

SELECTBOARD & FINANCE COMMITTEE DRAFT 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, Meredith O'Connor, Michelle Loubert, Will Curletti, Tom Blauvelt

1. Called to order at 6:38pm by Steve
2. FY 22 Budget Policy
 - a. Anne 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. Michelle asked if this has been brought before the Finance Committee; since she hasn't reviewed the changes, she would like time to review it. Anne 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 Michelle 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 Bill: cannabis impact funding seems low? Mark responded that they are spreading out the revenue over more years.
 - h. Steve noted that this is a general overview. Any questions? Tom 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). SB members can benefit from Town’s healthcare system without paying. 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). Mark 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 Anne: if consultant, stays in line. What about a full-time shared employee? Mark 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 TM office.
- 5. Finance Committee
 - a. Highlights by Mark & Anne:
 - i. Increased reserve fund – reducing
 - ii. Dues, membership, travel stays same
 - iii. Contingency for salaries: Fin. Comm. proposed \$128,000. Mark requested \$60,000 instead. Mark 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. Mark is proposing hiring a consultant to review salaries with respect to other Towns. Anne inquired as to whether we will just be looking at Department Head salary, or will we also be reviewing overtime budgets? Mark 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. Michelle 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. Anne was wondering if Mark knew of any companies; Mark said they will put this out to bid, but he can think of 2. Bill inquired as to whether we should hire another person in these departments? Michelle noted that a part-time person without benefits would be best. Mark said he would look into it. Principal Assessor position is currently hiring.
- 6. Finance Director/Town Accountant
 - a. Highlights by Sue 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. Kate 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 Sue 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. Kate 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. Anne 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 Sue
 - i. 15% debt service increase: \$450,000
 - ii. Result of \$5M bond from January
 - iii. Short-term interest: decrease by \$180,000
 - iv. Anne wanted to clarify that this is for any past capital expenditures. Sue confirmed.

14. Retirement

- a. Highlights by Sue
 - i. 6% increase (fixed cost)
- 15. Insurance
 - a. Highlights by Sue
 - i. 2.2% increase
 - ii. Were anticipating 3% increase, were able to reduce that (level funding)
 - iii. Slight increase/contingency for new employees
- 16. Citizen Speak
- 17. Media Time
- 18. Adjourned (42 attendees)

Respectfully submitted by Tate Coleman, Recording Secretary