

Members Present: Jo Lown, Chair, Bill Linnane, Cliff Watts, Ian Johnson, John E. Arnold, Brigitte Casemyr (arrived 7:05 p.m.), Michael Meachen (arrived 7:30 p.m.). Absent: Judy Lucas, 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

DPW

John Walden, DPW Manager, Joan Provost, Business Manager, and Richard Voutas, Assistant Manager, presented the department budget request for FY10. The Department budget is divided into four sections, General Operations, Snow & Ice Removal, Sewer Operations, and Water Operations.

General Operations

This budget has decreased. Lines that historically have shown a surplus were cut, one position open since December 2008 will not be filled (and six months of salary for FY09 will be returned to the town) and is currently unfunded, and one position that was vacant and unfunded in FY09 will remain unfunded.

Management and clerical salaries and wages are spread over the General, Sewer Operations, and Water Operations budgets. Currently there are 21 positions in the General budget, 5 in the Water Operations budget, and 4 in the Sewer Operations budget. The Operations Manager salary for Water and Sewer is spread over both budgets. There are also seasonal positions paid by the DPW.

Overtime – Cemetery occurs due to weekend burials and preparations for Memorial Day. Higher rates are charged for weekend burial, and funds collected are returned to the town General Fund. Overtime – Tree Dept. occurs when needed for cleanup after storms. Overtime generally occurs only in emergency situations. Staggered shifts to avoid overtime have generally not worked when tried in the past. Union contracts also limit changes to and flexibility of working hours.

This year's budget presentation compresses like items into one line, with detail still included in subcategories. The committee commended DPW managers for their improved budget presentation.

Electricity and fuel cost estimates are based on prior year usage and current rates.

Contract services include ballfield maintenance (now under 5 year contract) and detention basin cleaning. Funds are included for maintenance on Bay State Common Park. Catch Basin repair for newly built or rebuilt streets is included in Chapter 90 highway funding. Budget line 5250 covers cost of catch basin repairs needed on older streets.

In preparing this budget, Mr. Walden tried to maintain expense lines to include the ability to help other departments with unplanned needs due to unforeseen circumstances.

The DPW does all ballfield maintenance. Any maintenance done at the Country Club is reimbursed for materials used, and happens only rarely. For contracted services the contractor provides their own materials (for example, line painters provide their own paint.)

DPW Police Details have been reduced \$1,000. The cost for non-police flaggers is almost the same as for uniformed police officers. Westborough Police Officers are used on main roads.

The Office Supply – Software Upgrade is for the Chronos Time/Pay software which is not provided by the town's MIS/GIS Department.

In this budget, the salary line is decreased by 2.2% and expenses are decreased by 3.0%, resulting in a decrease to the total budget of 2.5% from FY09. \$377 from a prior year Article has been released for transfer.

Sidewalks are installed on both sides of arterial and main streets, and on only one side on side streets. Only main sidewalks around town buildings and the MBTA rail station, and school walking routes and bus stops are plowed by the DPW. New road surfaces are good for 15 years, with crack sealing done after 10 years. Sidewalks require less maintenance than streets. The Town has a maintenance plan but no plan to extend sidewalks. Sidewalk plowing and maintenance is a balance between cost and safety. Current plowing takes two to four hours per storm.

Developers do sometimes pay for and/or complete upgrades to infrastructure to limit the impact of the development on the town. The Board of Selectmen and DPW follow set guidelines for waiver of fees.

This budget will be adequate for the town and will not harm the quality of life, but may be inconvenient for townspeople. The DPW can manage at this level of service for a short time but deferred maintenance will need to be done eventually. The ticket system used for tracking reported problems is effective and works well.

A Performance Based Budgeting system will require more quantity tracking which the DPW does include in the Town Report (miles of road, number of calls, etc.) Mr. Walden would like to have specific GIS and timestamp data for all repairs and maintenance, which would enable him to easily determine when a specific road surface or section of pipe was last serviced. This will require data entry into the GIS database. The DPW has been using six senior volunteers to work on this project.

The DPW allows eight lead men to take department vehicles home so that they can report directly to a work site if called. Mr. Walden will forward a list to the AFC. Contracts call for a 4-hour minimum per overtime call. If highway workers are called in, they can be told to work filling potholes as well until the four hours is completed, but an electrician called in to repair a meter is not expected to fill potholes.

Radios are included in each vehicle and are used by front-line workers who don't have town-provided cell phones. Any duplication of radios and cell phones is only for managers, and each communication tool has specific uses.

Supervision of contractors has improved. Inspections are done in a timelier manner to avoid wasted effort and materials, and the result is better both for the town and the contractor.

Snow and Ice Removal

This budget is level-funded, and uses a five-year rolling average of costs. The DPW is responsible for snow removal on all town roads and parking lots, including schools. The School Department custodians clear and sand sidewalks at the schools. Capital outlays are for repairs to snow removal equipment.

Sewer Operations

Sewer Operations and Water Operations are paid out of enterprise funds and are not level-funded.

Sewer Operations increases include 3.6% contractual salary and wages increase and 8.4% increase in expenses, mostly for electricity (from \$117,345 to \$151,537). Most of this cost is for the sewer pump stations.

Engineering services are used for alarm systems, pump system upgrades, and odor control systems. Overtime occurs due to sewer pump failures, sewer line backups and other incidents, and maintenance of lines on main roads. Some overtime is contractual, for beeper coverage and weekend coverage.

Water Operations

Water Operations increases include 3.4% contractual salary and wages increase and 5.4% increase in expenses. The largest increase is for Veolia contract. The DPW will be taking over the contract to pay electricity to take care of the late payment budgeting problem. This will require a contract amendment, and will result in a decrease in the contract services budget line and a corresponding increase in the electricity budget line.

Approval of minutes – Meeting No. 16, March 9, 2009.

Mr. Arnold requested one change in the minutes. Mr. Watts moved to approve the minutes of meeting No. 16, March 9, 2009, as amended. The vote to approve the minutes was 7 in favor, with 7 being present.

Liaison Updates

Mr. Watts reported an expected \$557,220 in stimulus funding for Westborough Public Schools. This amount is part of a \$160 million slice from the \$980 million federal education stimulus grant to Massachusetts. The entire grant is to be utilized by June 2011. There is no assurance that Westborough will receive any further funding from this source. The addition of these funds lowers the expected cuts to \$700,000. Last night's presentations by the three Elementary Schools and Mill Pond Intermediate School highlighted the impact of cuts to support personnel. At this point, school funding is still a moving target. The Stimulus funding can only be used for schools, not for town general funding. These funds are allocated using a state funding formula, and will bring Westborough back to the minimum. Mr. Watts also noted that N*Star has filed to decrease electrical and gas rates. While the decrease in electric rates will not change the negotiated contract, he has inquired about the impact of the decrease in gas rates.

Ms. Lown met with Maryanne Bilodeau who has reported some possible issues with the insurance budget. Ms. Lown also reported that Greg Franks, Joe Harrington, and Henry Danis are reviewing and discussing the Nathan Fisher House Warrant Articles. The committee discussed a question on funding for Town Manager transition, and consensus was to ask for a written response from the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Johnson will meet with John Walden about the DPW articles on the Warrant. Mr. Johnson also noted that Chief Perron has changed the Fire Department budget to include \$6,088 previously cut from the EMS Recall budget line 5105H, and distributed a revised impact statement.

Ms. Casemyr reported that Mark Stockman, MIS/GIS Director, is working on a plan for updating and maintaining the town web site. MIS/GIS Department does use the state facilities list for equipment. Ms. Casemyr will meet with the WWTP next week. She has also gotten quotes for printing the Town Meeting Booklet.

Committee Reports

Mr. Arnold reported on the recent Government Study II Committee meetings. They are working on a draft recommendation, and hope to present this to the Board of Selectmen on 4/14. At this time, there is no immediate financial impact to any of the draft recommendations. There may not be any related articles on the May ATM warrant as nothing being discussed needs immediate Town Meeting action.

Ms. Lown distributed an updated list of committees with presentation dates, and tentatively scheduled dates for discussion and voting, noting that it is a work in process. On 4/2 there is a Town Manager interview being held, and so Ms. Lown would like to delay the start of the AFC meeting until 8 p.m. There are no presentations scheduled for that meeting. Ms. Lown has scheduled a work session on 4/2, to be followed by

discussions on each of the budgets and articles beginning on 4/6. Voting will be done the following meetings. All votes should be completed by 4/27, and the booklet should be finalized by 5/4.

Town Meeting Booklet and Information

Ms. Lown distributed a draft explanation of Enterprise Funds and asked for comments. Ms. Lown also printed the current glossary of terms and asked for any additional definitions were needed.

Mr. Meachen has done additional analysis of departmental budgets. Total budgets over the last three years (2007-2010) are very stable. The School Budget was rising as a percentage of the total town budget from 2003 to 2004, but then dropped in 2005 and has remained stable. The Insurance budget has risen steadily. Over the years, each department budget has been decreasing slightly as the insurance budget has grown. The Debt budget has been decreasing.

Mr. Arnold noted that the Annual Town Meeting does have oversight for expenses but does not negotiate contracts. Currently, the average annual increase in the town's salary and wage contracts is approximately 3%. Given the Proposition 2½ limit of a 2½% increase plus new growth, this trend shows that eventually these contractual increases would exceed the town's levy limit at some point unless a combination of new growth, expense reductions, or staffing changes can keep the overall levy below the levy limit. Mr. Johnson pointed out that the cumulative effect of longevity and step increases raises the salary total more than the negotiated increase. Mr. Arnold stated that if the people who negotiate the salary and wage contracts believe that salary and wage increases exceeding 2½% are necessary, they should realize that expense reductions, changes in staffing level, additional new growth would be necessary in order to avoid the eventual need for a Proposition 2½ override. Mr. Meachen noted that this is good for long-term planning. Looking only at each budget is like living paycheck to paycheck. This works, but the town must also look to future redevelopment to maintain and/or expand revenue. The committee discussed the new growth estimate.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Mr. Linnane pointed out that the Library did get a professionally done estimate on work for the building repair. While State laws put the Library under the jurisdiction of the Trustees rather than the Town Manager, he wondered if the Municipal Building Committee could be used as a resource to make recommendations for all town buildings.

Mr. Linnane commented on Rod Jane's recent presentation on the Business Committee. They have made great progress, and so far have used no funding.

Mr. Arnold noted that Joe Inman mentioned waiving fees for town buildings. Though the WWTP can be considered a town building, there are other towns that contribute to its funding. He suggested that the town may want to consider not waiving the building permit and other fees for the WWTP so the inspection and other costs that are supported by those fees can be fairly apportioned to all ratepayers and not just Westborough taxpayers.

Adjournment

At 9:25 p.m. Mr. Watts moved to adjourn the meeting. The vote to adjourn was unanimous, 7 in favor with 7 being present.