

Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: January 26, 2021

Place: Remote Meeting via Zoom

In attendance: Committee Members Bob Curley, Julie Strehle, Brenda Black, Andy McElaney, Evan Sheehan, Dave Anderson, Nancy MacDonald, Davalene Cooper, Kristen Dziergowski, Alan Macdonald, Victor Baltera, Tina Sherwood, Eryn Kelley, Libby Claypoole, George Danis and Town Accountant Sue Nickerson.

Absent: No one.

Agenda items:

1. **Call meeting to order:** Chair Curley called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm 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.”

2. **Comments from the public regarding items not on the agenda:** None

3. **Budget Hearings:**

- Town Clerk: Davalene Cooper presented this budget. Town Clerk Eileen McCracken requests, and Ms. Cooper recommends, the following amounts:

Category	FY 21 budget request	\$ change to FY 20	% change
Salaries	\$195,365	(\$4,349)	(2.2%)
Expenses	\$5,616	(\$2,250)	(28.6%)
Total	\$200,981	(\$6.599)	(3.2%)

Ms. McCracken stated that the Department was responsible for administering state and local elections, vital records, issuing licenses and permits and additional related duties. The COVID-19 impact was significant as no (or

minimal) in person meetings were allowed. Additionally, the use of mail-in election ballots increased significantly to prior years because of the virus.

Salary decreases were due to a reorganization and the retirement of a long term employee. Expenses decreased as a stenographer position used for Town Meeting was moved to the Board of Selectmen's budget.

- Elections: Davalene Cooper presented this budget. Town Clerk Eileen McCracken requests, and Ms. Cooper recommends the following amounts:

Category	FY 21 budget request	\$ change to FY 20	% change
Salaries	\$6,950	(\$22,342)	(76.3%)
Expenses	\$16,370	(\$5,475)	(25.1%)
Total	\$23,320	(\$27,817)	(54.4%)

Ms. McCracken stated that Salaries decreased as there will be only one election in FY 22 versus three last year. This reduced the need for additional hours from the part time staff to provide election support. Fewer elections also resulted in less custodial and other election related expenses.

- Bare Cove Park: Davalene Cooper presented this budget. Rik Johnson requests, and Ms. Cooper recommends, these amounts:

Category	FY 21 budget request	\$ change to FY 20	% change
Salaries	\$19,034	-	-
Expenses	\$9,390	-	-
Total	\$28,424	-	-

Mr. Johnson explained that one effect of COVID-19 was that people were more inclined to get outside so the park was extremely busy. Salary and expense amounts are budgeted as the same as last year.

- Elder Services: Julie Strehle presented this budget. Jennifer Young, Director of Elder Affairs requests, and Ms. Strehle recommends, the following amounts:

Category	FY 21 budget request	\$ change to FY 20	% change
Salaries	\$268,206	\$2,602	0.9%
Expenses	\$24,890	\$1	-
Total	\$293,095	\$2,603	0.9%

Ms. Young stated that the role of the Department is to support the independence and ongoing personal development of Hingham’s senior population (60+ years old). This population is growing and, based on an UMass study of 2010 census data (most recent available) the senior population is projected to represent 34% of the Town’s population in 2020 and 39% in 2030. Due to COVID-19, the Department has had to take many of their programs and classes to Zoom as in-person events are not allowed. The Department is also working with the Health Department to notify and assist seniors with getting vaccinations as they become available.

Ms. Young stated that Salaries increased by \$2,602 due to step and longevity increases and additional hours for a clerical part time position. Expenses were flat to FY 21. Additionally, the Department had Capital expenses in FY 21 for a vehicle and there are no similar Capital items this year.

The Department has revolving accounts for donations, state grants and program fees. The state grants must be spent in entirety each year while the other two accounts are allowed to carry forward any unspent funds.

- Fire Department: Eryn Kelley presented this budget. Chief Murphy requests, and Ms. Kelley recommends, the following amounts:

Category	FY 21 budget request	\$ change to FY 20	% change
Salaries	\$5,618,989	\$16,301	0.3%
Expenses	\$509,259	\$37,492	7.9%
Total	\$6,128,248	\$53,793	0.9%

Chief Murphy also requests additional funding for one firefighter at a cost of \$74,191. This request is part of a plan to add firefighter to each of the three shifts. This will bring staffing to 14 per shift which is the 2008 staffing level and, once completed, should result in a decrease in overtime.

Chief Murphy stated that the role of the Department is to save lives, protect property and support the community, promote fire prevention, fight fires, educate the public, and provide pre-hospital care and transportation to individuals among other tasks.

COVID-19 has impacted the Department as in-person programs have been suspended and all staff need to take additional safety precautions when responding to service calls. The Department has been part of Town wide planning events to help mitigate and control the spread of the virus. Chief Murphy also indicated that overtime and other COVID-19 expenses may be reimbursable under FEMA guidelines. The Department has submitted requests for reimbursement totaling \$870,000 (January 20-September 14) which may be

eligible for reimbursement at 75%. They are also working on a second request from September 15 forward.

Salaries are up slightly but this is based on the now expired contract. The Town and unions are currently negotiating new contracts so the estimated additional Salary costs will be included in Article 4 this year. Expenses are up by \$37,492 due to R&M which is driven in part by the increasingly more complex and systematized nature of equipment which tends to be more expensive to repair. The Department has also assumed Town wide control of defibrillators to better manage the process of replacing the devices on a regular basis.

- **Animal Control:** Tina Sherwood presented this budget. Animal Control Officer Leslie Badger requests, and Ms. Sherwood recommends, the following amounts:

Category	FY 21 budget request	\$ change to FY 20	% change
Salaries	\$69,099	(\$235)	(0.3%)
Expenses	\$6,200	-	-
Total	\$75,299	(\$235)	(0.3%)

Officer Badger stated that the Department is responsible for all injured, sick and deceased animals in the Town. Ms. Badger is also responsible for helping locate lost pets, capturing animals in need of medical assistance, monitoring the Town’s coyote population, and monitoring the Bare Cove Park off-leash program. COVID-19 has impacted her role from a safety standpoint as animal fur has been known to carry the virus.

Salaries are down slightly to FY 21 with a longevity increase offset by a reduction in the open part time position and overtime line items. Expenses are flat to FY 21.

- **Harbormaster:** George Danis presented this budget. Harbormaster Ken Corson requests, and Mr. Danis recommends, the following amounts:

Category	FY 21 budget request	\$ change to FY 20	% change
Salaries	\$208,151	\$3,740	1.8%
Expenses	\$75,138	(\$783)	(0.2%)
Total	\$283,289	\$2,957	1.2%

Harbormaster Corson described the role of the Department as patrolling the harbor, public safety in the harbor, and public education. The Department is also responsible for managing the Town moorings, boat ramp, harbor

dredging, Town bathing beach and the five inner harbor islands. COVID-19 has impacted their role from a safety standpoint as use of the harbor and related facilities increased as more people took advantage of these outdoor recreation facilities.

The Department also generated \$343,872 in various fees. All fees are routinely reviewed for competitiveness and this past year was the final year of a four step fee increase program. The Department completed oversight of the harbor dredging in 2020 and is planning to replace the boat ramp in the fall of 2021. Additionally, Harbormaster Corson secured a grant to upgrade the harbor security cameras and to offset the cost of a new boat.

Salaries increased slightly FY 21 due to steps and longevity. Expenses were down slightly to last year.

- Police department: Davalene Cooper presented this budget. Acting Chief Jones requests, and Ms. Cooper recommends, the following amounts:

Category	FY 21 budget request	\$ change to FY 20	% change
Salaries	\$5,873,802	\$1,248	0.02%
Expenses	\$396,900	(\$2,250)	(0.6%)
Total	\$6,270,702	(\$1,002)	(0.02%)

Acting Chief Jones stated that the COVID-19 impacted the Department's Community Outreach, Training, staff assignments and safety protocols. Additionally, the Department provided support for various Town COVID -19 planning committees tasked with controlling and mitigating the spread of the virus.

Salaries increased slightly to last year due to long term officer retirements and replacement officers being on the lower end of the salary scale. Expenses are also up slightly with increased spending on Officer Equipment offset by a reduction in fuel costs.

Acting Chief Jones also had two additional spending requests:

1. Part time (21 hours per week) clerical worker at an annual cost of \$32,580. This is a social worker to help officers with calls requiring mental health support. The Department had an eight hour position that was funded by a grant which is now expired. The individual selected (if the position is approved) would be specifically trained to work with police officers and would be involved directly on calls and any necessary follow-up;

2. Police overtime has historically been underfunded. Acting Chief Jones has requested \$40,000 in additional funding to more accurately reflect the expected spending.

4. Fund Balance Memo:

Town Accountant Sue Nickerson presented the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 General Fund Balance. This report represents the Town’s financial position as of the fiscal year end. Categories, and amounts, presented are:

Fund	Balance	% total
Non-spendable	\$ 0	-
Restricted	\$1,250,000	2.96%
Committed (various accounts)	\$4,011,857	9.51%
Assigned (various accounts)	\$6,780,774	16.07%
Unassigned	\$30,146,446	71.46%
Total annual expenditures per Town Financial Policy	\$119,142,820	100%
% Unassigned Fund Balance to Total Annual Expenditures		25.30%

Ms. Nickerson explained that the Total of all Fund Balances increased by \$3,691,239 this past year. This increase was driven by higher than expected amounts for State Aid and Local Receipts totaling \$381,771, budget surplus amounts from various Town Departments of \$2,626,354 and a \$700,000 reclassification in CARES ACT expenses requested by the auditors.

In response to questions from AdCom members Ms. Nickerson stated that Fund Balance monies dedicated to meeting any shortfall in FY 21 revenue are included in the Assigned Fund total and that approximately \$1,700,000 in water company acquisition expenses will be reimbursed to Fund Balance in 2021 as the Town’s purchase of the water company occurred after the close of 2020 fiscal year.

5. Review and Approval of Minutes from the December 22 meeting:

December 22nd Minutes approved by roll call vote of 13-0-1 (Libby Claypoole abstained)

6. Warrant Articles:

Chair Curley noted that there will be a citizens petition to call the role of deceased Town volunteers at the Annual Town Meeting, a Harbor Development Article dealing with wharfs, and there will not be a tree preservation article this year.

7. Liaison Reports:

- a. Andy McElaney noted that the Town Masterplan is due to be presented to the Planning Board on February 1st;

- b. Kristen Dziergowski noted that the Hingham Affordable Housing Trust is reviewing a contract and proposal for renovations to the Rhodes Circle property. Additionally, the Town engineer has identified potential access and water issues with property off Cushing Street that the Trust is looking to acquire.

8. Housekeeping items:

Chair Curley addressed the following items:

- a. Next Meeting Dates: AdCom will plan to meet on February 2nd, 4th and 9th;
- b. Policies and Procedures: Julie Strehle and Alan Macdonald have offered to assist Davalene Cooper in reviewing AdCom Policies and Procedures;
- c. Town Meeting and related deadlines: No update at this time;
- d. Warrant Article editing: Chair Curley will issue the guidelines. Davalene Cooper and Nancy MacDonald will again serve as editors.

9. Matters not anticipated within 48 hours: None

Adjourn: Roll call vote to adjourn at 9:57 pm (14-0-0)

Respectfully Submitted,
George Danis, Secretary

List of Documents Distributed for this Meeting:

Agenda
Draft Minutes: December 22nd
Fund Balance report for FY 2020

Approved on 02/04/2021 by roll call vote 13-0-0