

## **SELECTBOARD & FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES – Feb 16, 2021 06:30pm**

Selectboard Members Present: Leigh Davis, Steve Bannon, Ed Abrahams, Bill Cooke, Kate Burke.

Finance Committee Members Present: Anne O'Dwyer, Michelle Loubert, Meredith O'Connor, Will Curletti, Tom Blauvelt.

1. Called to order at 6:38pm by Selectboard Chair S. Bannon.
2. FY 22 Budget Policy
  - a. Finance Committee Chair, A. O'Dwyer said that the Finance Committee adopted a budget policy at their last meeting. Revision regarding language about the Tax Levy. Voted on January 27, 2020. At the last meeting, the Selectboard at February 8 had requested that one statement needed revision. M. Loubert asked if this has been brought before the Finance Committee; since she hasn't reviewed the changes, she would like time to review it. A. O'Dwyer shared the proposed revision on the screen—under "Strategic Priorities." A roll call vote was taken; the revision was approved by the Finance Committee 4-1, with M. Loubert dissenting.
3. Budget Overview: Town Manager Presentation (see packet)
  - a. Budget Priorities:
    - i. Ensure public safety, public health
    - ii. Maintain high quality of life through public services
    - iii. Invest in public infrastructure
    - iv. Investing in "Human Capital" (employees)
    - v. Investing in our Stabilization Accounts
  - b. FY 22 Revenue Sources & Estimates (see packet for more details)
    - i. Tax Levy
    - ii. State Aid
    - iii. Local Receipts
    - iv. Enterprise Fund
    - v. Free Cash (Tax Levy & Special Articles)
    - vi. Total Revenues = 6.6% increase
  - c. Expenditures
    - i. Town Operation Budget
    - ii. BHRSD Assessment
    - iii. Enterprise Fund (Wastewater)
    - iv. Special Articles
    - v. State Assessments/Overlay
    - vi. Total = 6.6% increase
  - d. Total budget
    - i. Lowest increase in past 7 years
  - e. Capital spending
    - i. Much lower; scaled back
  - f. Special Articles: see packet
    - i. Helped along by local cannabis sales
  - g. Question by B. Cooke: cannabis impact funding seems low? M. Pruhenski responded that they are spreading out the revenue over more years.
  - h. S. Bannon noted that this is a general overview. Any questions? T. Blauvelt stated that he had specific questions when we move into greater detail.

4. Selectboard/Town Manager Budget

a. Highlights:

- i. Salary: Selectboard salaries increased to \$23,500 total (\$4,700 per member – covers a full family HMO plan for a year). This increase will allow SB members to benefit from Town's healthcare system, making their payments out of payroll deductions. Note that 4% salary increases are only 2% increase over last year and this year.
- ii. Contracted Services: Consultants for specific projects, PR combined. Half of this increase will be for a dedicated HR professional (\$20,000). M. Pruhenski noted that we are still not sure whether the professional will be a consultant or a salaried employee. \$2,000 line item increase (HR professional instead of Joe Grochmal – Town Intern). Question by A. O'Dwyer: if consultant, stays in line. What about a full-time shared employee? M. Pruhenski responded that the \$20,000 would be moved to salary.
- iii. Advertising: Cost increase in Berkshire Eagle. Copy paper pulled out and separated—for entire building, not just Town Manager's office.

5. Finance Committee

a. Highlights by M. Pruhenski & A. O'Dwyer:

- i. Increased reserve fund – reducing
- ii. Dues, membership, travel stays same
- iii. Contingency for salaries: Fin. Comm. proposed \$128,000. M. Pruhenski requested \$60,000 instead. M. Pruhenski noted that we need to be able to attract and retain employees, and it is incredibly difficult to attract new or promote existing employees. E.g., Sergeant would be taking a pay cut in becoming Police Chief; same for Highway, Wastewater. Salary increases necessary. M. Pruhenski is proposing hiring a consultant to review salaries with respect to other Towns. A. O'Dwyer inquired as to whether we will just be looking at Department Head salary, or will we also be reviewing overtime budgets? M. Pruhenski responded that overtime has been an issue, especially this year (lack of available staff). We still need to review if our salaries are out of line with other municipalities. M. Loubert said she was concerned that there are so many people out of work—so she does not agree with increasing salaries at the moment. A professional review is best. A. O'Dwyer was wondering if M. Pruhenski knew of any companies; M. Pruhenski said they will put this out to bid, but he can think of 2. B. Cooke inquired as to whether we should hire another person in these departments? M. Loubert noted that a part-time person without benefits would be best. M. Pruhenski said he would look into it. Principal Assessor position is currently hiring.

6. Finance Director/Town Accountant

a. Highlights by S. Carmel (Finance Director)

- i. \$500 audit increase; contract increase
- ii. Line item reinstated for retired DoR to assist with end-of-year DoR submissions.

7. Technology

a. Highlights by Amy Pulver (IT Coordinator)

- i. Software subscription is typically 5% increase; seeking out different software to improve website ("virtual office")
- ii. New phone system installed: VoIP. \$20,000 for Verizon new phone system
- iii. K. Burke inquired about the repair costs. Amy replied that these costs are for printers, random cords, external hard drives, etc.

8. Assessors' Office
  - a. Highlights by S. Carmel
    - i. Contracted services increased by \$5,000 due to having new assessor, CAMA conversion, quarterly taxes
9. Collector/Treasurer
  - a. Highlights by Karen Fink (Department Head)
    - i. Decreased Tax Title budget
    - ii. Contracted services increasing due to change to quarterly
    - iii. \$4,300 for new automated mailer, copier
10. Town Clerk
  - a. Highlights by Jenn Messina (Town Clerk)
    - i. Election workers decrease (3 -> 1)
    - ii. Assistant Town Clerk: part time -> full time. K. Burke noted that we should pay our employees at least \$40,000.
    - iii. Decrease in election costs
    - iv. Supplies went up a bit
11. Building Inspectors
  - a. Highlights by Ed May (Inspector)
    - i. Level funding, small increase for Office Clerk. A. O'Dwyer thought it was good to look at increases for those not only at the top, but also the general employees
12. Health Department
  - a. Highlights by Rebecca (GB Board of Health)
    - i. New Health inspector: decrease
    - ii. Increase in contracted services (>5% increase for added nurse efforts with pandemic)
13. Debt Service
  - a. Highlights by S. Carmel
    - i. 15% debt service increase: \$450,000
    - ii. Result of \$5M bond from January
    - iii. Short-term interest: decrease by \$180,000
    - iv. A. O'Dwyer wanted to clarify that this is for any past capital expenditures. S. Carmel confirmed.
  - b. Retirement
  - c. Highlights by S. Carmel
    - i. 6% increase (fixed cost)
14. Insurance
  - a. Highlights by S. Carmel
    - i. 2.2% increase
    - ii. Were anticipating 3% increase, were able to reduce that (level funding)
    - iii. Slight increase/contingency for new employees
15. Citizen Speak
16. Media Time
17. Adjourned (42 attendees)

Respectfully submitted by Tate Coleman, Recording Secretary

Approved by Finance Committee on December 12, 2021