

**Joint Budget Meeting, Selectboard and Finance Committee**  
**Town Hall, 334 Main Street Great Barrington MA 01230**  
**Tuesday January 22, 2019 at 6:00 pm**

**Present:**

**Selectboard:** S. Bannon, E. Abrahams, D. Bailly, B. Cooke, K. Burke

**Finance Committee:** T. Blauvelt, J. Lee, A. O'Dwyer, E. Curletti, M. Loubert

**Town Manager:** J. Tabakin

**Town Accountant:** S. Carmel

I. **Call to Order** – S. Bannon called the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

II. **Finance Committee:** Approval of minutes from November 27, 2018.

**MOTION:** M. Loubert made the motion to approve the November 27, 2018 minutes.

**SECOND:** J. Lee

**VOTE:** 5-0

III. **FY20 Budget Review**

a. **Police Department**

i. **Board Questions**

1. **M. Loubert** asked for clarification in the difference in Overtime allowance. Chief Walsh noted that "Police Specials" decreased by 10K, which segues into the overtime. Cost of living, anticipated and current vacancies all play a role in overtime, as shifts need to be filled. Currently, there are four part-time officers, nine is optimum. While we build up the "Reserve Officers", shifts are filled with overtime.

2. **K. Burke:**

a. **Overtime:** Should the number actually be higher, as it seems the current will be easily reached, if not surpassed. And, if left as-is, and more funding is needed, would the Finance Committee be approached. Chief Walsh asserts grant funding is available and used for this purpose. Patrol Officer salary can also be transferred to the overtime fund.

b. **Police Specials** is less than anticipated. Would more be needed if we did increase the number of officers from 4 to 8? S. Carmel advised that the number was historically high and adjusted accordingly for FY20. Chief Walsh is comfortable with the number requested.

c. **Uniform Grant:** Is there a grant for uniforms? Chief Walsh is not aware of any, but we do receive a 50% reimbursement for bullet-proof vests.

d. **Crime Prevention/Ammo Increase.** Chief Walsh advised of a state mandated increase in training, which doubled the paid time and ammo required.

3. **D. Bailly** asked for clarification on “Uniform Allowance” vs. “Uniforms”. Chief Walsh explained that “Uniform Allowance” is the stipend for cleaning and maintenance of existing uniforms. “Uniforms” are the actual pieces newly purchased.

4. **M. Loubert** asked if the Police Department has all of the bulletproof vests they need. Chief Walsh confirmed, they are purchased every five years.

## **b. Fire Department**

i. **Chief Burger:** Expenses remain steady, not too many increases in line items. Additional equipment line item for \$2500 last year has been eliminated.

### **1. Increases**

a. **Call Firefighters: 25K increase.** Would like to have training more available and flexible, with more work details at the station. Trainings are currently Monday nights, Chief Burger would like to be able to offer it spread out over several days to improve the efficiency and have the crew on site and available more consistently.

b. **Full Time Firefighters: 25K increase.** This would be used to hire a third Full time firefighter halfway through the year. All would be put on 16hr rotating shifts – 6AM-10PM, 7 days a week. This would also allow cross staffing with ambulatory/EMS services.

## 2. Questions/Answers

- a. **J. Tabakin:** The increase in fees covers the increase in costs, minus clerical, which is covered elsewhere.
- b. **M. Loubert:** The Administrative Assistant is currently employed 2 mornings per week. A third morning is being sought. This would split 50/50 between the firehouse and Council on Aging for approximately 20 hours per week. This additional time would allow assistance with writing policy and procedures, payroll, procurement, etc. A full time Admin is not needed. A full time firefighter can assist with many tasks without the additional expense of a full time Admin. Assistant.
- c. **D. Bailly:** How are the fire hydrant rentals, specifically with Housatonic Water going? Chief Burger has been working closely with them, and communication is improving. However, maintenance records for the hydrants has not been received. D. Bailly asked if there was a code change regarding sprinkler systems. Chief Burger said no.
- d. **A. O'Dwyer:** On the Call Firefighters Line, at last Town Meeting, a contingent 50K was voted for. This was in FY19. The additional 50K for FY20 amounts to a total of 100K. The actual did not meet the funds approved, because there was not a new hire. The new full time hire will come on in January 2020. This will likely be an in-house hire, so they will already be trained.
- e. **M. Loubert:** Asked for clarification on the distance standard for accepting volunteers, and would like to see more women on the squad. Chief Burger explained that the volunteer must live or work within the Town of Great Barrington, or within 2 miles of a firehouse. Women are encouraged to join.
- f. **B. Cooke:** How much will the firehouse receive for assisting EMS? Chief Burger would prefer not to speculate.

### c. **Emergency Management** – Chief Walsh

- i. No questions

**d. Animal Control**

- i. The only change is in in-state travel, to accommodate compensation for personal vehicle use.

**e. DPW – Sean Van Deusen**

**i. Buildings and Grounds:**

1. Increase in Contracted Services to handle minimum wage increases, hvac issues, carpentry, and preventative maintenance.
2. New Staff – Highway and Building Department.
3. Departments have been merged (Buildings & Grounds with Parks and Cemeteries)– Supervising has been streamlined into one location, and gives improved coordination between Buildings & Grounds. This saves 8K overall.

**4. Questions:**

- a. **M. Loubert:** Why the jump in Overtime? **Clarification on Working Foreman Line?** S. Van Deusen explained it is due to Buildings & Grounds Dept. weekend garbage pick up requirements, and having someone available to check on buildings during extreme weather (pipes freezing, etc.). The Cemetery Department had its own foreman. This position now handles Cemeteries and Buildings and Grounds.
- b. **D. Bailly:** Library gas & oil actual is only \$25, is this true? S. Carmel believes it is coming out of another line. Will check. School maintenance does have expenditures, hence increase. The county does not pay the Town back for maintenance costs.
- c. **K. Burke:** Clarification on Custodian increase? Last year's budget was short.

**ii. Highway**

1. The Tree Warden position was merged into the Highway Department. There is a great number of hazard trees, especially downtown.
2. There is an increase in street lights and street maintenance. This allows sufficient funding for downtown. Housatonic is included in these

numbers, and a large amount will be going toward asphalt – potholes, etc.

### **iii. Parks and Recreation**

1. Improvements previously came out of Capital. Includes maintenance, landscaping of parks, and equipment repairs. Operating costs switched out of Capital, so is not really an increase.

### **iv. Wastewater**

1. Increase in electricity costs. Overtime increase to account for difficulties. 10K increase in collection systems to make point repairs after extremely wet years. These are EPA mandated. Repairs/Maintenance – add maintenance program, spare parts, inventory, preventative maintenance, etc.
2. New Clerical position needed to handle billing and paperwork, will help to better meet standards overall.

### **v. Questions**

1. **M. Loubert:** Overtime issues can be a concern for public-increase in bills. Are there plans for expanded sewer lines? At this moment there is not proper justification for expansion due to population density. As for Division Street, there is a lot of activity, old septic systems, and are still paying sewer rate. Also pointed out that benefit costs need to be considered for new hires, if they are benefit-eligible. This cost would be included in the threshold.

## **f. Capital**

### **i. Police**

1. Current radios are 10 years old, and not current with FEMA capabilities. The new radios are \$7500 vs \$1000 each at old cost. Chief Walsh recommends 6 new radios be purchased each year. Currently, three are being purchased with grant funds. 21 are needed in total. This cost was budgeted in case grants are not received.
2. Two new cruisers are needed in FY2020. T. Blauvelt asked if there are hybrid options. Chief Walsh said that there are some being released, they are around 8K more than non-hybrid, and new. He would prefer to wait

another year or so for “kinks” to be worked out in the new models.

Maintenance of the hybrids would also be a concern, as it would have to be outsourced. The hybrids also lack the acceleration and power of non-hybrid models.

3. Cruisers are replaced every two years at approximately 115K miles, on a 2/1 schedule. Trade-in value on them is around 4-5K.

## **ii. Fire**

1. We are optimistic that a FEMA grant will be received to help with replacing turn-out gear, which is currently 10 years old-beyond life allowance. Currently leasing gear. The average cost is \$3500 for just the pants and coat.
2. Housatonic Fire Station repairs are needed. This includes roof replacement, retaining wall, drainage, handrail addition, and cosmetic repairs.

## **iii. DPW**

### **1. Buildings and Grounds**

- a. The transfer station compactor needs work, as well as the chain.

### **2. Security Upgrades**

- a. Barrier and cameras to allow weekend access to Town Hall Bathrooms. The Selectboard has not yet voted on this.

### **3. Housatonic School Improvements**

- a. Roof needs repairs, the tarp is presently down. S. Van Deusen is continually working with contractors on this.

### **4. Police Station Repairs**

- a. Station needs shingling, new windows, masonry repairs on the chimney and stairs.

### **5. Town Hall Sewer Issues**

- a. Leaking elbows, etc. Work is needed.

### **6. Water Stations**

- a. This line should either be removed completely or moved into “Other”. These funds should be privately raised, not included in budget.

#### **7. Street and Bridge Improvements**

- a. Division Street – Authorization to borrow, though grants will be sought. Christian Hill bridge needs work, is in danger of collapsing.

#### **8. Parks:** \$45000 will be changed to \$42000

#### **9. Technology**

- a. Telecommunication – upgrade to phone system. Current one is 20 years old. The current bill averages \$1800/month. The new system will reduce this to approximately \$1000/month. It will encompass all departments.

#### **IV. Citizen Speak Time**

- a. Better lighting included in the Capital budget

#### **V. Adjournment:**

**MOTION:** E. Abrahams

**SECOND:** D. Bailly

**MOTION:** E. Curletti

**SECOND:** M. Loubert

With a unanimous vote from the Selectboard and the Finance Committee, the meeting adjourned at 8:02PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Tabitha Brewer

Recording Secretary