

Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date - January 18, 2022

Remote Meeting via Zoom

In Attendance: J. Strehle, G. Danis, N. MacDonald, D. Anderson, B. Black, D. Cooper, R. Curley, K. Dziergowski, M. Goulet, C. Kirk, A. Macdonald, A. McElaney, S. Melia, E. Sheehan, T. Sherwood, Town Accountant S. Nickerson.

Absent: none

1. Call Meeting to Order

At 7:00 pm, Vice Chair Danis, 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.”

Vice Chair Danis asked if any participants were recording the meeting, no responses.

2. Comments from the Public Regarding Items Not on the Agenda

None.

3. Review and Approval of Minutes from January 4 and January 11, 2022

Meeting minutes from 01/04/2022 approved by roll call vote, 10-0-1

Meeting minutes from 01/11/2022 approved by roll call vote, 11-0-1

4. Budget Hearings:

a. Fire Department – Ms. Sherwood presented this budget.

Ms. Sherwood reported that budget numbers requested by the Fire Department. The Department requests salaries of \$6,554,825, an increase of \$810,165 (14%) and expenses of \$616,943, an increase of \$106,670 (21%), for a total budget request of \$7,171,768. Ms. Sherwood noted that salaries are 91% of the total budget. The Collective Bargaining Agreement covering the Fire Department expired June 30, 2020. Thus, salary numbers were based on FY20. The new contracts just signed include 3% COLA for FY22-24 as well as equity adjustments which resulted in a 16.5% increase in salaries. Overtime hours are up significantly because of staffing shortages (a problem nationwide). Training is an automatic calculation based on requirements for continuing education. Ms. Kirk asked about overtime staffing and if the Department was fully staffed would overtime go down? Chief Murphy explained that the current Department staffing goals have a minimum of 11 people on duty at any time (maximum of 13). If there are less than 11 on shift, it is filled using overtime hours from other firefighters. With nine vacancies, getting to the 11 minimum is a constant challenge and requires excessive use of overtime. They are currently interviewing five candidates who currently work in other fire departments so they are fully trained and can begin working immediately if hired. Mr. Curley remembered that the Fire Department had significant cuts in the during the 2008-2009 recession and that since that time the overtime budget has been a perennial issue. He noted it might be better to staff the positions instead of paying overtime. Chief Murphy agreed. The Department used to be staffed at 14 until 2008 and

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then dropped down to 11 and is now back up to 13. Vice Chair Danis asked if there are national staffing standards for Fire Departments. Chief Murphy said yes, but they are per engine. The current nationally recognized standard is four per engine, Hingham is currently at 2 per engine. Vice Chair Danis asked if the location of the fire station affects the number of optimal staff. Chief Murphy said yes, cities will have higher numbers, smaller towns will have lower numbers per engine. Ms. Melia asked about our ability to recoup money from FEMA. Chief Murphy said yes, FEMA reimbursements are typically available after disaster situations such as storms. In 2020 the President declared Covid a disaster and Public Safety Officers' time became eligible for FEMA funds. Hingham has requested over \$1.5MM and has received \$250K in reimbursements so far. Other reimbursement applications are still in the queue. Indications are that they will be approved. Mr. Curley inquired about global warming and fires and Hingham's preparedness in respect to our open spaces. He asked if this budget provides the Department with the adequate resources to plan for the type of events we are seeing elsewhere in the country. Chief Murphy replied that while Hingham has had fires in our open spaces in the past, they have been limited to a few acres. He stated that the Commonwealth is not prepared for a major event such as the ones happening out west. Mr. McElaney asked if there is any prospect of or movement toward requiring sprinklers in single family residential structures. Chief Murphy said that this is something that is being reviewed at both a National and a State level. There is currently a bill in the State legislature to address this. The Chief believes that in Massachusetts it will most likely be a local option wherein Town's will require it in their own By-laws. Ms. Sherwood reported on changes in the Fire Department's expenses. They have also been affected by Covid. Vehicles are more complex, and less maintenance can be done in-house. Fuel expenses have gone up based on both the cost of fuel and call volume increase. PPE expense is much higher due to an increase in costs as well as increased usage. Mr. McElaney asked if there is any benefit to regionalizing backup vehicles. Chief Murphy said that the Town used to do that but stopped because of risk of not having access to vehicles and it was not considered beneficial for Hingham. Ms. Cooper noted that the Town gets ~\$1.4MM in revenue from ambulance transfers. This money goes into to the general fund and is not reflected in the Fire Department budget. Chief Murphy presented mission and services of the department as well as key initiatives. There are currently 57 full time positions with nine unfilled positions. The Department has additional requests of \$39,800 to send two EMTs to Paramedic School (new Hires) and \$456,026 to hire four new firefighters, one for each shift which should reduce overtime expenses. Ms. Sherwood recommended the requested budgets.

b. Police Department - Ms. MacDonald presented this budget

Chief Jones presented Mission, Services, Benchmarks, key initiatives. The Department has seven new hybrid vehicles. These vehicles are more expensive to maintain but fuel costs are down. There was an annualized savings of \$34,600 annualized in fuel costs, as well as the environmental benefit of a reduction of 55.5 metric tons of carbon dioxide released. The Department has two additional requests. \$211,695 for three fulltime Police Officers, one for each shift. They also request \$40,000 to increase the overtime budget. The Department requests a budget for salaries of \$6,700,439, an increase of \$654,569 (10.82%) and expenses of \$486,750, an increase of 890,250 (22.6%) for a total budget of \$7,187,189. The salary budget increase was based on COLA increases and equity adjustments. The significant changes in the expense budget include a reduction in fuel expenses because of the change to hybrid vehicles. However, repair and maintenance for these vehicles is up as they are more expensive to maintain. Printing expenses increased as officers have printers in their cars now. IT service agreements increased 5%-10% based on negotiated

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contractual increases. Mr. Macdonald inquired how does traffic details are assigned Chief Jones explained that those are private details that are paid for by the contractor or the Department doing the work requiring the detail. These costs do not come out of the police budget. Ms. Black commended the Chief for purchasing hybrid vehicles and inquired about adoption. Chief Jones replied that there was hesitation initially but now they are well received. He is working with Capital Outlay to update the replacement plan for vehicles and will continue to request hybrid vehicles. Ms. Cooper asked about support of religious organizations given the recent events nationally. Chief Jones said that officers are receiving training specific to protecting places of worship, for domestic terrorism and the like. Mr. Curley asked how much an officer can affect their income through working on private details The Chief said he does not have data for that but that the officers are paid for by the Town so that data is available to the Town. He will work to get that data for the AdCom. Mr. McElaney asked if there are any particular factors that prevent officers from working overtime and if one factor could be the desire to work on private details instead. The Chief said he did not believe so, that the data suggests that the hardest time to get overtime filled is for the overnight shift. Between on-the-job injuries and unfilled positions, they are down to 48 officers working of the 53 positions in the department. Ms. Melia asked where officers get fuel. Chief Jones replied that the Town purchases fuel. Ms. Nickerson clarified that the School purchases in bulk and bills back to each department. Ms. MacDonald recommended the requested budgets.

c. Animal Control – Ms. Cooper presented this budget.

Animal Control Officer Leslie Badger requests salaries of \$75,696, an increase of \$4,547 (6.39%) and expenses of \$6,200 (flat) for a total budget \$81,896. Ms. Cooper noted that there is no fuel expense as this is accounted for in the general police budget. Ms. Badger presented the mission and services, metrics, and key initiatives of the Department. Ms. Cooper recommended the requested budgets.

d. Recreation - Mr. Curley presented this budget.

Recreation Director Mark Thorell requests salaries of \$189,908, an increase of \$9,264 (8.45%) and expenses of \$181,319, up \$10,539 (6.17%) for a total budget of \$371,227. Mr. Curley noted that the Recreation Department has increased field maintenance responsibilities. All other expenses are self-funded through the revolving fund. The Department generates over \$1MM of revenue which covers all program expenses. The Department has an additional request of \$27,000 for spring and fall seasonal comprehensive landscaping of athletic fields, courts, and parking lots. Mr. Thorell presented the mission and services of the Department. Ms. Dziergowski asked if there is any increase in revenue with the fields in better shape. Mr. Thorell said that there is more utilization by Hingham teams who are now staying in Town. Vice Chair Danis inquired about plans to build pickleball courts. Mr. Thorell says it is on their radar. Mr. Anderson inquired about the CPC not funding the repairs for the Cronin Field Basketball Court. Mr. Thorell says there is some work they can do - patch work to get through another year and that they are piecing it together. Mr. Curley recommended the requested budgets.

e. Library – Mr. McElaney presented this budget.

Library Executive Director Linda Harper presented the Mission and Services, Benchmarks and Metrics, Key Initiatives, and Staff and Expenses of the Library. She requests salaries of \$1,770,602, an increase of \$173,037 (10.8%) and expenses of \$411,134, an increase of \$41,336, (11.2%), for a total budget request of \$2,181,736, an increase of \$214,273 (10.9%). Salary increases were due to the GovHR equity adjustments and collective bargaining agreements. There was an expense increase of \$34,590 for Books and

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Periodicals. Mr. McElaney explained that in order to be eligible for state grants, a municipal library must expend 15% of Library's total operating budget on Books and Periodicals. This requirement was suspended in FY21 due to the pandemic resulting in the Library returning money to Fund Balance. In fact, for FY21, the Library turned back \$309,916, to Fund Balance – most of this was from salaries due to the COVID-19 closure. From earnings on the Library's endowment, the Trustees pay \$215,000 annually to support Books and Periodicals, with the Town making up the difference. The Trustees also pay the costs of the programs put on by the Library. The Old Colony Network Assessment went up slightly. Mr. Curley asked when Hingham will have an opportunity to apply for a grant to do improvements to the library building. Ms. Harper said there is no set schedule and that there is no new funding this year. Mr. McElaney recommended the requested budgets.

- f. **Select Board** - Mr. McElaney presented this budget. He noted that he had circulated late this afternoon two substitute pages for the Select Board's Budget. In the hard copy of the Budget Books, the substitute pages are new pages 65 and 66. (The Select Board's Budget begins on page 65 behind the red General Government tab.)

Town Administrator Tom Mayo reviewed the Mission and Services, Benchmarks and Metrics, Key Initiatives, and Salaries and Expenses. Mr. McElaney stated that the Select Board requests salaries of \$690,511, an increase of \$32,030 (4.9%), and expenses of \$116,340, which is a decrease of \$2,250 or 1.9%, for a total budget of \$806,851, an increase of \$29,779 or 3.8%. Mr. Mayo indicated that he has two Additional Requests. The first is \$48,000 for a part time Sustainability Coordinator. He proposes that this be a shared resource with Cohasset. The Coordinator would work 23 hours/week for Hingham and 12 hours/week for Cohasset. He also noted that the Town may be able to offset this expense with grant money. The second Additional Request is \$40,000 for a part time Grant Writer. Ms. Cooper expressed support for the Sustainability Coordinator. Brad Moyer, 36 Wanders Drive, Chair of the Energy Action Committee, offered support for the Sustainability Coordinator. Mr. McElaney recommended the requested budgets.

5. Advisory Committee Handbook Update Vote

- Deferred

6. Liaison Reports

a. Sustainable Budget Task Force

- Vice Chair Danis reports that the Task Force will present to the Select Board on February 1st.

b. ACES/Education

- Mr. Anderson reported that we got a preliminary School budget. Expenses are up but are offset by a one-time reduction in SPED spending. The budget is still being reviewed and the third budget meeting is this Thursday.

c. Harbor Development

- Mr. Sheehan reported there will be a Warrant Article submitted by the Harbor Development Committee. Construction prices are up. Existing funds approved by last year's Town Meeting might not be enough to achieve the Town Pier flood line improvements needed. They would like to start work in June.

d. CPC

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- Ms. MacDonald reported that CPC met last week and did their final votes for the proposed projects and will present to the Select Board and the Advisory Committee next week.
- e. Hingham Municipal Light Board
- Ms. Black reported that HMLP is not going to go forward with the funding for the new transmission line and second substation this year. There will be an Article for the land transfer which will allow them to begin permitting.
7. Warrant Article Process Discussion
- Chair Strehle discussed the Warrant review process.
8. Discussion of Advisory Committee Housekeeping Items
- Chair Strehle discussed upcoming meetings.
9. Matters not anticipated within 48 hours of meeting
- Chair Strehle provided an update on the Foster School timeline. There may be some changes based on timing with the MSBA final vote on the project in August.
10. Adjourn
- Meeting was adjourned by roll call vote, 13-0

Documents Distributed for this Meeting

- Agenda
- Warrant Article Style Guidelines
- Final Version of AdCom Handbook
- Draft Minutes – 01/04/2022 and 01/11/2022
- Budget Books (Electronic)
- Fire Department Budget Memo

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy MacDonald
Advisory Committee Secretary

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