

Board of Selectmen

January 7, 2020

Present:

- Board of Selectmen: Ms. Karen Johnson, Chairman, Mr. Joe Fisher and Ms. Mary Power
- Mr. Tom Mayo, Town Administrator; Michelle Monsegur, Assistant Town Administrator

Call to Order: 7:03PM – Ms. Johnson

Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the minutes dated December 17th, with a few changes. Ms. Power seconded. All were in favor, 3-0.

Public Comment - none

Budget Hearings

South Shore Country Club – Kevin Whelan, Executive Director of the Country Club, and Christine Smith, Chairman of the Country Club Management Committee presented

Ms. Smith said that they were here to present their budget for the upcoming Fiscal Year. Mr. Whelan stated that the SSCC is a full-service municipal golf course and an important part of the Town. He explained that their total budget request for FY 2021 is \$1,766,742, which is a reduction from last year's actual spending of \$1,848,675. He listed many of their offerings and partnerships with other departments in Town, including the following:

- 18-hole golf course
- Driving range
- PGA Tour golf simulators
- Outdoor pool
- Tennis courts
- Bowling alley
- Dining
- Private function spaces
- Professional lessons
- Youth programs

He thanked the Country Club Management Committee and the Friends of the SSCC for all they have done over the past year. He added that they raised over \$15,000 with the Hingham Scramble and plan on using that money for long term infrastructure improvements like the pool and the maintenance facility.

He added that some of their key initiatives in 2019 included the following:

- Pace of play improvements
- Purchasing and updating golf simulators
- Pool and turf care center projects
- New weather alert system
- New grounds keeping equipment
- Social media advertising focus

He added that they have 10 full time staff members and 24 part-time seasonal employees. He added that their major expenses this past year were:

- \$164,000 for utilities
- \$135,000 for golf course treatments
- \$92,000 for debt service
- \$75,000 for Pro Shop merchandise

Mr. Whelan explained that the debt service he mentioned is for equipment that they purchased this year. He also said that they are reducing the amount of merchandise in the Pro Shop to make sure that they are profitable. He also said that they are planning to increase rounds fees by \$5 on the weekends and during tournaments. He said that the new fee for 18 holes with a cart would be \$75 for residents and \$85 for non-residents. He anticipated that this would bring in additional revenue of \$15,000-

\$20,000. He added that, with the revenue from the Hingham Scramble Tournament, they are planning to invest in forward tees in another effort to increase the pace of play. He added that he hoped to increase their total revenue by about \$200,000.

Ms. Smith said that she felt confident in the budget that they presented and added that the SSCC has paid off debt service for the irrigation system this year. She added that they also just resigned a new 5-year lease with Vista Verde.

Ms. Johnson asked Mr. Whelan to explain the SSCC Enterprise Fund. He said that for the SSCC, being an Enterprise Fund means that they are run more like a business than as a service. He added that this means that they are required to have a balanced budget and to make a profit. He said that they are making sure that they are a profitable enterprise so that, in the future, they can afford some of the major capital improvements that they would like to take on.

Mr. Fisher commented that there were a lot of decreases in the budget for things like R&M equipment, golf cart fuel, fertilizer, etc. and he asked if these decreases would alter the type of services that the SSCC provides. Mr. Whelan stated that this data is based on actual numbers and that he feels comfortable with these requests.

Ms. Smith wanted the Board to keep in mind that their fiscal year ends at the end of June, which is right in the middle of golf season. Mr. Whelan stressed that because the SSCC is a seasonal, weather-related business, it is very difficult to predict numbers. He also said that since the Town has purchased the club, the club has continued to improve.

Ms. Power asked what was included in the SSCC's debt service budget. Mr. Whelan said that they purchased a new rough mower and new fairway mowers which has made the grounds keeping more efficient. Ms. Power clarified that this budget doesn't reflect any charges related to the maintenance facility.

She also asked a question about the increase in utility fees at the restaurant, and whether Mr. Whelan and the committee were receiving information needed to manage this budget during the year. Mr. Whelan said that he receives the necessary information and reviews the budget on a monthly basis and reconciles the revenue. Mr. Mayo added that the Town also audits this budget on a quarterly basis.

Ms. Power commented that Mr. Whelan and the Committee have had to make some tough choices on services and she said that she appreciated the long-term thinking and thoughtfulness that was put into the creation of this budget.

Ms. White added that the equipment they purchased is also the equipment that mow all the fields in the Town so it is an asset to all townspeople.

Ms. Johnson commented what a great job they have done getting the numbers together and commended the leadership of the country club management in making everyone feel welcome.

Library – David Mehegan, Chairman of the Board of Trustees and Ms. Linda Harper, Executive Director of the Library presented.

Ms. Harper stated that they were presenting a level budget and that it has not changed from the prior year because they have no new funding requests. She commented that the library is as busy as ever. She said that people come for the collections, to access technology, to get help researching and learning things, and to gather, to read, study and to meet their friends. She gave the Board some Benchmarks and Metrics including:

- 252,216 people of all ages visited the Library
- 327,561 books, ebooks, movies, music, magazines, technology, digital and electronic equipment, art, puzzles and games were loaned to adults, teens and children
- 45,004 items were sent between libraries for holds through the Interlibrary Loan delivery
- 20,351 adults, teens and children attended 813 library programs and events
- 11,138 Hingham residents had active library cards
- 3,456 times individual study rooms were used
- 190,319 times people connected to WiFi for their devices in the Library
- 4,308 research and reference questions were answered
- 116 volunteers worked 5,701 hours working in the bookstore, shelving, mending books, filling hold requests, and providing books through the home delivery service.

She listed some of their key initiatives from 2016-2020 including:

1. Evaluate, redesign, and expansion of physical space to provide flexibility and support for offerings.
2. Development of new offerings for patrons
3. Prudent continuing adaptation of technology
4. Enhancement of core collections and service strengths
5. Enhancement of marketing, outreach, and communications channels with patrons and non-patrons
6. Training and development of our staff
7. Development of new public and private funding sources and improvements to existing sources
8. Greater collaboration with Town departments and community organizations

Ms. Harper stated that their budget request for salaries is \$1,521,020 for 12 full-time personnel and 23 part-time personnel. She also stated that their operating expenses are \$342,878. She stated that their major expenses include repair and maintenance, utilities, books and materials and an OCLN network assessment. The total FY21 budget request is \$1,867,284 which is a 2.3% increase from last year.

She added that there is an electricity demand usage charge which attributes for the increase in the electric budget.

She also added that the Library's Union contract expires on June 30th so any new expenses related to that are not shown in this budget.

Mr. Mehegan added that he feels that the Library is continuing to meet the needs of the public and that he is continually astounded by the public demand for the Library's services. He added that the Trustees are confident in the budget as presented.

Mr. Fisher stated that he feels that this is a conservative budget and that he is continually astounded by the demand for the library and its services. He asked if Ms. Harper could speak about any activities or services they provide to the Town's seniors. She said that the Library also visits Linden Ponds once a month. They help those who find it hard to leave Linden Ponds to visit the Library or are not able to take the bus that is provided to take them to the Library. She also said that they have a home delivery service where a Library volunteer will pick out some items for the person and will drive them to their home. She said that she plans to work with Ms. Jennifer Young at the Senior Center as well.

He also asked about the increase in the budget for books and periodicals. She stated that there is a state minimum to adhere to in order to qualify for state aid and be available for state grants. She said that they have used this money in the past for construction and for materials.

Ms. Power stated that there has been a 62% increase in the books and material charges over the last 4 years, which translates to a 16% annual increase and asked Ms. Harper to explain why this has been so high. Ms. Harper said that the Trustees have been paying for approximately 80% of the books and materials every year but added that their budget has also be working on a deficit for the past several years and have been paying for these books and materials out of their endowment. She said that they are asking the Town to pay for the increase in an attempt to allow the Trustees to fundraise and bring in some revenue. Ms. Power asked if this budget line was affected at all by overdue fees. Ms. Harper said that it was not. Ms. Power stated that she would be following up after the meeting to get additional information to better understand this situation.

Ms. Power asked how many people from neighboring communities use our Library. Ms. Harper stated that they can only see what town a person is from when they check out books or connect to the internet. She added that about 80% of people who checked out books were from Hingham. She added that Hingham is one of the top lenders in OCLN.

Mr. Mehegan added that Library visits could be affected in the future due to the fact that several neighboring towns like Weymouth and Norwell are building new libraries.

Mr. Fisher also asked if was the library affected by publishers' trademark issues regarding ebooks. She said that they are very affected by them and hope that things change in the near future.

Ms. Power thanked Ms. Harper for keeping the Library open extra hours during mid-term and final exam times and added that the students appreciate it.

Ms. Johnson commented on the positive Library culture that Ms. Harper has created.

Ms. Johnson also asked Ms. Harper to comment on their long-range plan. Ms. Harper stated that in order to maintain eligibility for state aid they are required to have a long-range plan.

Ms. Johnson also thanked them for allowing the Selectmen to dedicate the Library as a cooling center during the very hot summer days.

Mr. Fisher asked if Ms. Harper had any security concerns. Ms. Harper said that they feel very safe at the Library but that their biggest concern is sight lines in the children's room. She added that they purchased new cameras last year and they are very vigilant on a regular basis. She also added that they are regularly in touch with police to take walk-throughs, etc.

Recreation Department – Mark Thorell, Director of the Recreation Department and Vicky Donlan, Chair of the Recreation Commission presented

Mr. Thorell spoke about the scope of operations of the Recreation Department, including their mission to assist all Hingham residents in enhancing their physical, social and emotional wellbeing. He said that they manage over 200 self-funded recreational programs which generates \$1.55 million in revenue, including the following:

- An 11-week summer program with 2,900 enrolled
- More than 150 children's programs, including Funky Feet School of Dance, Kickers Soccer, Field Hockey, track and field, etc.
- More than 25 Adult fitness classes every week.
- The annual 4th of July Road Race with 2,100 entrants
- Over 250 memberships to the Town Pool and over 300 children enrolled in swim lessons
- Operate the Rec Center, Rec Barn and Fitness Room which are open 100+ hours, seven days a week.
- Provide and maintain safe and accessible athletic fields, playgrounds, basketball courts, tennis courts, and a street hockey court.

Mr. Thorell went over some of the children's and teen programs as well as an overview of their fields and facilities and the Rec. Barn and playgrounds. He also added that the Recreation Department is 100% self-funded, with the exception of the Director's salary. He also added that Hingham's Recreation Department offers more programs and produces more revenue than 90% of comparable towns., while at the same time receiving less tax dollars than most towns.

He added that their key initiatives are:

- The Athletic Field Study – He said that they are in the process of conducting a comprehensive study of the Town's outdoor fields and courts (tennis and basketball) and that they will soon start to implement some of the recommendations. He added that the study is expected to be finished at the end of February.
- Complete the Hull Street playground
- Improve accessibility at public playgrounds
- Continue growing Hingham Youth Field Hockey, Hingham Youth Tennis and Pickleball
- Strengthen partnerships with the SSCC, School Department, and Elder Services by offering more recreational opportunities

Mr. Thorell added that their budget for 3 staff members and 125 part-time/seasonal personnel is self-funded so their only budget request is \$105,990 for the Director's salary.

Mr. Fisher stated that as a member of the Fitness Center he was is impressed with the Recreation Department.

Ms. Power said that it has been a pleasure to watch Mr. Thorell continue to grow into his role and that his leadership is instrumental to the success of the Recreation Department. She also stated that she is pleased with the leadership that he is bringing to the field study. She added that she feels that, because the field study is an independent data driven analysis of our facilities, it will really help inform decisions that we will have as a Town.

Ms. Power asked how many hours a week the Rec Barn is used for programs. Mr. Thorell stated that the barn is used every day of the week for dance and yoga classes as well as other programs, and that it would be hard to get more use out of it than they already are getting. She also asked about the membership of the fitness room. He said that their membership is currently just over five hundred, one hundred of whom are residents 75+ years old who receive free memberships.

Ms. Johnson commended Mr. Thorell on his leadership with the field study as well as his collaboration with the schools, the South Shore Country Club, and the Board of Trustees.

Ms. Johnson also asked what his thoughts were on how they would need to modify their summer programs due to the lack of a pool at the Country Club. He said that it would affect their program at the Country Club because they use the pool for an hour every day during their program but that they will come up with an alternative activity. He didn't feel that it would affect the enrollment numbers for the summer camps at the Town Hall.

Mr. Fisher asked if he would utilize the bathing beach more this summer. Mr. Thorell said that he had already been in talks with the Trustees of the Bathing Beach. There was some conversation about how they could use the new bath house, snack shack, and bathrooms at the Bathing Beach. Ms. Donlan commented that there are even more opportunities to expand the offerings at the Bathing Beach. She said that they are always happy to receive ideas from anyone regarding the Recreation Department offerings.

Ms. Power commented that she was so pleased with how beautifully Hull Street playground came out.

Appointments

Ms. Johnson explained a little bit about their process in selecting potential appointments.

Vote: Mr. Fisher voted to appoint Robert Stansell to the Historical Commission to fill an unexpired term ending June 30, 2020. Ms. Power seconded. All were in favor, 3-0.

Vote: Ms. Power made a motion to approve the issuance of three (3) Special (One Day) Wine and Malt Beverages licenses to John Davenport on behalf of Friends of Hingham Cemetery, Inc. for the Winter Cultural Series to be held at Ames Chapel on January 11 and March 7, 2020 from 7:30 pm to 10 pm and on February 6, 2020 from 7 pm to 10 pm. Mr. Fisher seconded. All were in favor, 3-0.

Naming of the Water Company Discussion (Board of Selectmen acting as Board of Water Commissioners)

Ms. Johnson explained that a while back the Town asked the public for suggestions on a new name for the Water Company. She stressed that the name is very important because the Town will have to re-brand the water company. She added that, in their capacity as Water Commissioners, the Board was provided with the results of the naming survey that were collected from citizens by the Transition and Evaluation Committee.

Ms. Power suggested that they make a decision on the name within the next two weeks so that transition activities related to a water system name can. . Ms. Power said that for four weeks, the Town gave the public (residents of Hingham, Hull and Cohasset) an opportunity to offer name suggestions. She suggested, as a starting point, to discuss whether the Board has any feeling on whether they should use names of member communities in the new name.

Mr. Fisher clarified that, conceptually, the new water company will not be a "company", but a "department" within the Town. He suggested that the communities that the water company would service may not be static so he would suggest that we not include the names of Hingham, Hull, and Cohasset. He added that his top choices were Accord and Weir River.

Ms. Johnson said that she agreed with Mr. Fisher, stating that her top choices are Accord and Weir River as well, giving priority to Weir River.

Ms. Power said she was also in agreement with the two top choices. She added that, since Hingham is located in the Weir River Watershed, using that name might encourage water conservation stewardship of that area.

Mr. Mayo added that he felt that the top naming suggestions by the Board are respectful of the other towns and he thought that they would be appreciated.

There was some ensuing discussion regarding the name Weir River System versus Weir River Water. Mr. Fisher added that he liked the name Weir River because, geographically, the Weir River connects the different communities.

The board was in agreement that they were ready to move forward with a vote.

Vote: Ms. Power made a motion that we refer to the entity to be the water system to be acquired by the Town of Hingham from Aquarion as the Weir River Water System and the Board is making that motion in the capacity as Water Commissioners, subject to review by Town Counsel to make sure that there are no legal impediments to the Town using said name.

Mr. Jim Watson, 291 Rockland Street, came to the podium and suggested the name Accord Waterworks.

Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. All were in favor, 3-0.

Selectmen and Town Administrator Reports

Ms. Monsegur – nothing to report

Mr. Mayo – nothing to report

Mr. Fisher mentioned that on Friday evening, January 3rd, Congregation Sha'aray Shalom in Hingham hosted a special Shabbat service. The service was called "A Service of Solidarity – Stand Together Against Hate and Antisemitism." The service was held in collaboration with the Hingham Hull Religious Leaders Association. The synagogue was filled with Jews and non-Jews who were prompted to attend the service by the recent stabbing attack in Monsey, New York, during the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah where five Jews were stabbed by an attacker. Cantor Steven Weiss at Congregation Sha'aray Shalom lead a beautiful musical service. In attendance were at least a dozen clergy from houses of worship throughout the local area. The Rev. Sarah Holland, from the Hingham Congregational Church and President of the Hingham Hull Religious Leaders Association, gave a very moving speech at the end of the service. She also submitted a statement to the editor of the Hingham Anchor, which Mr. Fisher read:

"To the editor: As members of the Hingham Hull Religious Leaders Association, we raise our voices in solidarity with our Jewish friends and family during this time of rising anti-Semitic hate speech and violence. We affirm that an attack on one faith community is an attack on us all. We resolve to name hate when we hear or see it expressed, and to meet hate with loving determination to create together a nation and world of mutual understanding, honoring and celebrating the beautiful diversity of our faiths and cultures."

Ms. Power gave a short water update, saying that the Evaluation Committee will be interviewing potential operators and that the RFP progress continues to move along.

She also mentioned that Sue Nickerson, Town Accountant, put together, at the Board's request, a debt schedule which she felt may be helpful during the process of evaluating Warrant Articles. She asked Mr. Mayo and Ms. Monsegur to give this document to those groups who are submitting Warrant Articles in an effort to make sure the committees understand the impact of borrowed money on Town finances. She thanked Ms. Nickerson for putting this together. Ms. Johnson added that this could be a good tool when evaluation long-term capital projects.

Ms. Johnson hoped that everyone had a happy holiday season and added that we will now start evaluating Warrant Articles in preparation for Town Meeting this spring, which is an important part of our Town cycle. She encouraged the public to get involved in Town Govern.

Mr. Fisher made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Power seconded. All were in favor, 3-0.

Meeting adjourned at: 8:37PM

Documents: A complete meeting packet of supporting documentation is on file and available for public review in the Board of Selectmen's office.