

Board: Board of Selectmen/ Water Commissioner's Meeting
Date: Monday, December 07, 2020
Location: Online Video/Audio Conference Pursuant to Governor Baker's Executive Order in Response to the COVID-19 State of Emergency

Selectmen Present: Jacob Smith, William Bembury, Peter Sanders
Finance Committee: Daniel Hammock, Benjamin Fellows, Charles Zilinski, Debra Smith
Also, Present: Bryan Smith, Kelly Loynd, Michael Gordon, Robert Holst, Mariah Kurtz, Jacquelyn Boyden, Deborah Mero, Adam Paicos, Amanda Flower
Press: Katherine Nolan, Montague Reporter

At 6:34 PM **Chairman Smith** called the meeting to order.

Chairman Smith explained that the meeting is being recorded and provided an overview of the functions of the video/audio conferencing platform.

Discussion Regarding Town Response to COVID-19

Bryan Smith, Town Administrator, explained that the Town had been notified this afternoon about a testing location for COVID-19 for residents of the North Quabbin area, including Erving, that will be held in the Town of Athol, Massachusetts. The testing is available at no cost on a first come first serve basis. Bryan will share the notice of the testing location on the Town website and social media sites. **Chairman Smith** thanked the Town Manager of Athol for the notice about the testing location.

Library Construction Project Update & Review of Change Order Requests

No updates at this time.

River, Warner & Strachan Street Project Update & Change Orders

No updates at this time.

Discussion Regarding Chief of Police Position Search

Chairman Smith explained that the Town is beginning to work with the UMass Boston Collins Center on the search process for the Chief of Police position. **Chairman Smith** explained that a tentative schedule for the search would be drafted this week and outreach to the members of the Screening Committee to schedule a first meeting.

Appointments to the Public Works Feasibility Committee

Bryan explained that the advertised deadline for citizens to express interest in serving on the Public Works Feasibility Committee has passed and that no letters of interest had been received. Bryan requested that the Board consider appointing the proposed members to the Committee so that review of the proposals may begin, and the Town can continue to search for a final member. **Selectman Bembury** asked Bryan to contact resident Peter Mallet to inquire if he would be interested in serving on the Committee. The Board members expressed agreement.

Selectman Bembury made a motion to appoint Glenn McCrory, Peter Sanders, Mariah Kurtz, and Michael Gordon to the Public Works Feasibility Committee. **Chairman Smith** seconded. **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

Discussion Regarding POTW#2 Sludge Dryer Project

Chairman Smith explained that the Town has met with legal counsel to discuss options for handling the procurement and the draft agreement with Erving Industries for the proposed sludge dryer project at the Erving Center Wastewater Treatment Plant (POTW#2). **Chairman Smith** added that a meeting has been scheduled with the Attorneys General's Office to review the project and to obtain guidance on how the procurement must be handled. **Chairman Smith** explained that he expects that a legal opinion could be available for the next joint meeting with the Board and the Finance Committee to consider. **Chairman Smith** explained that the Town has been asked by Erving Industries to vote to consider the proposed dryer equipment as separate assets from the Wastewater Treatment Plant as long as they are purchased with financing separate from the Town. **Chairman Smith** explained that the proposal includes the dryer equipment becoming assets of the Treatment Plant once the financing period has concluded. **Chairman Smith** asked that the Town communicate with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection about the options for changing the scope of the State Revolving Loan Fund application as well as options to include the force sewer main replacement project.

Review of Town Letterhead Design

Chairman Smith explained that feedback from the last review has been sent to the graphic designer and that the Town is awaiting revisions.

Discussion of Sale of Surplus Cruiser to the Town of Warwick- 2nd Reading

The Board reviewed the surplus equipment request for the 2014 Dodge Charger cruiser from the Police Department for a second reading. **Chairman Smith** explained that the Town of Warwick has confirmed interest in purchasing the surplus equipment in the amount of \$3,000. The Board agreed to carry the agenda item for a third reading at the December 14, 2020 meeting. Bryan explained that the Town is in the process of registering the new cruiser with the Registry of Motor Vehicles and that the vehicle is nearly ready to be put into service.

Review of Meeting Minutes for April 27, 2020

The Board passed over this agenda item.

Review of Meeting Minutes for June 01, 2020

The Board passed over this agenda item.

Review of Meeting Minutes for November 30, 2020

The Board passed over this agenda item.

Review of Town-wide Project List

The Board reviewed an updated draft of the Town-wide project list. Mariah Kurtz, Assistant Town Planner, joined the meeting. **Chairman Smith** discussed the approach taken to reorganize and prioritize the list. **Chairman Smith** explained that with the prioritization, ten (10) projects are scheduled for summer 2021 and discussed making priority assessments considering the Town's capacity to complete the projects. **Chairman Smith** discussed the approach to schedule projects in quarters and by funding source, noting the example that the Town would use of Green Communities funds to complete weatherization projects. **Chairman Smith** gave another example such as the issuance of the Town Hall feasibility study request for qualifications (RFQ) noting that it has already been drafted and is ready for release. **Chairman Smith** suggested that the RFQ could be released by the Board in May 2021 and the feasibility study work could be conducted over summer 2021. The Board members expressed agreement. Discussion occurred regarding additional projects such as the potential to issue a request for proposals (RFP) to sell the former

school building on Pleasant Street, the feasibility study for siting a new cemetery with the understanding that some of these projects are multi-year in nature. **Chairman Smith** discussed the importance of using an approach to assess the capacity of the Administrative Office and of each department to focus on projects in addition to regular operations. **Chairman Smith** suggested limiting project capacity to a maximum of two (2) special projects per department within a year to not take away from regular operations. **Selectman Bembury** asked for an explanation of the current status of the former school building on Pleasant Street. Bryan explained that daily operations at the facility of the School Superintendent's office has moved into District school buildings. **Selectman Bembury** asked about the plan for Recreation to continue operations. Bryan explained plan explained that the Recreation Assistant has been working primarily remotely and that plans are in place to relocate the desk, filing cabinets and phone to Town Hall for a work location.

FY2022 Budget Request Review- Joint Meeting with Finance Committee

At 7:03 PM **Chairman Smith** called the joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee to order. Daniel Hammock, Charles Zilinski, Benjamin Fellows, and Debra Smith joined the Board.

Chairman Smith discussed the recent conversations with the Capital Planning Committee and to consider the intersections between the master planning document and the priorities for the multi-year capital plan. **Chairman Smith** provided Finance Committee with an overview of the project schedule. **Chairman Smith** discussed using the schedule to balance ability of the Town to complete and fund within a reasonable timeframe. **Chairman Smith** added that the plan should also help the Board prioritize new project ideas as they come forward and to determine if the Town should pursue funding or not.

FY2022 Budget Request - General Government Budget Review

Chairman Smith discussed altering the FY2023 budget planning calendar next year to allow for more lead time to assemble the individual departmental requests into the budget book.

Review of the Town Moderator Budget Request

Bryan explained that the budget request for the Town Moderator had been adjusted to \$250.00 for FY2022 as was indicated in the draft elected official compensation policy. The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee had no concerns.

Review of the Board of Selectmen Budget Request

Bryan explained the FY2022 budget request for the Board of Selectmen and Administration Office of \$280,506.00, noting that increases for wages are in line with the adopted grade and step system. Bryan explained that additional increases include software support, mileage reimbursement and a significant increase of \$35,000 for legal counsel support. Bryan explained that the Town has been working through several personnel related matters and has retained specialized labor counsel. **Chairman Smith** explained the use of labor counsel. **Selectman Bembury** asked noted that the Selectboard salaries line item does not include the proposed differential for the chair position. Bryan will make the adjustment for all elected boards and commissions. The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee had no concerns.

Review of the Finance Committee Budget Request

The Finance Committee's request for FY2022 is level funded at \$52,500.00. Benjamin discussed support for the level funded budget request. The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee discussed past use of the Reserve Fund, noting that the approved transfers are not appearing in the expense column.

Bryan will take the data regarding past approved transfers and add a footnote that lists the amounts and the transferred location. The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee had no concerns.

Review of the Accounting Budget Request

Deborah Mero, Town Accountant, joined the meeting and reviewed the FY2022 Accounting budget request of \$64,806.00, explaining that the budget only includes an increase in wages that align with the grade and step system as well as an increase in software support after moving the accounting software to a hosted platform. The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee had no concerns.

Review of the Assessors Budget Request

Jacquelyn Boyden, Principal Assessor, joined the Board and the Committee to review the FY2022 Assessors' Office budget request of \$94,838.00. Jacquelyn explained that the increase is in the Principal Assessor wages as indicated in the grade and step system and that there is a reduction in supply expenses to offset an increase in dues and memberships. The Board of the Selectmen and the Finance Committee discussed the need to add the chair differential compensation into the Board of Assessor salary line item. Bryan will update. Jacquelyn noted that the request for software support has been level funded at this time but may change with a requested upgrade in software. The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee had no concerns.

Review of the Treasurer Budget Request

Bryan reviewed the FY2022 Treasurer's Office budget request of \$90,435.00, explaining that the only increase to the budget is for the Treasurer's salary. Bryan explained that the Assistant Treasurer's position also has a wage adjustment in accordance with the grade and step system, but that there is sufficient capacity within the existing budget for there is sufficient capacity within the staff line item. The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee had no concerns.

Selectman Bembury asked Bryan to explain to elected department heads that attendance at their department's budget hearing to present their budget request is expected. The Board and the Finance Committee members expressed agreement.

Review of the Tax Collector Budget Request

Bryan reviewed the FY2022 Tax Collector's Office budget request of \$35,097.00, explaining that the request changes are related to wages for the Tax Collector and Assistant Tax Collector, in accordance with the grade and step system. **Chairman Smith** explained that there was a cost change related to software support during FY2020 for transitioning the Vadar system to a cloud platform and that it is funded within the Tax Collector's budget. Jacquelyn explained that the Vadar system is used by the Assessor's Office, Tax Collector's Office, Treasurer's Office, and occasionally by the Administrative Office. **Chairman Smith** posed the question for the Board and the Finance Committee to consider when a shared software cost for multiple departments should transition from a departmental budget to the Information & Technology budget to support the entire staff. There was general agreement that it should be considered for the future. The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee had no concerns.

At 7:34 PM **Chairman Smith** recused himself from Board.

Review of the Information Technology & Support Services Budget Request

Bryan reviewed the FY2022 Information Technology & Support Services budget request of \$93,530.00, explaining that the current requests present the salary and wages as level funded from FY2021 because the Board and the Finance Committee have not completed their review of the IT Coordinator stipend and

the IT Support Technician rate of pay. Bryan explained that Department expenses are proposed to increase by \$10,000 to support town-wide software licensing. Jacob Smith discussed a proposed reduction of \$6,000 in the phone services line item and a corresponding proposed increase in the website maintenance line item of \$6,000 to support updates to the Town website. Jacob discussed the reliance of the staff and the public on the Town website to disseminate information during the pandemic and explained that the Town may want to expand available online services for residents, such as remote meetings. Jacob noted that one potential project would be to create dedicated sub-homepages for the Library or the Police Department. Jacob asked Jacquelyn about her thoughts on the transition in the IT Coordinator position, noting that Jacquelyn had asked the Board of Selectmen to begin to plan for the future needs of the Department a few years ago. Jacquelyn discussed the current duties handled by the IT Coordinator position and explained that the Town will need someone to correspond with an IT firm or a regional IT services if the Town makes that transition over the next few years. Jacob explained that it is likely that the Town will transfer to a firm. Daniel Hammock asked if the Town had explored partnering with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) for IT Services. Bryan explained the work that has occurred to date with the FRCOG and other municipalities to explore a county-wide IT service. Bryan explained that each Town within the County is at varying levels of technological ability and therefore need, noting that Erving and maybe two other towns within the County may be ready to transfer to a regional service within the next year.

Selectman Bembury asked about technology related expenses that have evolved for the Town because of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, wanting to ensure that they are embedded within the FY2022 budget plan. Bryan explained the use of the CARES Act funding that has allowed the Town to rapidly transition to remote work and its overlap with the Town's existing project to transition to a virtual server platform and improved network security. Bryan noted that the Town needs to determine how remote meetings will continue in the future, whether to stay with the current platform or if it is possible to transition to another service that will align with the cable broadcast of public meetings. **Selectman Bembury** discussed the broadcasting channel that was negotiated in the Comcast cable franchise agreement by the Cable Advisory Board. Bryan agreed and explained that the Town needs to create a budget from the Community Access fund. Deborah expressed agreement, explaining that the Board and the Finance Committee would have to propose a budget that is presented at the Annual Town Meeting. Bryan will work to draft a budget proposal. Jacob discussed the need to figure out the public broadcasting of meetings. The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee had no other concerns at this time.

At 7:53 PM **Chairman Smith** rejoined the Board.

Review of the Town Clerk & Elections Budget Request

Bryan reviewed the FY2022 Town Clerk and Elections budget request of \$47,463.00, noting that while the wages for the Town Clerk and the Assistant Town Clerk increased in accordance with the grade and step system, the wages for elections decreased because there are fewer elections during FY2022. Similarly, election expenses reflect a decrease. **Chairman Smith** asked about the request to fund a \$5,000 special article for the ongoing maintenance of the Town Code. Bryan explained the purpose of the request as it relates to the larger Town Code project that the Town Clerk is working on. **Chairman Smith** discussed support for the need to maintain the Town Code but questioned whether it was a request that met the definition of a capital request. Debra Smith expressed support for the request but suggested making an annual operating expense. **Selectman Bembury** expressed support for treating the request as an operating expense and that it should be funded annually. **Selectman Sanders** expressed agreement. Bryan will work with Deborah to request a new expense line item in the Town Clerk budget. **Selectman**

Bembury asked for the line item to be funded at \$2,500. The Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee members expressed support and had no other concerns at this time.

Review of the Land Use Budget Request

Bryan reviewed the FY2022 budget requests for the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals, noting that the only requested increases are for the Planning Board. Bryan noted that Planning Board salaries were adjusted as drafted in the elect official compensation policy but needs to include the compensation differential for the chair position. Bryan explained that the Planning Board expenses have increased by \$1,500 in a request for consulting. Debra explained that she is a member of the Planning Board and is unaware that this request for an increase in consulting expenses has been requested. Debra explained that the Planning Board has not used the consulting line item in the last two (2) fiscal years and feels that the Planning Board needs to meet to discuss. Debra discussed wanting to keep the Planning Board's consulting line item at \$1,500. Deborah Mero explained that State statutes and guidance regulations from the Department of Revenue allow Planning Boards to reasonably charge project applicants for consulting fees if a consultant is needed to review project applications and assist the Board in the development of special permit conditions, etc. therefore an increase in consulting funds may not be necessary. Benjamin discussed wanting to have the Planning Board provide clarifications about the Board's request. The Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee members agreed.

Town Buildings & Ground Maintenance Budget Requests

The Board and the Finance Committee passed over the review of this budget request and will review at the next joint meeting.

Discussion Regarding POTW#2 Sludge Dryer Project (revisited)

Chairman Smith gave the Finance Committee an update on the status of the proposed sludge dryer project for POTW#2 and recent communications with Erving Industries. **Chairman Smith** explained that the Town is working to gather more information and may have an update to review with the Finance Committee next week.

Adjournment

At 8:20 PM **Selectman Bembury** made a motion to adjourn. **Daniel Hammock** seconded. **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Bryan Smith
Town Administrator