

Joint Budget Meeting, Selectboard and Finance Committee Minutes
Town Hall, 334 Main Street Great Barrington MA 01230
Tuesday January 15, 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 6:03PM

II. FY20 Budget Review

a. Strategic Priorities:

- Ensure public safety, public health.
- Maintain a strong local economy.
- Maintain a high quality of life.
- Maintain stable and healthy community.
- Seek Environmental Sustainability.
- Maintain public infrastructure.
- Follow Great Barrington's Master Plan.

b. Financial Goals:

- Maintain adequate financial resources to sustain municipal services in short and long term.
- Respond to changes in the economy.
- Meet priority needs of our Town.
- Provide quality services effectively and on a cost-effective basis
- Maintain appropriate capacity for present and future needs
- Maintain top credit rating.
- Keep overall tax levy as low as possible.

c. Operation Objectives:

- Meet public service needs, with growing demand in inspectional services, public works, police and fire.

- Incorporate best practices into administration.
- Community economic development.
- Union contracts.
- Support strong department leadership.

General Notes: Budgets became tighter, but the actual numbers are meeting estimates. Great Barrington is approaching “State of the Art” equipment with computers, and with the new system being proposed, phones will be upgraded. We are in the second year of a three year Union Contracts. In late Fall of 2019, negotiations for a new 3 year contracts should begin. New Department Heads have come in in the past couple of years. They were well-trained, and are providing strong Department leadership.

d. Town Funding Programs:

- Town Revolving: user fees pay for service.
- Capital Improvement Program: grants, bonds and tax levy.
- Town Operations: taxes, state funds, grants, user fees.
- Wastewater Treatment Plant: enterprise program funded by sewer rates.

e. FY20 Revenue Estimates

- Tax Levy: \$24,235,560
- State Aid: \$1,172,189
- Local Receipts: \$1,525,000
- Enterprise Fund: \$2,201,599
- Free cash to reduce tax levy: \$2,109,298
- Total Revenue (4.4% increase): \$31,243,646

f. FY20 Proposed Appropriations

- BHRSD Assessment: \$17,124,615
- Town Operation Budget: \$11,645,722
- State Assessments/Overlay: \$271,710
- Enterprise Fund (Wastewater): \$2,201,599
- Total to be raised (4.4% increase): \$31,243,646

g. Town Operating Budget/Percent Increase in Dollars

- FY20: \$11,645,722 (2.4% - \$273,734)
- FY19: \$11,371,988 (1.9% - \$215,689)
- FY18: \$11,112,034 (1% - \$157,392)
- FY17: \$10,954,642 (1% - \$74,720)
- FY16: \$10,879,922 (2% - \$168,435)

h. Proposed FY20 Appropriations

- General Government: \$1,453,494
- Public Safety: \$2,433,945
- Public Works: \$2,280,428
- Cultural, Recreation & Human Services.: \$1,115,845
- Insurance: \$1,824,900
- Debt: \$1,661,150
- Retirement: \$856,960
- Miscellaneous: \$19,000
- **TOTAL PROPOSED OPERATING: \$11,645,722**

Note: These numbers have been generally consistent with past years. Primary differences resulted from changes in labor costs and insurance.

i. FY16-FY20 Capital Program

- FY20: \$8,687,000
- FY19: \$3,047,045
- FY18: \$4,186,400
- FY17: \$5,566,450
- FY16: \$2,672,790

j. Capital Budget FY20 - \$8,687,000

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Division Street Bridge Repairs - \$4,000,000 (*grant money is not yet in, so costs are included in analysis*)
- Street Improvements - \$1,740,000
- St. James Place & Taconic Retaining Wall - \$450,000

NOTE: Capital Program Reviewed in budget process

k. Proposed Capital Stabilization Fund

At Town Meeting, propose to appropriate \$1,000,000 from Free Cash to establish a Capital Stabilization Fund to offset debt payments and avoid pulling from operating budget or make cuts to fund future capital projects without impacting tax rates.

- **FY20** – appropriate \$1,000,000 from free cash to begin Stabilization Fund.
- **FY21 – FY25:** appropriate \$100,000 each year from free cash to total \$1,500,000 by FY25

l. Streets and Sidewalks - \$6,840,000

- Downtown Street Improvements
 - (Bridge Street, Bentley Avenue, and Taconic Parking Lot)
- Design and replacement of Lake Mansfield stream culvert
- Rehabilitation of retaining wall for Taconic Avenue
- Additional street and sidewalk improvements
- Engineering

m. Building and Grounds - \$1,102, 000

- Housatonic School roof replacement
- Housatonic School masonry and window repairs
- Police Station roof and masonry repairs
- Police Station window replacement
- Town Hall sewer repairs and plumbing upgrades
- Housatonic Fire Station roof repairs

n. Parks and Open Space - \$45,000

- Skate Park repairs
- Baseball field repairs
- Softball field repairs

o. Vehicles and Equipment - \$655,000

- 3 DPW dump trucks w/plow and sander
- 2 Police cruisers
- 6 Police radios
- Fire Department turnout gear
- Town Hall phone system

III. FY2020 Budget

a. Selectboard/Town Manager

- i. Increase of 1.86% - \$6,358
- ii. Legal costs high in 2018 due to zoning enforcement litigation.

b. Finance Committee

- i. Reserve Fund and Finance Committee numbers were combined.
- ii. If we do not meet the budgeted amount, excess will go into Free Cash.

c. Town Accountant

- i. Sue Carmel has been here for a year, and is doing well. The pay is now at the previous level, as she is now holding the title of Finance Director. This did add a 21.36% increase (\$25,400)
 - ii. Clerical part time hire to assist with payroll, accounts receivable, etc.
- d. Technology
 - i. 1.71% increase (\$3,498)
- e. Assessors
 - i. 6% increase (\$8,865)
 - ii. FY2020 is a recertification year. We will be bringing in as firm to assess taxable items in businesses. This did provide a return 7-8 times the cost of labor last time.
 - iii. We will be sending out a homeowners personal property form as well. Care will be taken to keep hours for part time help to review these forms under 20/wk to avoid triggering benefit requirements.
- f. Collector/Treasurer
 - i. 12.85% increase (\$24,593)
 - ii. Largest jump is due to tax title litigation costs. This represents the true cost, rather than going to Finance Committee for more money later on.
 - iii. Contracted Services – change in payroll software/company.
 - iv. Clerical/Assistant Collector were previously in the same line item.
 - v. “Other Services” includes offsetting people who pay online – we pay the \$0.25 fee.
- g. Town Clerk
 - i. 5.01% increase (\$6,130)
 - ii. 2019 elections were included in “other supplies”, are split out for 2020
- h. Debt Services
 - i. 0.75% Decrease of f(-\$12,500)
- i. Retirement
 - i. 4.73% increase (38,697)
- j. Insurance
 - i. -5.51% decrease (-\$106,530)

- ii. Workers Compensation is unpredictable. FY2020 number may prove to be low.
- iii. Insurance deductibles may also be low.
- iv. Mitigation Account: 2019 is the last year we are required to fund.
- v. Health Insurance: Berkshire Healthcare Group is anticipating a 7.5-8% increase. 7.5% used to configure numbers.
- vi. Actual through 12/31/18 is only a 5 month figure.
- vii. If there is no increase, these numbers will be changed.
- viii. Allocation from Wastewater: Time spent and salary allocation from Enterprise Fund is reimbursing the General Fund.

IV. Citizen Speak Time - None

V. Adjournment

MOTION: E. Abrahams made the motion to Adjourn at 7:30PM

SECOND: D. Bailly

VOTE: 5-0

MOTION: E. Curletti made the motion to Adjourn at 7:30PM

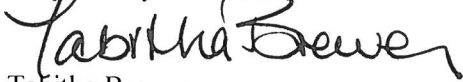
SECOND: M. Loubert

VOTE: 5-0

The meeting adjourned at 7:30PM

With a unanimous vote from the Selectboard and the Finance Committee, the meeting adjourned at 7:30PM.

Respectfully Submitted



Tabitha Brewer

Recording Secretary