

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, January 9, 2018

7:00 PM

Town Hall – Selectmen’s Meeting Room

Members present: Brad Cote, Connie Benjamin, Ann Hurd, Ted Kirchner, Joe Myerson and Brian Boyle

Members absent: None

Call to order: Chairman Cote called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The entire meeting can be viewed by going to:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3JBEPUQnBs>

### Agenda Item #1: Treasurer budgets (145, 710, 752, 911, 913, 914, 915)

- Town Treasurer Kristen Noel presented the following budgets:
- Treasurer (145)
  - The Longevity line was initially raised to \$8,500 for FY19 to cover two additional employees who are entitled to longevity pay. After some discussion, Kristen agreed that she could reduce that line to \$8,000 (vs. \$8,300 in FY18).
  - The Purchases of Service line (\$6,000) can be eliminated for FY19 because it was allocated to a wage and compensation study that has been completed.
  - The Software Support line is increasing from \$18,000 to \$19,000 due to a contractual increase with Vadar, our service provider.
  - The Tax Taking Expense line is increasing from \$500 to \$1,000 because of more activity in this area.
  - The In-State Travel line is decreasing from \$2,080 to \$1,200 because Kristen expects to travel less in FY19 than our prior Treasurer did. For similar reasons, the Meetings line is decreasing from \$1,640 to \$1,000.
  - **MOTION:** Connie Benjamin moved to approve the Treasurer budget as modified during the meeting, for a total of \$162,712; seconded by Brian Boyle. **VOTING IN FAVOR:** Brad Cote, Connie Benjamin, Ann Hurd, Ted Kirchner, Joe Myerson, and Brian Boyle. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS (6-0).**
- Debt Principal (710) and Debt Interest (752)
  - We reviewed the anticipated debt and interest schedule for FY19. As of the meeting date, the total anticipated request was for \$1,389,254 (down from \$1,998,074 in FY18). However, our Town Accountant Ninotchka Rogers noted that none of the anticipated FY19 capital requests were reflected on the debt schedule yet. We also noted that one item (for the Police Repeater) will likely be removed.
  - The committee agreed to revisit debt this later in the budget season after FY19 capital requests have been added.

- Worcester Regional Retirement Assessment (911)
  - Kristen is anticipating a 9% increase over FY18, for a total of \$408,654. That budget number is just a placeholder; we expect to get the actual figure in February. Chairman Cote asked if we could get a copy of the calculation of the annual appropriation, and Kristen agreed to provide that when it's available.
- Unemployment Compensation (913)
  - This item has been budgeted at zero for the past few years because we are following a practice of paying these claims as they come, due to their variable nature.
- Health Insurance & OPEB (914)
  - The trend for the Minuteman Nashoba Health Group is not looking very good for FY19. As a placeholder, Kristen is budgeting for a 10.3% increase, for a total of \$525,000. She informed us that the group is planning to roll out a high deductible health plan in the coming years as a way of containing costs.
  - Kristen provided us with the actual OPEB liability for FY19: \$178,357.
- Life Insurance (915)
  - This budget is going down from \$1,500 to \$1,400.
- Medicare (916)
  - This budget is going down from \$49,000 to \$46,000.

Agenda Item #2: Accountant budget (135)

- Town Accountant Ninotchka Rogers presented her budget.
- For FY18, the accountant's hours were increased to 32 per week. Ninotchka said that the increased hours have been valuable because they allowed her to delve more deeply into various financial and accounting tasks.
- The main differences between the FY18 budget and the proposed FY19 budget are as follows:
  - Salary will go from \$57,708 to \$60,620 due to a step increase and a COLA adjustment.
  - Purchase of Services will go from \$0 to \$2,000 because we are due for an actuarial analysis of the town's OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) liability. This analysis takes place every other year.
  - The Software Support line (which pays for Vadar services) will stay the same at \$6,750. Chairman Cote noted that the town seems to have several different contracts with Vadar, and he asked whether there would be any savings from have a single contract. Ninotchka explained that the pricing would be no different, because the contracts are for distinct service modules that are priced based on the type of service.
  - The Meetings line will go from \$1,200 to \$1,400 so that Ninotchka can attend additional educational sessions.
- **MOTION:** Connie Benjamin moved to approve the Accountant budget as presented, for a total of \$87,570; seconded by Joe Myerson. **VOTING IN FAVOR:** Brad Cote, Connie Benjamin, Ann Hurd, Ted Kirchner, Joe Myerson, and Brian Boyle. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS (6-0).**

Agenda Item #3: Conservation Commission budget (171)

- Town Conservation Agent Rebecca Longvall and Conservation Commission Chairman Brian Berube presented the Conservation Commission budget.
  - The Conservation Commission is requesting an increase from 32 hours per week to 35 hours per week for Rebecca. She is consistently working 34-35 hours per week, so this request reflects the reality of her work hours. Brian Berube reported that Town Administrator Don Lowe supports this request.
  - Rebecca noted that the Purchase of Services line typically gets spent in the second half of the fiscal year. This explains why none of the \$14,500 that was budgeted last year has been spent yet.
  - The Land Maintenance line will increase from \$6,000 to \$10,000. This includes the removal of some large trees, annual mowing, and invasive species management.
  - In general, management of invasive species is a large component of what the Commission does. If not properly managed, these species spread very rapidly. In the FY19 budget, “management of invasive species”-type activities will be funded through portions of several line items: Purchase of Services, Land Maintenance, and Land-Capital Improvements.
  - Ninotchka Rogers noted that Purchase of Services line has never been fully spent. The Conservation Commission agreed that they could reduce that line to \$12,500.
  - **MOTION:** Brian Boyle moved to approve the Conservation Commission budget as modified during the meeting, for a total of \$86,832; seconded by Ann Hurd. **VOTING IN FAVOR:** Brad Cote, Connie Benjamin, Ann Hurd, Ted Kirchner, Joe Myerson, and Brian Boyle. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS (6-0).**
- Chairman Cote noted that in 2015 an article was approved at town meeting for repairs to Fyfeshire Dam in the amount of \$36,000. To date, those funds have not been spent. If the funds will not be spent in FY19, the town would like that money to be turned back. Rebecca said that she will research this and make a decision as soon as possible. On a related note, Town Accountant Ninotchka Rogers said that the town is now trying to follow a policy of requiring all approved articles to be spent within three years of town meeting.
- Chairman Cote also explained that Advisory is asking all departments and committees to develop a five-year capital plan. He asked whether the Conservation Commission could create a five-year capital plan. Rebecca responded that while such a plan is conceptually possible, it is very difficult to know when land is going to become available. Brian Berube echoed the idea that conservation purchases are sporadic and hard to predict, and he also noted that the reason the town created a Conservation Fund was so that it could purchase conservation land when it becomes available. Chairman Cote acknowledged the challenges and uncertainty involved in creating a 5-year plan, but he emphasized that it would still be very helpful as a planning tool. Rebecca and Brian Berube agreed that it would be a valuable exercise.

Agenda Item #4: Parks & Recreation budgets (630 & 650)

- Karen Regan presented the Parks & Recreation budgets:
  - Recreation (630): level-funded at \$25,570.
  - Parks (650): level-funded at \$3,620.
- Chairman Cote again explained that Advisory is asking all departments and committees to develop a five-year capital plan. Karen Regan said that the Parks & Recreation Commission is trying to implement more of a “business mindset” and create long-term plans for the town’s various park properties and recreation programs.
- Karen Regan told the Advisory Committee that the Parks & Recreation Commission would like to advocate for a staffing position in the town’s budget. The commission believes that, in the long run, the town would benefit from having a staff person who has expertise in administering parks and recreation programming. Karen noted that recreation programs should serve all of Bolton’s residents – children, parents, adults, and senior citizens alike. It would be helpful to have a person whose responsibility is to oversee all such programs. Chairman Cote said that our committee would like to gather more information about this proposal. He also noted that the Town Administrator and the Human Resource officer would have to make a recommendation about this type of staffing decision.
  - The Advisory Committee agreed that Ann Hurd and Brian Boyle will serve as liaisons to the Parks & Recreation Commission as it develops a long-term plan and hones the staffing proposal. One question to be addressed in consultation with the liaisons is whether to defer making a formal staffing proposal until FY2020.
- **MOTION:** Connie Benjamin moved to approve the Recreation (\$25,570) and Parks (\$3,620) budgets as submitted; seconded by Ted Kirchner. **VOTING IN FAVOR:** Brad Cote, Connie Benjamin, Ann Hurd, Ted Kirchner, Joe Myerson, and Brian Boyle. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS (6-0).**

Agenda Item #5: Advisory Committee business

- The committee agreed to review and vote on several sets of minutes at our January 10 meeting.

Adjourn: **MOTION:** Connie Benjamin moved to adjourn at 8:46 PM; seconded by Ted Kirchner. **VOTING IN FAVOR:** Brad Cote, Connie Benjamin, Ann Hurd, Ted Kirchner, Joe Myerson, and Brian Boyle. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS (6-0).**

Documents Referenced

Departments’ FY19 budget submissions

Handout from Karen Regan regarding a Parks & Recreation staffing proposal

Approved by the Advisory Committee