

Board of Selectmen Joint with Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 12, 2021, 6:30 pm
Virtual GoToMeeting

Present: Board of Selectmen Chair Diana Szynal, Edmund Jaworski and Brian Moriarty; Darryl Williams, Betsy Rider, Kim Baker, Diane Brzozowski and Sean Barry, Finance Committee; Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator; Sharon Strzegowski, Treasurer/Collector; Lydia Szych, Town Clerk; Police Chief Mike Dekoschak; Robert Flaherty, Fire Chief; Audrey Weston

CALL TO ORDER Chair Darryl Williams called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.
 Chairperson Szynal called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS None

PUBLIC FORUM None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES None

POSTED BUSINESS

TOPIC 1: Review FY2022 Budget and Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles. Town Administrator, Marlene Michonski, uploaded the spreadsheet on the computer for emergency services for everyone to see. Darryl Williams asked if Ms. Michonski made changes and she said she did noting that all changes are highlighted. Darryl Williams wanted to start with public safety, the Police Department first. Darryl Williams welcomed Mike Dekoschak, Chief of Police. Darryl Williams asked if Ms. Rider wanted to review this. She identified three things in the Chief's proposal: 1) \$4,160.00 to promote Sgt. Phillips; 2) \$3,120.00 to increase the base pay of the full-time officer; and 3) \$2,000.00 for supplies. There was discussion as to whether that figure was based on the 2% COLA for last year, this year, what? Ms. Rider said the total for Sgt. Phillips' increase would be \$1,060.80. Chair Diana Szynal didn't understand why the Board and Committee wouldn't let the Chief have the full amount he is looking for. The Chief reiterated that the optimal thing I'm looking for is \$7,000.00 because it raises the salary of the full-time person. Chair Szynal stated that we are not retaining people in this department. I'm in favor of the amount that the Chief has asked for plus the customary 2%. There was discussion as to which number to include on the FY22 budget spreadsheet. Darryl Williams asked Sharon Strzegowski, Treasurer/Collector, if she calculated 2% on from FY21 and 2% on FY22 then added whatever the additional for the new contract? Ms. Strzegowski said yes. Lydia Szych, Town Clerk, also used the same formula. Back to Police Department, Darryl Williams asked the finance committee we would do the full \$4,160.00 for Sgt. Phillis and then the 2% would go on top of that? That is what we are hearing? Darryl Williams my question for the Chief regarding supplies is what are you anticipating by the end of the year that you will run out of money in your supplies? Chief Dekoschak stated, no, but next year will be tight, dues have gone up, they just revamped that stuff. It's par for the course that everything just keeps going up. The

\$2,000.00 gives me that. I have never been this low of a figure this time of year, I will make it to the end of June. I will have no overages. Darryl Williams but you are anticipating for the FY22 budget that you will need that \$2,000.00 for fees which you know that are going up? One thing we can do is put these things in the budget and talk with Chief Flaherty with the understanding that we need to see what the bottom line is. Sean Barry suggested to put them in now so that we can see where we are. Ms. Rider, have we upped snow and ice? I'm sure Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator, put them in. Ms. Michonski reminded everyone that we did not decide what to do with snow and ice.

Fire Department: Darryl Williams stated that the Fire Department is looking for \$2,410.00 for supplies. Chief Flaherty stated that is correct. Darryl Williams asked if there anything else we are missing? Were you looking for another person? Ms. Rider no that was ambulance side. Chief Flaherty discussed the possibility of an additional full-time ambulance person. Chief Flaherty stated that he would like an additional \$12,000.00 to put someone there 5 days a week to cover the ambulance. Chief Flaherty stated that he only had a chance to talk about level funding. Darryl Williams refresh me on the increase side. Chief Flaherty said that the budget ended up showing a 14% increase. Chief Flaherty put a total of \$40,000.00 to include a bit extra for administrative. Chief Flaherty said the money that would cover it would come from ambulance calls. He said that we missed 27 calls between 7:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. which are given up to another ambulance service. With someone here, we would be ahead of the game and would make around \$6,000.00 more by covering those calls ourselves. Chair Szynal said and we provide better service! Chief Flaherty said I had someone working 1 day a week and haven't missed a call since sometime last August. Darryl Williams asked the Chief in your Fire Department budget what is the salary line increase on the fire side? Chief Flaherty stated that the increase would be coming from ambulance revenue. Chief Flaherty said that he has multiple salaries. On the fire side he put in an extra category only to make it easier to see. Ms. Rider why don't we just take it out of ambulance? Chief Flaherty said we will be above and beyond soon for ambulance funds. Ms. Rider - I suggest let's do it. Darryl Williams I'm okay with that and there is still enough to pay for the ambulance lease. Chief Flaherty said that over the last five years we are in the mid-90's for ambulance. Last year we were at \$102,000.00. Betsy Rider said last year we paid for the paramedic equipment out of free cash. Chief Flaherty said the funding this year will come out of free cash. Darryl Williams asked the Chief if this new position is full time. Chief Flaherty said I can do it both ways. I can make it work without having the benefits become an issue with it. Darryl Williams said this is where I am going. If it's full-time there is a benefit package and Sharon Strzegowski would have to put the money into her benefits package. Chief Flaherty said that he has people looking for hours. Darryl Williams asked are we okay with putting this in as it makes sense to me as the Chief can pay for this with covering all the calls from Monday-Friday? This includes emergency management but there are no changes there right Bob? Chief Flaherty replied no changes with emergency management. Ms. Rider did we add in \$2,410.00 for expenses? Darryl Williams what was that for? Chief Flaherty answered it was for apparatus and filtration and they need to be changed out and ambulance and fire reporting software, website, dues all increased. Chief Dekoschak mentioned that the Finance Committee can bundle this in with the police. Chief Dekoschak said he applied for a grant and he should know before town meeting if he will get it. Sean Barry said I think the good part is that it doesn't really matter. If we get grants we don't borrow it.

Chief Dekoschak stated that as far as animal control, Scott Pomeroy goes on a lot of calls. Chief Dekoschak can justify 20+ calls per week. Mr. Pomeroy is there every time we call him either chasing a rabid fox or quarantined dog. Chief Dekoschak stated that whatever meager increase it's probably not enough. Mr. Pomeroy works hard and he does a good job. Chair Szynal went further to say, this is another position we are lucky to have someone in Town to do this. Chair Szynal went on to say that Mr. Pomeroy should be paid in a way that also makes sure that we retain him. Chair Szynal said if we were without that him in that position, we would be in trouble. Marlene Michonski said we have been talking about this position for years. Chair Szynal I have called Scott many times and he is great. Chair Szynal said it's a small increase and a no brainer. Ms. Michonski changed the number by \$1,460.00 increase to Mr. Pomeroy. Ms. Michonski also increased budget spreadsheet for the inspector of animal position also held by Scott Pomeroy by a \$450.00 increase.

Ms. Rider noted there are a few on this list as to whether we fully discussed them. Ms. Rider can't remember if we authorized the library the \$828.00 they need. Ms. Michonski said it was increased on the spreadsheet. Regarding the Veteran's service, Ms. Strzegowski said the service would happily accept an increase. Chair Szynal said you mentioned police reform stuff in previous meetings are you factoring this in this year? Chief Dekoschak reminded everyone that the meeting was cancelled because it ruffled some feathers essentially bashing them and pushing the police reform through but no way of paying for it. In some communities it would cost millions; for Hatfield just under \$40,000.00 for full time training. This would be broken up over 2-3 years. Chief Dekoschak may be able to absorb some of it, the ammunition which he can absorb. Chief Dekoschak said it is around \$10,000.00 to train these guys. The meeting was cancelled so abruptly and then all of a sudden everyone is looking for money from the State. They made the academy free, EVOC vehicles to be supplied by State. Everyone is looking for the State to pay for officers. This is not horrible. With the general consensus nationwide, recruitment is way down. No one can find officers. Chief Dekoschak hopes the full-time officer will hold out and he can keep the part-timers. Chair Szynal just want to be sure there is enough money in the budget. Chief Dekoschak said there is no other way to cover that but he may come to you in the fall time for more money. Ms. Rider, if that happens it would be considered an emergency need.

Ms. Rider double check on Planning Board. Stephanie Slys is asked for \$700.00 to bring her budget to FY20 and asked for \$450.00 for part-time planner. Ms. Rider again expressed that they don't want to hire part-time planner at this time but to keep in mind that we may have to in the future. Ms. Rider should we add the \$700.00 in case the need comes up? The \$700.00 is for advertising and postage. Chair Szynal again reiterated that she is not in favor of creating positions right now. Sean Barry asked if Historical was taken care of. Ms. Michonski stated that we increased their budget by \$1,000.00 last week.

Ms. Rider just one more thing, did we approve \$600.00 for DPW to get vadar license? Ms. Michonski stated that there was an increase for custodial hours but not the license.

Betsy Rider on the Council on Aging they are looking for 1) an increased rate for the current assistant of \$540.00 to make that person's rate the same as other assistants; 2) a new assistant for 12 hours per week; and 3) an additional \$700.00 added to activities. Ms. Rider said that I am

happy to increase rate for the current assistant and the activities but they are not eager about adding an additional position. Mr. Williams, I agree. Ms. Rider got a letter from Geri Rodgers and she gave numbers for all the people who use the Council on Aging and where they serve the most people. Betsy Rider said it was quite clear and I would like to increase activities budget. Chair Szynal said I would like to think that maybe in FY23 we could hire an assistant but not this year. We can all justify the need for it but very concerned about doing it this year. Chair Szynal went on to say there are a lot of unknowns to all. In fairness, I would like to let them know we would prioritize it next year. Betsy Rider said as you point out Diana there are a lot of unknowns this year. All agreed with Ms. Rider. Ms. Rider said to increase the salary line by \$540.00 and the activities line by \$700.00.

Ms. Rider questioned the sewer and water increase for electricity and professional services where did that money come from? Ms. Michonski stated that they have increased their line item. All their operating expenses come from the enterprise. Mr. Williams to Ms. Rider's point they need the increase because of electricity. Sean Barry said if there is a reasonable expense we can take it out of their revenue. Mr. Williams let's pass this off to Phil, Eric and Tony to get back to us. The \$14,600.00 will be put in water. Ms. Michonski said she would look at sewer budget because there was an increase of \$51,750.00 and \$17,000.00 and Ms. Michonski said he is looking to increase it again for FY22. Mr. Williams hopefully none of these things come back to taxation. Sean Barry said the revenue is based on the prior 3 years of revenue. When we adjust rates, we make an adjustment for that. Sean Barry water revenue is weird - water revenue goes up and down. Mr. Williams we are close to wrapping this up and I would invite Phil, Eric and Tony to next week's meeting.

Darryl Williams said we put quite a bit of money in finance reserve but I guess the question is do we want to put some more money in there for "just in case?" Chair Szynal I would say yes there should be more in there. Ms. Rider we already discussed this. Ms. Rider, I'm thinking around \$60,000.00. Mr. Williams said I would put more in there, at least \$100,000.00. Selectman Brian Moriarty said that he agreed that we need enough in there but we don't want to fall short. We were going to start putting some money aside. Sean Barry if money like that is going to go for on-going expenses taking on free cash is somewhat problematic unless we do it every year because you will have to find it somewhere. Chair Szynal it's the best we can do but eventually it needs to be addressed. Mr. Williams we can keep it at \$30,000.00 for now. Regarding Historical Commission, Ms. Rider said the cost of software is \$540.00 annually and they wanted a consultant to help them turn from old data base to new data base.

Mr. Williams do we want to talk about free cash. Ms. Rider I'm confused by two things. First, that number in the middle \$152,808.00 that is from last year. Sean Barry, we didn't spend \$115,142.20 we didn't take it on taxation. Mr. Williams our levy limit has dropped but we have been given a fair amount of increases. Discussion began regarding the \$115,142.00 and where to put it. Sharon Strzegowski said when I presented deficits for town hall and library, we found some money from the library but there is still an outstanding invoice for Marois Construction \$415.00 in line 44, that number we are consulting \$68,000.00 left over for Council on Aging if we can repurpose that money. Selectman Moriarty asked wasn't that money school choice funds and if we are not using town money how can be short? Selectman Moriarty said that project was

supposed to be paid for by the trustees and school choice but we end up getting whacked on the town money. The town ends up losing money.

Darryl Williams said regarding IT Ms. Michonski would look into having that rebid this year. Mr. Williams I'm okay with leaving that in free cash right now. Sean Barry do you want police equipment out of there? Mr. Williams do you want to take \$50,000.00 and put it into stabilization. Sean Barry said that is a little weird to do that for communications equipment. How long does that equipment last? If the money comes from a grant that's a different story. Discussion was had about what to do with the snow and ice and how did we end up over the limit. Mr. Williams let's stem for a week and give everyone time to look this over and have it buttoned down better.

Regarding the school, Betsy Rider said they will let Superintendent McEvoy know what the budget was. There was discussion about an addition \$200,000.00 that Superintendent McEvoy has in his budget. Ms. Michonski will check with the Superintendent to make sure the numbers on the spreadsheet are accurate. Ms. Michonski received email from Recreation Committee Chair and they are asking if they can have a budget line item submitted. Their fees are not covering the costs, maintaining the fields. Ms. Michonski has asked for an expense report for last 3 years and take a look at the revolving fund but they may have to raise fees. They are looking for \$5,000.00. Mr. Williams next week's meeting the department head from recreation to join us.

Selectman Edmund Jaworski pointed out one thing. The previous accounting being screwed up, the cost overran for town hall project. Selectman Jaworski said were given figures for the project. The new accountant showed that, at that time, we were given wrong numbers. Darryl Williams thank Selectman Jaworski and said we need to be careful on how we address those issues.

Darryl Williams suggested the next meeting be held on April 20, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. After discussion, it was agreed that the Board of Selectman would have their meeting on April 20, 2021 a 5:30 p.m. and then would convene with the Finance Committee on April 20, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. Chair Szynal stressed that she hoped the meeting at 6:30 p.m. would not be another 2 hours.

Darryl Williams, Chair, made motion to adjourn at 8:29 p.m.; Ms. Rider seconded that motion, all in favor, the motion to adjourn was approved.

Chair Diana Szynal made a motion to adjourn at 8:29 p.m.; Edmund Jaworski seconded; all in favor, the motion to adjourn was approved.

Respectfully,

Karen Brodeur
Executive Assistant