

## **Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Date: January 14, 2020**

**Place: Town Hall**

In attendance: Committee Members Victor Baltera, Julie Strehle, Tom Belyea, Eryn Kelley, Eric Haskell, George Danis, Andy McElaney, Davalene Cooper, Dave Anderson, Nancy MacDonald, Kathleen Almand, and Town Accountant Sue Nickerson.

Absent: Bob Curley, Libby Claypoole, Evan Sheehan, Ed Gaydos.

Chairman Baltera called the meeting to order at 7:32 pm.

**Comments from the public regarding items not on the Agenda** None

### **Approval of Minutes from January 7, 2020 meeting**

Minutes of the Meeting held on 1/7/2020 were approved by a vote of 8-0-2.

### **Budget Questions Follow-up**

- Health Department - Julie Strehle provided an update from Susan Sarni, the Executive Health Officer, on the Social Worker position (based on questions asked by AdCom members at the budget hearing held in December). A part-time public health social worker has a standard caseload of 30-40 clients that can be handled in 20 hours per week. Out of our 19 benchmark communities, 11 communities employ a licensed social worker (LSW), with 9 LSWs employed full-time. While all eleven of these communities employ a LSW under their Council on Aging, Ms. Sarni questions this model as there is also a concern for those residents who are under 60 years old.

The Health Department is creating the model on how to handle hoarding cases with Mass Housing. Hoarding has been a diagnosis in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* since 2013. Many communities are using the Town's model with the Fire Department.

All Hingham fire trucks and ambulances are equipped with a "Clutter Image Rating Scale", which is used to rate any level of hoarding found in a home during an emergency visit. Emergency personnel would pass this information to the Health Department.

The value of employing a social worker can be quantified with these contrasting examples. In 2017, the Board of Health had condemned a dwelling, so the resident was living in his car nightly while temperatures fell to near zero degrees. Ms. Sarni met with the Town Manager, Police Chief, Fire Marshal, Veterans Officer, and a Police Officer in order to find a solution to this potentially dangerous situation. That hourly meeting cost over \$350 in salaries. In contrast, the Board of Health recently finished a condemnation of a home where the Social Worker and Veterans Administrator handled the issue, and that hour cost the town a little over \$50 in salaries.

### **Budget Hearings**

- Library - Eric Haskell presented this budget. Library Director Linda Harper was joined by Trustees David Mehegan, Lucy Hancock, and Treasurer Jeremy Parker. Ms. Harper requests Salaries for \$1,521,020, Expenses for \$346,264, for a total of \$1,867,284. Mr. Haskell recommended the base amounts requested.

The Library budget has no new requests. The union contract expires June 30th, so any union salary increases will be included in Article 4. The electric utility expense increased 3% due to the new HMLP "demand charge" method of assessing electricity usage. The line item for the purchase of new books and periodicals increased 19%, a number determined by a state formula (in order to qualify for state aid). The total spending requirement for FY21 is a total of \$282,000. As done annually, the Library Trustees will fund the bulk of this purchase with \$215,000 from its endowment, while the Town expense is \$66,485.

The Old Colony Library Network (OCLN) assessment is \$49,946, a 3% increase over last year. OCLN includes 30 libraries, and the assessment pays for a network computer system, technical support (computer servers and people who catalog items), fiber optic data lines, and the cost of transporting borrowed materials among library locations. While the annual assessment amount is based on a formula including circulation and population of the town, which would usually result in a higher increase for Hingham this year, OCLN is currently capping annual increases at 3%. Ms. Harper is optimistic that this assessment cap will be used again in future budgets, although there is no guarantee.

- Trustees of Bathing Beach - Dave Anderson presented this budget. Board of Trustees members Alan Perrault and Ed Johnson request Salaries for \$24,077, Expenses for \$8,058, for a total of \$32,135. Mr. Anderson recommended the base amounts requested.

The salaries increase is \$3,000, for extra lifeguard hours. With beach improvements, the Board of Trustees would like to add extra lifeguarding hours on shoulder weeks (earlier in June and later in September).

The new bathhouse will be opened this year. The building has two components: snack stand and maritime use (community room), and will also include restrooms. With community room rental revenue expected to reach \$30,000 annually, plus proceeds from the snack stand, the Trustees anticipate paying funds back to the Town, hopefully over ten years. The mechanism for returning revenue back to the Town has not yet been created. While utility costs for the new building are unknown at this point, the costs are expected to be fairly low, and revenue can help offset any expenses associated with building operation. The snack stand concessionaire is responsible for payment of utilities associated with snack stand operation. The plan is to work toward keeping the facility open year-round. The existing bathhouse will be retained for use by the lifeguards.

The Board of Trustees, along with the Harbor Development Committee, submitted a Community Preservation application this year to hire a consultant to create programming plans in harbor area (while the Metropolitan Area Planning Council may award a grant to fund master planning)

- Recreation Commission - Dave Anderson presented this budget. Mark Thorell, Director of Recreation, was joined by Recreation Commission Chair Vicki Donlan. Mr. Thorell requests Salaries for \$105,990. The Town pays the Director salary, and all other expenses are paid through user fees and fundraising such as the 4th of July road race. Mr. Anderson recommended the base amount requested.

The Recreation Department manages a comprehensive range of over 200 self-funded recreational programs, which generates \$1.55 million in revenue. Town facilities under Recreation management include the recreation fitness room, gym and fitness studios, the rec barn, 12 athletic fields, tennis courts, and basketball courts. A key initiative in FY21 is to complete the

athletic field study being undertaken with a consultant, and then make plans to carry out any recommendations produced by that study. For the field study, the consultant has conducted site visits and observations, inventoried facilities, interviewed stakeholders, hosted an online survey, held one public meeting, and created matrices for facilities, facility maintenance, and field usage. The study is expected to be completed by the end of February/early March.

Other key initiatives include strengthening partnerships with Elder Services, Bathing Beach, South Shore Country Club, and School Department. Since the SSCC pool will not reopen this summer, there are no plans to offer swimming lessons, swim memberships, or swim team. Recreation may try to offer swimming lessons at the Bathing Beach, however only specific weeks with favorable tides would be possible for lessons. Without use of a pool, Recreation will continue to offer golf and tennis summer camp programming, and plan to provide alternatives such as ocean safety, and hiking in Bare Cove Park.

- Historic Preservation - Andy McElaney presented this budget. Andrea Young, Historical Administrator, requests \$74,194 for Salaries, Expenses for \$5,991, for a total of \$80,185. Expenses are up slightly due to increased electric costs for maintaining the Memorial Bell Tower. The department oversees two special funds: Greenbush Historic Preservation and Preservation Projects. A question was raised about calculation of interest on the funds. Mr. McElaney will follow up on this.

There are two additional requests to Expenses, both recommended by the Town Administrator. The first is R&M Cemetery Maintenance for \$1,200, to fund the annual maintenance of the small Canterbury Street cemetery taken by the Town at ATM 2019. This request is in anticipation of a Community Preservation Committee grant of \$40,000 (and subsequent approval at ATM 2020) funds to restore and preserve the cemetery.

The other additional request for \$2,000 under Expenses, Annual Assessment - Monuments. This amount would fund the inspection of one-fifth of the Town's monuments to assess any necessary maintenance or capital improvements. This would be the first year of a five-year cycle to assess all Town monuments (four per year).

Mr. McElaney recommended the base amounts requested, noting that all additional requests would be held for consideration together at the end of the budget process.

- Debt Service - Dave Anderson presented this budget. He recommended: Principal for \$6,096,615; Interest for \$1,832,769; Non Excluded Debt Capacity for \$33,474; for a total of \$7,962,858.

In 2017, the Town decided to set aside into a reserve fund any available non-excluded debt capacity as it gets retired. The Town could vote to use this non-excluded debt capacity reserve fund for future capital expenditures. The amount available as of June 20, 2019, was \$118,984.

- Employee Benefits - Dave Anderson presented this budget.

Group Insurance request is \$6,916,113. (This amount may be lower, when the final number becomes available in the February/March timeframe).

Other Postemployment Benefits (OPEB) request is \$1,194,156. This amount goes toward the Town's obligation to pay 50% of healthcare costs to future retired employees. The Town makes a payment each year, and under the current approach the obligation will be fully funded by 2038 (there is currently \$13 million in the trust). The Town is in a small percentage of towns in the Commonwealth with regular contributions to OPEB, a budget discipline which is looked on favorably by rating agencies.

Mr. Anderson recommended the base amounts requested for Group Insurance and Other Postemployment Benefits, for a total of \$8,110,269.

Contributory Retirement request is \$5,090,917. The amount comes directly from an actuarial table. Mr. Anderson recommended the base amount requested.

Workers Compensation request is \$330,000. The Town is self-insured except the police and fire departments purchase their own insurance policies, which are included in their budgets. Mr. Anderson recommended the base amount requested.

Unemployment Compensation request is \$30,000. Mr. Anderson recommended the base amount requested.

Employers Medicare request is \$1,070,850. Mr. Anderson recommended the base amount requested.

- Unclassified - Dave Anderson presented these budgets.

General Insurance request is \$759,633. The premium increased 10% because a claim was made to pay for repairs to Hingham High School after the fire in spring 2019, plus a policy rewrite. Mr. Anderson recommended the base amount requested.

Unclassified request is \$7,550. This includes an increase in the production cost of the annual Town Report. Mr. Anderson recommended the base amount requested.

### ***Warrant Article Process***

AdCom will start reviewing warrant articles on 1/28/2020. Once submitted by the deadline of 1/21/2020, warrant articles go to town counsel for review, and then will be available in final form by 1/31/2020. Any articles reviewed by AdCom on 1/28/2020 would be any articles reviewed by the Board of Selectmen on 1/21/2020 (for example, perennial articles, such as revolving funds, and the Hannah Lincoln Whiting fund).

The AdCom liaison assigned to each article is responsible for receiving the warrant article text, and drafting a comment and recommendation before AdCom's hearing on the article (unless a controversial article, in which case the comment and recommendation may be delayed to reflect discussion at the hearing). The liaison appointed to each article will speak with proponents and opponents, do independent research if necessary, and make a presentation to AdCom. All articles will have hearings to give the opportunity to hear pros and cons. AdCom will vote on most articles at the initial hearing, but with other more involved or controversial articles, a vote will be delayed to a future meeting.

Guidelines on rules and procedures expected by AdCom during the warrant process are included in the AdCom Handbook. The Warrant Article Style Guidelines document, which is the same as last year, outlines editing and stylistic rules. The Warrant Article Process for 2020 document provides the sequence of the warrant process. Nancy MacDonald and Davalene Cooper have agreed to serve as initial editors again this year. Bob Curley will track the status of each article on the Warrant Article Status Summary (WASS). The goal is to submit each article as soon as it is ready in order to avoid a crunch in early March.

### ***Liaison Reports***

#### **Schools -Dave Anderson**

The preliminary budget from the School Department includes a proposed increase in the base budget (level services) of 6.11% (for a total of \$57.6 million; last year's increase was 4.4%.) An ACES budget discussion meeting with the School Department is scheduled for 1/26/2020, 1 - 3 pm, with all of AdCom invited. George Danis added that there is the possibility for two warrant articles. For Foster School, the School Department may request an additional \$350,000 in feasibility study funding (in addition to the \$750,000 approved at ATM2017) because the latest information for schools the size of Foster shows that a higher amount of feasibility funds may be necessary. Another warrant article may be submitted to pay for fire repairs at Hingham High School (from the fire in spring 2019).

It was thought that an article would be needed to access the \$1 million pledged by the Alliance condo developer for window replacement at PRS, but it has been determined that an ATM vote is not necessary.

#### **Affordable Housing Trust - Davalene Cooper**

HAHT was awarded a Housing Choice Designation Grant of \$140,000 by the Commonwealth. These infrastructure grants are awarded to communities which show a commitment to increasing affordable housing. The Trust will use these funds to renovate a two-family house on Rhodes Circle, including a connection to Sewer.

#### **Energy Action Committee -**

No report.

#### **CPC - Julie Strehle**

The Community Preservation Committee will choose the projects and funding amounts for proposed grants at its meeting on 1/15/2020.

### ***Discussion of Advisory Committee Housekeeping Items***

The next meeting is scheduled for 1/21/2020, with budget hearings for public safety. The joint meeting with BOS to hear CPC projects is 1/28/2020, and the joint meeting with BOS to hear the School Committee budget presentation is 2/11/2020.

The End of Year Celebration was discussed. Nancy MacDonald has volunteered to assist Kathleen Almand with party preparation. Victor Baltera will coordinate a date with Town Moderator Michael Puzo. The consensus is to host the party again at the Hingham Heritage Museum, and reduce the amount of food and drink purchased (and therefore try to reduce the AdCom member contribution).

***Matters Not Anticipated within 48 Hours of the Meeting*** - None

Adjourn - 10:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Strehle, Secretary

List of Documents Distributed at this Meeting:

Agenda

Budgets as set forth in the Budget Books

Draft Minutes of Meeting 1/7/2020

Warrant Article Style Guidelines

Warrant Article Process for 2020

Budget Scorecard updated through 1/7/2020

AdCom approved 1/21/2020