

Members Present: Ian Johnson, Chair (arrived 7:26 p.m.), Judy Lucas, Cliff Watts, Ronn Moody (arrived 7:15 p.m.), Jo Lown, Carolyn Spring, John Arnold, Brigitte Casemyr. Absent: None.

At 7:05 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.

Approval of minutes –Meetings No. 16, March 17, 2008, and No. 17, March 20, 2008, FY2008.

Mr. Watts moved approval of the minutes of Meetings No. 16, March 17, 2008, and No. 17, March 20, 2008.

The vote to approve the minutes was 5 in favor, with 5 members being present.

Budget and Article Review – Historical Commission

Paula Skog and Donald Shapleigh, Co-chairs, presented the Historical Commission budget request of \$32,768, an increase of \$675 (2.1%) over last year's budget. The salary increase of 3.07% includes only cost of living increase for one part-time staff person who is at maximum step. The expense budget is level-funded. The Historical Commission has not sponsored any articles in this Town Warrant.

Expenses of \$10,125 include:

- \$1,000 for Operation and Maintenance Historical Property to maintain the Nathan Fisher House. The Commonwealth has not yet released the property and so funds may be needed for moving and storage of items currently in the property. Storage space has been offered by the DPW until a disposition of the property is determined.
- \$100 Dues and Memberships in Preservation organizations.
- \$2,400 for Professional Services for consultants on archeology, architecture, and historic districts.
- \$125 for a speaker during Archeology Month (October.)
- \$2,500 for supplies including Plaques for Historic Districts (the next area will be the Parkman Parsonage District) and office supplies.
- \$4,000 for Other Professional Services used for gravestone preservation.

The Commission employs one 19-hour/week staff person to answer telephones, greet guests, handle permit requests, take minutes and post agendas for meetings. The office is open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9 a.m. to noon on Friday. The public is welcome to come in to view the collection housed in the building.

Liaison Updates

- Ms. Lown noted an email from the Wastewater Treatment Plant Board distributed to AFC members containing three attachments, including a chronology of events leading to the current Warrant Article. A tour of the plant for AFC members is scheduled for Wednesday at 8 a.m.

Budget and Article Review – Treasurer / Collector

Joanne Savignac presented the Treasurer / Collector budget request of \$254,737, an increase of 5.76% over last year's budget. The salary increase of 4.88% includes union negotiated increases for two full-time and one part-time staff persons. Increased expenses include:

- \$200 increase in Travel due to increased mileage reimbursement rate. Ms. Savignac has been elected to the position of President of the Massachusetts Collectors and Treasurers Association.

- \$200 increase in Office Supplies due to the increased cost of toner used to print bills.
- \$3,000 increase in Tax Title Services. This year 32 properties were advertised and liens were placed on 30 of these. This service uses an independent counsel to follow up on these cases. Mr. Franks will begin to do some of this work in the coming year.
- \$1,000 increase for Bank Charges to pay for payroll processing for the whole town and to cover bad check charges. Fees collected from customers for bad check charges go into the town's General Fund, not back into this line item.

The Treasurer / Collectors office does input for all payrolls but the School Department (1.5 days/cycle), and processes all retirement contributions, tax payments, etc. for the town and school departments (2 days/week.) The weekly payroll includes 445 town employees and 1,270 school employees. Each check issues costs \$0.85, and each direct deposit costs \$0.15. For the town departments, 200 employees get checks and 245 use direct deposits. For the School Department, 675 employees get checks and 595 use direct deposits. New School Department employees are required to use direct deposit.

The Treasurer / Collector office issues water bills quarterly, and is not planning to increase frequency as it would not be cost effective. The DPW request for radio read equipment may be more efficient for the meter readers.

Paying bills electronically has worked well and is used by many townspeople. Payments from a bank account are not charged a processing fee. Credit card payments do cost more, as credit card companies charge the town a fee for each transaction processed.

Budget and Article Review – General Fund Debt Principal and Debt Interest

Joanne Savignac presented the Town's Debt Principal and Debt Interest budget of \$8,517,657, a decrease of \$263,170 from last year's budget. She also gave information about the Town's outstanding debt principal and interest for the next ten years. The Town currently owes \$90,000,000 in long-term debt. Short-term debt varies between \$1,500,000 and \$30,000,000, and is currently under \$2,000,000. \$3,600,000 will be due in interest on the long-term debt in FY2009. These figures include only the debt that has been authorized and issued, not borrowing that has been authorized but not yet issued.

The Town's underwriters can no longer get a rating on the outstanding debt. Ms. Savignac just issued a disclosure on this which may affect interest rates on future borrowing. The risk premium will also increase the cost of borrowing. Current short-term borrowing is estimated to be at 4.25%, but rates and costs are constantly changing.

The FY09 budget includes borrowing for only a portion of each of this year's Warrant Articles. Most borrowing will need to wait until after 7/1/2008. All internal borrowing (between town departments) must be repaid by June 30.

Only the school debt is subject to a debt exclusion (Line 5760D.) Refunding (similar to refinancing) is only allowed to be done once on each borrowing. Town debt is an expense that is included in property tax rates. Water and Sewer debt expense is included in the water/sewer rates.

Ms. Savignac has been trying to get debt schedules from the Water Pollution Abatement Trust (WPAT) for Wastewater Treatment Plant borrowing of \$37,000,000 at 2% interest. The project had been scheduled to borrow \$15,000,000 in FY2009 and make a payment in FY2010. The WPAT had offered a 2% fixed rate for 20 years and under, and a market rate at the rate offered 2 borrowings previous to current – 2% (if 2 borrowings ago got 4.6%, current borrowing would cost 2.6% interest.)

Article Review – DPW Manager

John Walden, DPW Manager, presented the following Warrant Articles:

ARTICLE 16. Work on Town Sewer System (DPW Manager)

- A. Requesting \$600,000 to rehabilitate the East Main Street Pump Station and the Beachmont Station. This is part of the ongoing reconditioning of pump stations over 30 years old in the town's sewer system. There are 37 stations, and 7 have been rehabilitated so far. As a result of this work, maintenance costs on the system have decreased. They may be looking to eliminate the East Main Street Station, but won't know before town meeting as the evaluation is just beginning. Mr. Moody questioned whether the wording of the article should be changed to include the possibility of eliminating the station.
- B. \$75,000 for study and design costs associated with the rehabilitation of the Banyan, Cumberland, Flanders, Chauncey and Longmeadow Pump Stations. These five pump stations are 20 year-old modular units installed by the low bidder and feared to provide limited service lives. DPW needs to evaluate welds and pumps. Replacement costs for each station will be \$200,000 to \$250,000.
- C. \$463,000 to perform an Infiltration/Inflow Analysis and Sewer System Evaluation Study (SSES) of the sanitary sewer collection system including sections of the municipal storm drain system in accordance with the DEP guidelines dated January, 1993. This work is needed to eliminate infiltration into the WWTP as processing clean water wastes capacity. This work will identify, quantify, and repair leaks. The current high ground water level creates the ideal condition to look for leaks. Borrowing for this project would be at 2%, and could be phased borrowing.
- D. \$55,000 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/sewer billing system. Half of this borrowing is in **ARTICLE 15, section B**. This could help homeowners identify leaks in their system earlier and avoid high water bills as well as conserve water.

ARTICLE 17. Purchase Equipment (DPW Manager)

Requesting \$78,000 to purchasing a truck chassis and other vehicles. These would replace older vehicles including a 2000 Ford Taurus (DPW Manager's vehicle), a 1990 Ford Explorer, and a 1995 heavy-duty utility chassis. The Taurus would be transferred to Engineering, and the Explorer and the utility chassis would be auctioned off. The Explorer would be replaced with a Ford Escape. DPW vehicles need to have 4-wheel drive as they are used on all roads and in all weather conditions. AFC members requested information on cubic storage space in the vehicle, and gas mileage. Replacement costs for these vehicles are approximately \$20,000 for the Ford Taurus, \$20,000 for the Escape, and \$37,000 for the utility chassis. The current utility chassis gets very low gas mileage. DPW would use the utility body from the current vehicle. The cost of the Taurus would be split three ways, between the DPW, Water, and Sewer budgets. The cost of the Escape would be split two ways, between the Water and Sewer budgets. All vehicles purchased are on State bid. There would be no increase in the size of the fleet.

ARTICLE 20. Cemetery Development (DPW Manager)

Requesting \$20,000 for the purpose of developing for cemetery purposes the Town owned property in the Southwest section of Town off Nourse Street near the intersection of Glen Street as shown on Assessors' Map 6, Parcel 4. There is probably another seven or eight years worth of existing space in the town cemetery. Doing this project now would give the DPW time to prepare the property for use. Phase I of preparation (to begin in FY 2010) would be to build a road at a cost of \$100,000.

ARTICLE 21. Adopt Stormwater Management and Erosion Control Bylaw (DPW Manager)

This change to the Town By-laws is mandated by the State and follows Federal Regulations. Phase II of the Massachusetts Stormwater Management Policy, for smaller communities, requires regulations to be in place by May 17, 2008. These regulations would cover any area 2,000 square feet up to 1 acre, and will require written notification to the DPW of the work to be done and implementation of measures to prevent the offsite discharge of sediment (hydroseeding or application of salt hay/mulch or soil netting.) Larger areas will require

more permitting. Areas on a steeper slope would require more erosion controls. Fines listed in Section 10 were set by the town after review of fines in surrounding towns. The DPW will put out information on how to comply, and who needs to comply. Mr. Walden will first educate landscapers. Mr. Johnson noted that no permits are required for landscape jobs and wondered how the DPW would know where landscapers were working. No money has been requested from the town for this Article. The DPW currently is required to provide a number of hours of education each year, and education focused on this regulation would be included. AFC members requested information on the minimum area required by the State Policy as 2,000 square feet is a small area, and a 15% slope may be hard to judge.

ARTICLE 22. Adopt Bylaw Governing Discharges To The Municipal Storm Drain System (DPW Manager)

This Bylaw is also a federal requirement under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, and prohibits dumping of pollutants into the Municipal Storm Drain System (such as dumping waste motor oil into a catch basin.) Periodic cleaning of the catch basins has revealed chronic problems in certain areas. Enforcement of these regulations would be done by the DPW. Exemptions to the regulations do allow for normal actions of daily living, such as fire fighting activities and DPW ice and snow control operations. Costs associated with this are for permits, cleaning of catch basins, disposing of what results from catch basin cleaning. The DPW salt shed is used to recover clean fill from road collections, reducing the amount of toxic material requiring disposal. This Bylaw will not require upgrading of catch basins. Fines attached are up to \$300, and each day can be considered a separate offense resulting in a fine.

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

Mr. Walden was asked about the new Trench Regulations. In his opinion the regulations will cause a burden for the DPW. Time requirements for inspecting and permitting will be hard to track. There was some question as to how long a trench must be open to be covered by the Bylaw, and Ms. Spring will check with Mr. Franks.

Liaison Updates

- Ms. Spring passed along a request from a citizen to have each town budget listed in the AFC booklet. Mr. Johnson verified that this has been done in the past.
- Mr. Arnold confirmed that the MIS/GIS Department will be presenting the budget on Thursday, when Mr. Arnold will not be in attendance. Mr. Danis will present the requested salaries, and Mr. Lawrence will present the requested expenses.
- Mr. Johnson has received a breakdown of current steps of town employees.

Discussion and vote on transfer request – Veterans Services

Mr. Perry is requesting a transfer of \$10,000 of additional funds to cover costs until the end of the year. Ms. Lown moves to transfer \$10,000 from the AFC Reserve Fund, \$3,000 to budget line 15433-5706, Veterans Services Group Insurance Medicare, and \$7,000 to budget line 15433-5709, Veterans Services Cash Grants. The vote to transfer the funds is 8 in favor with 8 being present.

Adjournment

At 9:23 p.m. Mr. Watts moved to adjourn the meeting. The vote to adjourn was unanimous (8 members present and in favor).