

Minutes Holden Finance Committee, March 29, 2023

Members Present: Paul Challenger, Dave White, Chris Lucchesi, Dan Graves, Al Berg, Jane Titcomb, Stephanie Adams, Donna Wallace, Marilyn Foley

Also Present: Peter Lukes, Town Manager, Stephanie King, Asst. Town Manager, Jeanne Hudson, Town Clerk, Laurie Gaudet, Treasurer/Collector, Lori Rose, Accountant, Doug Nelson, I.T., Helen Aronowitz, I.T., Rosemary Scully, Assessor, Selectmen: Anthony Renzoni, Geri Herlihy, Tom Curran

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

Peter informed the Committee that the WRSD would not be requesting a capital purchase (an intercom upgrade for WRHS), which had been rumored to be coming.

Peter began the review of the General Government Budget narrative. Moderator Budget no change. Finance Committee Budget no change, but the Committee discussed if the Reserve Fund should be increased to \$200,000.00. Board of Selectmen Budget has a slight change in clerical and an increase in Employee Appreciation. Town Manager Budget increase in salary lines to match market value of the positions and contractual requirements. Stephanie reviewed the I.T. Budget. There is a slight increase as the Town moves to a new cloud-based computer system. The Insurance Budget was moved from the Treasurer/Collector Budget to the Town Manager's Budget. Increases in this budget are due to anticipated increases from the providers. As such there are no firm numbers yet. The Legal Budget has increased due to Town Council, Collective Bargaining and Labor Relation expenses. The Manager alerted the FinCom that the labor relations budget would probably be overspent in FY23 due to an increased number of cases filed against the town for labor issues. The Town aggressively fights and prevails on all such lawsuits, but it costs money to do so.

Lori reviewed the Accounting Budget narrative and answered questions. Lori explained how the new accounting software, ClearGov would benefit the Town Departments. This new system works with Munis and excel, which are presently used. There will be more room for storage in the cloud and changes can be made easily as needed by the departments. There will be training for staff included in the start-up cost. Paul, Al and Donna offered their expertise if help was needed in the data validation.

Laurie reviewed the Treasurer/Collector Budget narrative and answered questions. The OPEB study is not in this budget as it is only done every two years. Cash accounts have been reconciled through February. The audit is being currently being completed and should be concluded in a few weeks. It took longer this year as the Town needed to finalize the ARPA and related money received from various governments for COVID related relief. The Retirement Budget is based on an assessment from the Worcester County Retirement Board. The Town opts to pay the entire assessment in July thus saving 2and1/2%. The Debt Budget covers the Town exempt and non-exempt debt. The needed long term debt has been issued under a favorable interest rates, and there are no plans to borrow more.

Rosemary reviewed the Board of Assessors Budget narrative and answered questions. There are only slight changes in this budget.

Jeanne reviewed the Town Clerk Budget narrative and answered questions. The Budget is down this year as there are no big elections.

Stephanie reviewed the Department of Planning and Development and answered questions. The Town is presently looking to hire a Planning Director. The Planning Department includes the Planning,

Health, Conservation, Zoning, Open Space and Recreation, Solid Waste Enterprise Fund and Historic District Commission. The Director's salary is divided between Planning and Solid Waste. The Code Enforcement Office's salary is divided between Building Commissioner/Enforcement. Holden is now part of a regional Board of Health. The sealer of Weights and Measurers is level funded. Solid Waste is predicted to go up 3%. The Inspections Budget has decreased.

The Committee thanked Peter, Stephanie, Jeanne, Lori, Laurie, Rosemary, Doug, Helen.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marilyn Foley, Clerk
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