages, and to level fund this would require a decrease in hours. The Town Manager requested no decrease in hours. This department takes in fees (\$514,900 in 2008.)

The largest project slated to begin soon is the Westborough Village transit-oriented housing. Each new store in Bay State Commons requires a new building permit to reconfigure the interior space. Proposed construction has all been approved and is waiting for the economy to improve, so estimated revenues for 2009 are lowered to \$300,000. Permits for the Public Safety Building and the Wastewater Treatment Plant are required, but the fees for these are waived by the Board of Selectmen. Future construction will be dependent on the economy.

Department expenses include training required by the state for re-certification of inspectors. Budget line for Professional Services covers the contract for the wiring inspector. This arrangement may not continue and would need to be replaced by a full time wiring inspector. Natural gas lines are inspected, and recent problems in other towns have not resulted in new requirements from the state.

Conservation Commission

Joseph Inman, Conservation Officer, and Edward Brady, Chair, Conservation Commission, presented the budget request for the Conservation Commission. The commission administers the State Wetlands Protection Act, including review of any work done within 100 feet of a wetland, cleaning catch basins on private property, and review of drainage plans. The largest project last year was review of the EMC project on Flanders Road. The budget includes salary for one clerical staff position. Expenses include funds to buy fish to stock the reservoir. \$3,000 will buy approximately 1,200 fish. The Civic Club and WASA also contribute to this special event. The Assistant Conservation Officer is paid from the Planning Board budget.

Notice of Intent filings have dropped off in recent years. Each notice may require more than one meeting to gain approval.

Police Department

Alan Gordon, Police Chief, presented the Police Department budget request. The impact of a level funded budget would be the loss of one dispatcher, however new telecommunications funding from the surcharge for 911 services on cell phone contracts will pay this salary. The town handles 11,000 calls to 911 each year. The town has also received \$12,700 from a stimulus funding grant, but Chief Gordon did not yet know what restrictions may be attached to these funds.

Salaries and wages include contractual increases only. The budget also includes an increase in the overtime budget. Each extra 8 hour shift is compensated at time-and-a-half, either in pay or in compensation time. Minimum staffing levels result in overtime being needed to cover sick leave and injured-on-duty leave. The department paid \$120,000 in overtime this year, which is lower than other local departments. Minimum staffing requirements are 3 officers on the day shift, 4 officers on the evening shift, and 3 officers on the overnight shift. Overtime and compensation time policies do sometimes create staffing difficulties. Officers are limited to 36 hours per week for court time, overtime, and details, in addition to regular working hours. Chief Gordon added \$12,575 to last year's \$40,000 budget for events such as elections, town meeting, 4th of July celebration, Holiday Tree Lighting celebration, Memorial Day Parade, Little League Parade, and Westborough Road Race.

The state Community Policing funds may be cut next year, which will force cuts to several programs currently offered in town. The School Liaison Officer, RAD Programs, Motorcycle Safety Program, and Child Safety Seat program all receive funds from the state.

Stimulus funding will be distributed through the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Public Safety. There is also funding available through the COPS program to pay salaries for three years for officers who are in danger of being laid off. Other cities and towns have announced many more lay-offs (Worcester will not hire 42 officers who just graduated from the academy, and Boston has also announced lay-offs) so will probably get more of this funding.

ARTICLE 7. Regularly Recurring Articles (Town Manager)

E. (Police Department)

This article requests \$35,400 to purchase one police cruiser. The vehicle this would replace has 65,480 miles, but never really ran well and now has a bent hood from a minor accident. All cruisers are purchased from MHQ in Marlborough which sells and maintains Crown Victoria. In 2008 the department bought three vehicles, and has released \$308 in unused funds.

Mr. Johnson asked about the department referrals to Westborough Youth and Family Services (WYFS) Youth Diversion Program. Chief Gordon described the program, which is for kids who are arrested for non-violent offenses and are referred to WYFS for family and individual intervention of 4 sessions. These recommendations can come from pre-trial diversion or be court-ordered. This program is used as a model for all towns that use the Westborough District Court. Chief Gordon would hope that this program would continue, as he refers 15-20 cases each year and there is a low recidivism rate for youth who complete the program. The cost impact to the Police Department if this program is not offered would include increased court time for officers of a minimum of 4 hours for arraignment and 4 to 12 hours for trial. WYFS also runs an anger management program for Police Department referrals.

The contractual services expense line has decreased to \$4,200 as one contract is now being provided by the MIS/GIS Department. The radio system upgraded a couple of years ago works great – coverage is good throughout the town as long as there is power.

Approval of minutes – Meeting No. 14, March 2, 2009.

Mr. Watts moved to approve the minutes of meeting No. 14, March 2, 2009. The vote to approve the minutes was 8 in favor, with 8 being present.

Liaison Updates

Mr. Meachen reported that the Personnel Board (Kathy Wilfert) will want to make a presentation.

Ms. Casemyr has scheduled meetings with the Board of Health and the Planning Board. Mark Stockman, MIS/GIS Director, reported that the town's insurance does cover large computer claims but has a high deductible so would not cover loss of an individual computer.

Mr. Arnold noted although it does not appear in the index, the Country Club budget is on page 180 in the budget book.

Mr. Johnson asked for any specific questions for the DPW, so he can forward them prior to the presentation scheduled for 3/19.

Ms. Lown has scheduled meetings with Greg Franks, Town Council, and Maryanne Bilodeau, Assistant Town Coordinator. She has posted a meeting schedule and sent copies to Joe Harrington and Nidia Ruberti to confirm the dates. Ms. Lown would like to have all presentations completed prior to voting on any budgets. Ms. Lown asked committee members to think of any possible alternatives to current spending cuts during the presentations.

Mr. Watts distributed information on the Assabet School District Article. This Article is the result of a 1987 court decision, and maintains representation for each town in the District.

Ms. Lucas asked if the committee would like Town Assessor Linda Swadel to make a presentation as the only changes in her budget are for salary and wages. Her new growth estimate is \$700,000 based on current information. The committee consensus is that any presentation could be done much later in the process if necessary. Ms. Lucas also reported that the School Committee will begin budget hearings on Wednesday.

Mr. Watts noted that the projected decrease in state Quinn Bill funding does not decrease the town's obligations under the bill.

Committee Reports

Ms. Lucas reported that second interviews for Town Manager candidates are scheduled for 4/2.

Mr. Arnold reported the Government Study II Committee is working on a draft recommendation on Human Resources functions in town. They have just started to look at the date of town elections (before or after Annual Town Meeting) and developing a codified plan to revisit the town plan on a regular basis.

Ms. Lown prepared an updated revenue and expenditures sheet which includes articles, but does not yet include transfers or overlay surplus funds; it shows a deficit.

Town Meeting Booklet and Information

The Committee reviewed an informational press release drafted by Mr. Johnson. Mr. Watts moved to accept the draft and post it on the AFC web site. The vote to accept the motion is 8 in favor, with 8 being present.

Ms. Lown is working on an explanation of enterprise funds.

Mr. Meachen has compiled historical data. Some areas are spotty but information by department is complete. Mr. Lown requests incorporating census data to add demographic data. Mr. Meachen asked for a sketch of graphs members would like to see, and possible groupings of budget items.

Mr. Johnson suggested the possibility of an AFC PowerPoint presentation at the start of Annual Town Meeting. Ms. Casemyr suggested a one-page color handout in addition to the booklet.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Ms. Lown noted that the Board of Selectmen will vote on deficit spending for the Snow and Ice Budget tomorrow. The AFC will wait to vote on this request until the Board of Selectmen has voted.

Ms. Lown asked for ideas / alternative suggestions for raising funds or cutting costs. She has noticed that WYFS did not include the 2.93% salary increase for their staff, and wondered if this increase is to be assumed?

Mr. Johnson questioned a 2005 Article for LERC Emergency Responder training for \$25,000. He will check with Chief Perron, and Ms. Lown will check with Ms. Talbot.

The committee discussed whether all financial strategies should be presented and evaluated even if they are controversial. Ms. Casemyr felt strongly that certain topics should not be discussed in this context.

Adjournment

At 9:30 p.m. Ms. Lucas moved to adjourn the meeting. The vote to adjourn was unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.