

**Advisory Committee  
Meeting Notes  
January 17, 2023  
Hingham Town Hall, South Hearing Room**

**In Attendance:** Chairperson; George Danis, Tina Sherwood, Nancy MacDonald, Davalene Cooper, Andrew McElaney, Caitlyn Kirk, Lyndsey Kruzer, Brenda Black, Joe Griffin, Alan Macdonald, Carol Tully, Brian Stack

**Absent:** Jason Price, Sarah Melia

**Participating Remotely:** Kathy Curley

**Call Meeting to Order:** Chairperson Danis called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and read the following statement:

*“This meeting is being held remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to an Order issued by the Governor of Massachusetts dated March 12, 2020 Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the Chairman at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording.”*

**Comments from the Public on Items not on the Agenda**

There were no comments.

**FY 24 Budget Hearings**

**Animal Control (S. Melia)**

This is a straight forward budget. There was a step increase in salaries. There is an unfilled allocation for a part-time position which is not expected to be filled in FY24. Expenses are level with last year and include maintenance of vehicles, supplies, dues and postage. Much of her work is wild life control and finding lost pets. Hingham also provides mutual aid for surrounding towns.

The Animal Control budget was recommended for \$88,058.

**Harbormaster**

The Harbormaster budget hearing will be rescheduled.

**Police Department (Chief David Jones and D. Cooper)**

It's been a difficult fall for the police and other first responders. The Chief noted that the hiring of the Social Worker has been a help to the police department. The department is moving towards state accreditation. There is also a need to comply with new training mandates due to the new police reform. The state does not offer any money to meet these mandates. Many of the mandates Hingham was already doing. Staffing, and being fully staffed, is a moving target. The police dept is in the process of hiring 3 new recruits, and it takes approx. a year for a new recruit to be at work on the street. The call volumes are

going up with an increase being seen in mental health calls. There are now more large developments in town which generate more calls. The increase in salaries is 2.5% and are mostly due to contractual increases, overtime, longevity and step increases. Expenses are up 1.8%. The increases come from computer service agreements and professional services which includes the new body cams that the police are now using.

There is an additional request for 4 new police officers and this will bring down the overtime and forced double shifts. This would allow for better staffing and would help morale.

The Police Department budget was recommended for \$7,383,671.

### **Fire Department** (Chief Steve Murphy and T. Sherwood)

We currently have 57 fire fighters who serve the town. The number of calls per year has increased. The department is looking at doing a large-scale major incident training program that will require up to two years to complete and fully implement. Other initiatives include a new Public Safety Facility, a Fire Inspection Program, and continuing to work on securing reimbursements and grants. The department's salary budget request represents a 7.3% increase. Personnel makes up 91% of the department's budget. Given the challenges with staffing to a minimum amount of 11 and maximum number of 13 fire fighters per shift, the department is challenged with an overtime budget that is unpredictable. The expenses show a 9.7% increase. The expense increases are due to vehicle fuel, repair and maintenance as well as building maintenance.

FEMA reimbursements have to be based on a presidential declaration – historically this relates to a storm. In January 2022 we had a disaster declaration. All of Covid, back to 2020 is still considered a disaster declaration. Until the end of 2022 it was reimbursed at 100%. Historically it was 75% for storms. Now, Covid reimbursement are also at 75%. The fire department has not gotten money yet for FY23 submissions and had to resubmit requests due to program changes. Historically, it took 4-5 years to receive all the reimbursements. Absent FEMA reimbursement, what would the overtime be for FY24? Looking at the fact that we spent \$1.7mm last year – the department felt it was far too large to request the full amount based on historical spend.

The revenue from ambulance runs goes to the general fund. In FY23 we projected \$1.4mm to the budget – as anticipated ambulance revenue. Funds over that amount will be put into a reserve account for purchasing new ambulances. We typically buy a new ambulance every 2 years. Currently, an ambulance costs \$500,000. This reserve fund just started in FY23, so we will see how it works.

The Fire Dept is asking for 4 new fire fighters, at \$392,280, to allow the department to increase maximum staffing levels and decrease overtime coverage. Realistically, it will take a year to hire this new staff, get them through the fire academy and into the department - so our overtime budget will not potentially see a reduction until FY25 if this request is approved. This is a recurring deficit in the budget and is not sustainable for the department for the long term.

The Fire Department budget was recommended for \$7,730,604.

**Public Safety Utilities** (Chief Murphy – Dept Head and D. Cooper)

The total budget for the water and fire hydrants is \$453,250 which is level with last year. The street lighting / electrical expenses are \$107,100 which is a minor increase.

The Public Safety Utilities budget was recommended for \$560,350.

**Debt Service** (N. MacDonald – Sue Nickerson)

The debt service is based on contractual obligations of the town. The budget includes both excluded and non-excluded debt. Most of the debt is long-term debt. There are also estimates on the BANS because we do not know the interest rates yet. There are two new lines in this budget for the Public Safety Facility Building and the new elementary school to replace Foster School under excluded debt. The FY24 numbers are currently estimates. There is one payment rolling off in FY24 for two pumper engines. To note, even adding the two new lines of debt, we are still using very conservative estimates of what our TAE will be next year – within our 5-10% fiscal policy.

South Shore Country Club pool for FY24 is currently at zero. TM appropriated money for the pool, but we haven't borrowed it yet.

The Debt Service Budget was recommended for \$4,785,782 in principle and \$3,394,784 in interest for a total of \$8,000,180.

**Dispatch (SSRECC)** (D. Cooper)

Located here in Town Hall and provides our 911 calling response for 4 towns. There is a formula for our portion of the budget and we share a contribution. The formula is based on call volume and population. It is an estimate and shows a 5% increase. The Director believes this will be a sufficient amount to cover the increases.

The Dispatch Budget was recommended for \$1,040,991.

**Warrant Articles: Hearing and possible vote on the following Articles**

The select Board has not heard these articles yet, so we will hear them but not vote them.

Article C: Reports of Various Town Committees (L. Kruzer)

This is a straight-forward, perennial Article. Ms. Kruzer is going to recommend the Town look at whether the Tree Preservation Study Committee has fulfilled its mandate, and can be discharged. And, Ms. Kruzer will discuss the addition of the Human Rights Commission.

Article E: Salaries of Town Officials (J. Price)

We will review this article at a later date.

Article I: Building Department Revolving Fund (J. Griffin)

The Article has to do with using the fees that are collected by electric, plumbing and gas inspections to pay the salaries of the inspectors who do those inspections. Chapter 44 allows towns to use the money in this way, and we cover this in our bylaws. We have established a limit for this at \$350,000.

Article K: Transfer Funds to Reserve Fund (A. McElaney)

With the help of our Town Accountant, we will provide a report on what funds are available, which will be our recommendation.

**FY 22 Fund Balance Memo review**

Sue Nickerson, Town Accountant, reviewed the Fund Balance memo as of June 30, 2022. This memo is a once-per-year snapshot of fund balance. The changes in fund balance are due to a surplus of revenue, budget surplus or turn-backs, and the use of fund balance through reserve transfers.

There will be a Forecast group meeting on February 2, 2023.

**Liaison Reports:**

ACES- School budget session 2 (N. MacDonald)

During the most recent school budget presentation, the numbers were the same, but the narrative was broken down into detail. Dr. Adams and the building principals talked about re-allocation and para services. If we invest long-term, we provide more programs in-house that would allow us to serve more of our Special Ed students in-district. The anticipated increase to the Special Ed out-of-district placements is at 14% and the Superintendent is looking at strategic ways to decrease that over time.

Planning Board (A. McElaney)

The Planning Board is in the process of hearing 7 proposed amendments to zoning by-law and the most significant is that we currently permit attached dwelling units where the people living there have to have a familial relationship with the owners of the property. The proposed amendment would allow for detached ADLs and would not require a familial relationship.

The second will also be looking at the minimum occupancy term of residential uses. Currently there is no minimum occupancy term. A proposal has been made to make the minimal occupancy term 60 days.

The third will be discussing the storage of unregistered vehicles. Currently there is only an allowance for one unregistered vehicle per zone but this is could change to two.

The fourth is to clean up language in the downtown overlay district by-law provisions.

The fifth is looking to clean up language in the Hingham Harbor overlay district by-law provisions

The sixth would require some EV charging stations to be allowed in parking lots going forward for lots with 20 or more spaces, and there would be a requirement that 25% are built with the infrastructure to make them EV ready, and 10% be actual EV charging stations.

The seventh is a citizen petition from Priya Howell, and would increase the minimum lot size from 20,000 to 30,000 square feet in District A. The current square foot allowance is 20,000.

CPC (D. Cooper)

The Advisory Committee is going to hear CPC next week in a joint meeting with the SB. The following week Julie Strehle will be presenting the CPC recommendations to AdCom. There were 11 applications that were accepted as meeting the possible guidelines. There is more budget available on the CPC than there were requests. Two projects received more money than they requested. The CPC decided to pay off the debt on the Benjamin Lincoln House, assuming Town Meeting approves it.

**Discussion of Advisory Committee housekeeping items**

Approval of Minutes from the January 10, 2023 AdCom meetings  
The meeting minutes will be approved at the next meeting.

Next meeting: Tuesday, January 24, 2023

**The meeting was adjourned at 9:15p.m. by roll-call vote (13-0).**

**Documents Distributed for this Meeting:**  
AdCom January 17, 2023 Meeting Agenda

**Respectfully Submitted,**  
**Alicia Anthony/Recording Clerk**