

Minutes Holden Finance Committee, March 30, 2022, Remote via Zoom
General Government, Debt, Retirement, Insurance Budgets

Members Present: Paul Challenger, Dave White, Joe Dolak, Chris Lucchsi, Don Graves, Al Berg, Jane Titcomb, Stephanie Adams, Marilynn Foley

Also Present: Peter Lukes, Town Manager, Stephanie King Asst. Town Manager, Lori Rose Town Accountant, Laurie Gaudette Treasurer/Collector, Jeanne Hudson Town Clerk, Rosemary Scully Assessor, Pam Harding Planning/ Development, Doug Nelson, Helen Aronawitz IT, Gerri Herlihy and Rick Bates Selectmen

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M.

Jeanne reviewed the Town Clerk Budget and answered questions from the Committee. A voting machine will be purchased for the new precinct 6. Postage and paper costs have increased dramatically due to Census mailing, on line registration for dogs (also included in the census form owners do not send self-addressed envelopes back), informational post cards for voting and sending out mail in voting forms. New archival approved binders are needed to protect the town's vital records, but this request needs to be in the operational budget, not the capital request. The department will need a copier since the DPW will be moving to the new building (that copier was shared between the DPW and Clerk at Town Hall). The Meridian system for voting at Town meeting will be tried again at the Annual May meeting.

Laurie reviewed the Treasurer/Collector Budget and answered questions from the Committee. The only change from last year is equipment maintenance. The Property Insurance budget increased due to the DPW building completion. Health insurance is up 10.2%. The Retirement Budget is up 10 and 1/2%, based on the assessment from the Worcester Regional Retirement Board. The town pays a lump sum to the Retirement Board in July in order to save 2% of the assessment, rather than quarterly payments. Debt reflects the final issuance of the bonds on the new DPW building. No significant debt was retired this year.

No changes in the Moderator's, Finance Committee and Selectmen's Budgets.

Peter reviewed the Town Manager Budget and answered questions from the Committee. A new line item is for a salary study of the department heads, intended to keep their salaries in-line with the market place and avoid turn-over. The wage adjustment line item may be decreased due to settling all outstanding contracts except one by now. The petro line item has been increased due to increased fuel prices.

Peter reviewed the IT Budget and answered questions from the Committee. A new Budget for IT was sent out today showing changes from the early draft printed in the budget book. Hardware equipment and Software support have increased. Since the lease is finished, the Town is purchasing the Simplivity equipment we have been renting for the past three years.

Lori reviewed the Accounting Budget and answered questions from the Committee. Wages are up 8% due to turnover in the office leading to higher starting wages and then subsequent step increase process.

Rosemary reviewed the Assessors Budget and answered questions from the Committee. There are no real changes in this budget.

Peter reviewed the Legal Budget and answered questions from the Committee. The Town has been handling more of the collective bargaining in-house, and it is reducing our legal expenses.

Pam reviewed the Planning/Development Budget and answered questions from the Committee. There have been minimal changes in the F/Y2023 Budget. The dues for CMRPC have increased. There is a grant to fund the health agent for next year, so no expense is budgeted. There is a need for a copier and map plotter as these were shared with the DPW and that department is moving to the new DPW building. There are no changes in the Sealer of Weights and Measurements and the Inspection Budgets. Pam discussed the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund. Disposal fees at Wheelabrator have increased. A new item is a fuel surcharge that is invoked when the price of fuel exceeds the base rate agreed on in the contract. A fee increase to customers has been proposed.

The Committee will wait until the Budget discussions are completed to look at funding the General Stabilization Fund. The Town has applied for reimbursement under the 911 State Grant and the Town is hoping to receive approval from the State before Town Meeting. This is earlier timing than in prior years.

The Committee thanked all the Department Heads that were here for this meeting.

The Committee plans to meet in person at Town Hall for the next 3 weeks for budget discussions. Chris will prepare a worksheet to keep track of the Committee votes.

A motion by Al 2nd by Stephanie to approve the minutes of March 16, 2022 was voted unanimously by roll call vote: Challenger aye, Berg aye, Graves aye, Adams aye, Lucchesi aye, Dolak aye, Foley aye (abstained White, Titcomb).

A motion by Stephanie 2nd by Joe to approve the minutes of March 23, 2022 were voted unanimously by roll call vote: Challenger aye, Berg aye, Graves aye, Adams aye, Lucchesi aye, Dolak aye, Foley aye, White aye (abstained Titcomb).

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marilynn Foley, clerk