

Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: February 4, 2021

Place: Remote Meeting via Zoom

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

Absent: Tina Sherwood

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.”

Agenda items:

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

3. Budget hearings:

b. Conservation: Victor Baltera presented this budget. Loni Fournier, Senior planner and Conservation Officer, requested, and Mr. Baltera recommended the following amounts:

Category	FY 22 budget request	\$ change to FY 21	% change
Salaries	\$200,877	\$13,808	7.4%
Expenses	\$13,256	(\$50)	(0.4%)
Total	\$214,133	\$13,758	6.9%

Ms. Fournier stated that the mission of the Department is to support the Conservation Commission in the administration of the State’s Wetlands Protection Act, Rivers Protection Act and the Town’s Wetlands Protection By-Law. Additionally, the Department is responsible for the maintenance of public lands owned by the Conservation Commission, coordination with various entities on environmental projects, managing the Commission’s hunting program, responding to citizen inquiries and providing GIS and mapping support to municipal departments. Two key initiatives for the

Department this past year were to finalize the Town open space and recreation plan and to focus on coastal and flood plain property regulations in response to climate change.

COVID-19 affected the department by eliminating most in-person meetings and migrating to on-line processing for permits and applications (hard copy and actual signatures still required) and Zoom meetings. Additionally, more people visited open space facilities resulting in an increase in trash, campfires and vandalism.

The Department has two revolving funds, the Conservation Fund and the Wetlands Fund. The Conservation Fund is an endowed Fund which is used for conservation restrictions maintenance, property maintenance, due diligence reviews and repairs to the Foundry Dam. The Wetlands Fund is funded from the State portion of application fees and is used for administrative and enforcement actions related to the Wetlands Protection Act.

Salaries increased by \$13,808 due to step increases and additional hours for a part time position. Expenses decreased by \$50 due to a slight decrease in fuel costs.

a. Building: Eryn Kelley presented this budget. Building Inspector Mike Clancy requests, and Ms. Kelley recommends, the following amounts:

Category	FY 22 budget request	\$ change to FY 21	% change
Salaries	\$238,750	\$170	0.07%
Expenses	\$15,960	-	-
Total	\$254,710	\$170	0.07%

Mr. Clancy stated that the Department is responsible for enforcing a series of 14 international building codes designed to insure that new and modifications to existing structures meet all safety regulations for the benefit of the public. COVID-19 impacted the Department by moving the permitting process entirely on-line and requiring enhanced safety precautions. The Department was also involved with both the Restaurant Reopening Group and the Incident Management Team.

The Building Department generates revenue from permitting fees. This revenue is placed in the Department's revolving fund account. The balance in this account as of the beginning of FY 21 was \$756,197. Additions to the account come from permit fees. Through November, 2020, the Department collected approximately \$1.1 million dollars from 2,285 permits. The revolving fund is used to cover 50% of the salary expense for Mr. Clancy, two administrative positions, and to pay inspector salaries and expenses. The amount of funds used from the revolving account is set annually at Annual Town Meeting.

Salaries increased by \$170 due to longevity and expenses were flat to last year.

c. Historical: Kristin Dziergowski presented this budget. Historical Administrator Andrea Young requests, and Ms. Dziergowski recommends the following amounts:

Category	FY 22 budget request	\$ change to FY 21	% change
Salaries	\$75,679	-	-
Expenses	\$7,363	(\$628)	(7.9%)
Total	\$83,042	(\$628)	(0.8%)

Ms. Young stated that the role of the Department is to support the Historical Commission and the Historic Districts Commission. The Historical Commission is responsible for the identification, evaluation and protection of 800 properties in Town that are not in a historic district but are subject to the National Historic Preservation Act and Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 8D. The Historic Districts Commission oversees 700 properties in historic districts in Town in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

The Department also administers two revolving funds. The Greenbush Fund is available for expenses related to the impact of the Greenbush Line. The Historic Preservation Fund is funded by the sale of books, donations, and earnings on the balance in the revolving account. This fund is used for preservation projects.

COVID-19 has impacted the department as in-person meetings have been replaced by on-line ones and volunteer support staff have been unable to perform routine clerical duties.

Salaries are flat to last year while expenses are down slightly due to reduced postage and courier costs.

d. Land Use and Development: Victor Baltera presented this budget. Senior Planner Emily Wentworth requests, and Mr. Baltera recommends, the following amounts:

Category	FY 22 budget request	\$ change to FY 21	% change
Salaries	\$147,890	\$4.00	0.003%
Expenses	\$7,375	-	-
Total	\$155,265	\$4.00	0.003%

Ms. Wentworth stated that the role of the Department is to integrate land use regulation, affordable housing production, economic development, and planning functions so the Town can better formulate and implement an overall growth strategy that reflects and enhances the character of the community. The Department provides oversight for projects approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals, works with developers on 40B projects, provides assistance to the Hingham Affordable Housing Trust on budgeting, project management, and financial reporting and works to streamline economic development projects.

The Department has been impacted by COVID-19 through more on-line services, enhanced safety measures, assisting with the Restaurant Reopening task force, and involvement with various regional planning committees.

Salaries and expenses are basically flat to last year.

e. South Shore Country Club: Libby Claypoole presented this budget. Director of Operations Kevin Whalen requested, and Ms. Claypoole recommended, the following amounts:

Category	FY 22 budget request	\$ change to FY 21	% change
Salaries	\$890,830	(\$24,562)	(2.7%)
Expenses	\$998,450	\$147,100	17.3%
Total	\$1,889,280	\$122,538	6.9%

Ms. Claypoole stated that the Town purchased the South Shore Country Club (SSCC) in 1986 to preserve the club for recreational purposes and to prevent the property from residential development. SSCC is run by the Country Club Management Committee who hire the Administrator to oversee all aspects of the Clubs operation. Included within SSCC is a bowling alley, restaurant, event facility, tennis courts and a now defunct swimming pool. The restaurant and event facility are leased to private entities, the tennis courts are available to the public at no cost and the bowling alley operates on a fee for use basis. Overall, SSCC operates as an enterprise fund with revenues expected to match or exceed expenses while providing quality recreational opportunities to the public that are comparable in price and functionality to surrounding municipally owned facilities.

Director of Operations Kevin Whalen stated that COVID-19 significantly affected operations in the spring of 2020 as the Club was unable to function. As restrictions eased, the course gradually reopened and activity increased.

Mr. Whalen stated that while Salaries decreased by \$24,562, due to the high number of seasonal and part time employees he has flexibility to respond to increases and decreases in customer activity without adversely affecting the overall customer experience. Expenses are up by \$122,538 due to several large projects. Mr. Whalen has chosen to pay for these projects with operating revenue rather than seek funding with debt. These projects nclude migrating irrigation controls to the internet to provide the ability to remotely operate the system, repair the roof over the bowling alley, and pay expenses related to the planned new maintenance facility.

f. Weir River Water Company: Dave Anderson and Libby Claypoole presented this budget. The Board of Selectmen are the Water Commissioners and their position was presented by Water Supervisor Russell Tierney. Mr. Tierney requested, and Mr. Anderson and Ms. Claypoole recommended, the following amounts:

Category	FY 22 budget request	\$ change to FY 21	% change
Salaries	\$257,434	\$5,951	2.4%
Operating Expenses	\$5,449,190	(\$189,800)	(3.4%)
PILOT/Insurance	\$920,600	\$79,642	9.5%
Debt Service	\$5,788,969	\$4,249,969	276.2%
Revenue/budget surplus	\$1,753,465	(\$578,841)	(24.8%)
Total	\$14,169,658	\$3,566,921	33.7%

Mr. Anderson and Ms. Claypoole noted that the Town's purchase of the water company occurred on July 31, 2020 so the FY 21 expenses are for only 11 months which affects the budget comparisons with last year. Additionally, debt service reflects the purchase in the FY 22 budget and principal and interest payments under the debt agreement. Mr. Anderson and Ms. Claypoole also pointed out that the Weir River Water Company is an enterprise fund and that all expenses related to its operation are funded by users.

Water Supervisor Russell Tierney noted that the Weir River Water Company is responsible for 190 miles of water mains, and treats over 1.2 billion gallons of water annually for customers in Hingham, Hull and Cohasset. Mr. Tierney stated that the Water Company is engaged in a 10+ year Master Plan to project the needs and requirements of its customers in order to insure a safe and sufficient supply of water to its customers. Additionally, they are performing a site survey to locate a new water storage tank, a cost of service study and are finalizing the transition of customer billing to Suez Water Company from Aquarion.

h. Public Works: George Danis presented this budget. Department of Public Works (DPW) Superintendent Randy Sylvester requests, and Mr. Danis recommends, the following amounts:

Category	FY 22 budget request	\$ change to FY 21	% change
Salaries	\$2,441,126	\$17,138	0.7%
Expenses	\$801,423	(\$25,046)	(3.0%)
Snow Removal	\$563,365	(\$2,384)	(0.4%)
Road maintenance	\$385,500	\$3,000	0.8%
Total	\$4,191,414	(\$7,292)	(0.2%)

DPW Superintendent Randy Sylvester noted that the Department is responsible for 6 divisions, 140 miles of roads, 100 miles of drainage lines, 60 miles of sidewalks and 10,000 shade trees. Additionally, the DPW is responsible for MS4 storm water compliance, public education for recycling, sewer system inflows and infiltration, and maintaining the grounds at public facilities.

COVID-19 affected the Department through enhanced safety precautions, increased trash at the landfill, increased trash pickup at public facilities and area trash receptacles,

closing of the landfill swap shop, and increased use of the scale for demolition disposal due to the inability to process in person permits.

Mr. Sylvester noted that salaries are up slightly due to step, longevity and overtime. Expenses are down due to lower fuel and electricity expenses which offset increases in other categories. Additionally, snow removal and road maintenance are flat to last year.

i. Landfill and Recycling: Nancy MacDonald presented this budget. DPW Supervisor Randy Sylvester requests, and Ms. MacDonald recommends, the following amounts:

Categories	FY 22 budget request	\$ change to FY 21	% change
Salaries	\$621,535	(\$2,470)	(0.4%)
Expenses	\$1,033,482	\$147,253	16.6%
Total	\$1,655,017	\$144,783	9.6%

Mr. Sylvester notes that Salary expenses are down due to a reduction in the number of part time staff and a corresponding decrease in part time hours. Expenses are up significantly due to increased costs for trash disposal, recycling costs, scale administration (COVID-19 related), telephone (internet) which offset decreases in electric and fuel expenses.

Mr. Sylvester stated that he has secured a grant to purchase a new baler for plastic milk jugs which can be recycled at a profit. This project has been delayed due to COVID-19 but he is hopeful to have it operational this year. Additionally, Mr. Sylvester will be selling home composting bins to allow homeowners to compost food scraps which otherwise would be included with homeowner trash.

j. Sewer: Brenda Black presented this budget. DPW Supervisor Randy Sylvester requests, and Ms. Black recommends, the following amounts:

Category	FY 22 budget request	\$ change to FY 21	% change
Salaries	\$382,737	\$3,715	0.9%
Expenses	\$300,785	(\$18,207)	(5.7%)
Engineering	\$10,000	-	-
MWRA Charges	\$2,280,148	\$149,168	7.0%
Debt Service	\$72,720	(\$1,936)	(2.6%)
Hull Inter-municipal Agreement	\$445,869	-	-
Total	\$3,492,259	\$132,740	4.0%

Ms. Black noted that all expenses are paid by users of the sewer system. Mr. Sylvester noted that Salaries increased due to steps and longevity. Expenses decreased primarily due to lower electric and fuel costs. MWRA and Hull assessments are based on operating costs for these entities and Debt Service was reduced as existing debt is paid down.

g. Public Service Utilities: Eryn Kelley presented this budget. Town Accountant Sue Nickerson requests, and Ms. Kelley recommends the following amounts:

Category	FY 22 budget request	\$ change to FY 21	% change
Emergency Water	\$414,060	\$6,310	1.5%
Street Lighting	\$105,000	-	-
Total	\$519,060	\$6,310	1.2%

Ms. Nickerson stated that these costs are to maintain water in the hydrant lines in case of fire, funds for hydrant repair or replacement, and electric charges for street lighting.

Ms. Nickerson also noted that water rates are scheduled to increase by 10% this year and that all budget that include a charge for water will need to be adjusted accordingly.

4. Review and Approval of Minutes from January 26: Approved with changes by a roll call vote of 13-0-0.

5. Warrant Article Updates: Chair Curley noted that Town Counsel had indicated that proceeds from the sale of the Hersey House could be used to help fund the construction of the proposed new Public Safety Facility, that the possible Warrant Article recognizing volunteers was still under review and that the AdCom would plan to review the perennial Warrant Articles at the February 11 meeting.

6. Liaison Reports: None. Chair Curley noted that he had reviewed AdCom questions about sub-committees with Town Administrator Tom Mayo and they agreed that teams of liaisons meeting with Department heads to review budgets did not constitute a sub-committee for purposes of the Open Meeting Law. Only established sub-committees (i.e. ACES) need to post meeting notices and minutes when they are meeting and plan to have a quorum. To avoid confusion it was suggested that the head liaison in the group would be called a team leader instead of a chair.

7. Discussion of Advisory Committee Housekeeping Items:

- a. Meeting times: The AdCom will next meet February 9th and 11th. The meeting on the 11th may be a joint one with the Board of Selectmen and the Community Preservation Committee;
- b. Policies and Procedures: No update;
- c. Town Meeting and related deadlines: All Town Meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 8, 2021 with rain dates of May 15th or 16th. Possible State legislative action will allow Town elections to move to after All Town Meeting;
- d. Warrant Article editing procedures: Chair Curley noted that he had issued guidelines for preparing recommendations to all AdCom members.

8. Matters not anticipated within 48 hours of meeting: None

9. Adjourn: Motion to adjourn at 10:41 pm approved by roll call vote of 13-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

George Danis, Secretary

List of Documents Distributed for this Meeting:

- Agenda
- Minutes from January 26 meeting
- Budget Books

Approved on 02/11/2021 by roll call vote of 12-0-1 (Tina Sherwood abstained)