

Shutesbury Finance Committee
Tuesday, November 26, 2024 Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

Members Present: Ajay Khashu - chair, Bob Groves, April Stein, Susie Mosher, Jim Hemingway, Kathy Salvador and George Arvanitis Absent: None Attending: Interim Town Administrator Gabe Voelker, Library Director May Anne Antonellis , Police Chief Kristen Burgess, Mel DeSilva, Brad Foster and Elizabeth

Meeting called to order at 6:33 p.m.

- I. Reviewed the minutes of the 11/12/24 meeting, as amended. Will wait for edits from Bob regarding the Librarian Assistance\Aides at the next meeting

- II. Library Department budget review
 - A. At April 2024's Annual Town Meeting the town approved the FY25 Library budget with an increase of three hours/week for assistants due to COVID programming demands. The amount entered in the operating budget for library assistant\ aides was incorrect due to a transcription error and did not reflect the increased hours and cost-of-living increase for FY25. Corrections for this plus coverage for sick days and vacation time for FY25, will be voted on at the December Special Town Meeting.
 - B. FY26 Salaries are based on the FY25 amount voted on at the December special town meeting, and before the FY26 cost of living rate increase that will be proposed
 - C. Bob noted that over last ten years the town budgets increased 18% and the increased library 93% due to an increase in services
 - D. Requested expenditures increase of \$454 from FY25
 - i. To stay certified, MBLC requires that 20% must be spent on technology, and materials. Acquisitions increase is \$1,788
 - ii. Serials line decrease by \$500
 - iii. C/W Mars increase of \$116
 - iv. Programs decrease by \$950
 - E. Revenue increase of \$454:
 - i. Library expenses line in operating budget increase by \$1,000 (4.6%)
 - ii. Dog Tax decrease by \$950, town has not been collecting dog license fees
 - iii. Rev\Fund is collected for fines and fees, but this portion is nominal and assuming zero to be conservative
 - iv. State aid is being directed to the New Library
 - v. Library Trust Fund increase by \$454
 - vi. LCC (Local Cultural Council) decrease by \$150, decreased grants
 - vii. Friends of the Library increase of \$200
 - viii. Recreation Committee decrease of \$100
 - ix. Overall loss of revenues from sources other than the operating budget is \$546
 - F. Mary Anne expects that costs will not increase when the new building is in operation
 - G. It was noted that there may be new services that can be supported in a new building and we need to consider the cost implications of those services. Mary Anne does not anticipate a major budget increase due to the new building. She noted that the library is currently

- providing a high level of services, and she is currently using off-site locations to store materials that will be moved into the new library
- H. Circulation has been rising each year and much is in digital which still requires staff support
- I. Not requesting professional development due to time being spent on the new building. There are some free training opportunities, but little time available by staff. This may change at a point when the transition to the new building is complete
- J. Bob will send an analysis of historical costs to the Finance committee members

III. Police Department budget review

- A. New statutes for police reform require all officers to meet the standard of the full time academy. Part time officers are not willing to attend the full time academy for only part time hours. Many have been lost and are harder to recruit, mostly in Western Massachusetts. Hiring of willing part timers exposes us to paying for training them at the academy
- B. Officers' salaries request is \$187,233, \$47,424 (34%) higher than FY25
 - i. Salaries are based on the department covering the town from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.
 - ii. This request changes the staffing configuration to one full time sergeant, two full time officers and one part time officer
 - iii. FY25 staffing is one full time sergeant, one full time and three part time officers
 - iv. Maintaining FY25 configuration will be \$195,783 due to contracted wage increases and needed coverage for training and vacations resulting from staffing with part timers. This would result in a \$55,974 (40%) increase from FY25
 - v. The estimated cost of training is mandated by the state. Training plus vacation time amount to \$20,549 under the FY25 staffing configuration
 - vi. Kristen noted that other towns are reconfiguring to more full times. New Salem and Leverett are two examples
- C. The police officer contract provides 3% salary increase in years two (FY26) and three (FY27)
- D. Chief's contract ends in FY25 and a new one will be negotiated for FY26
- E. No increase requested for all other expenses
- F. A vehicle schedule of maintenance was requested by the Finance Committee. The Chief will send this to the committee
- G. A new police cruiser is anticipated in FY27

IV. Interim Town Administrator

- A. Ajay described the budget development process for Gabe
 - i. We will need the FY24 actual expenditures
 - ii. George will provide the budget sheet to Gabe for preparing the FY26 budget. He will also assist her in setting up the sheet for the FY26 budget
 - iii. Discussed the budget presentation format
 - iv. Need to have a plan for transitioning the budget to a future Administrator
- B. Gabe presentation:
 - i. A number of town employees need new computers. Recommends waiting until close to year end to determine the amount needed for a Finance Committee Reserve Fund transfer
 - ii. Fire engine two is broken down and its repairs will deplete his maintenance budget. There is also a repair needed for the Brush Truck

- iii. A Highway truck needs repairs costing \$9k. This is an older truck that needs many repairs, and she recommended that the town analyze the need to replace it
 - iv. Veterans' benefits will run out in December (currently \$1,800/ month). A Finance Committee Reserve Fund transfer is anticipated
 - 1. State reimbursements are received in future years, a portion only (75%).
 - 2. These monthly costs change within the year
 - 3. We have the option to approve overspending and cover in the future
 - v. Recommended that the Finance Committee approve overspending of veteran's benefits and IT maintenance (computers) and make a Finance Committee Reserve Fund transfer later in the year. Motion was approved 7-0
 - vi. Motion for a Finance Committee Reserve Fund transfer to Highway Dept Machinery Maintenance \$9,081 and to Fire Dept Maintenance \$9,100. Approved 7-0
 - C. Discussed scheduling of the Capital Planning process and their first meeting. Gabe will reach out to the committee chair
 - D. Discussed information distributions to Finance Committee, Ajay will discuss expense report distribution from the Town Accountant
 - E. Expense\spending reporting for each department will be available soon on the Shutesbury web site
 - F. Funding of previously approved capital purchases has not been finalized. Highway department truck, backhoe and culvert currently funding by a short term note
- V. School finance updates (Union 28 & Amherst Regional Public Schools)
- A. The four town meeting date has not been finalized, but we're expecting it to be on December 14
 - B. ARPS Finance Director is preparing responses to questions we submitted last month
 - C. We will provide our questions to the regional school committee
 - D. Amherst has FY24 cash surplus. They are considering using some of those funds for the FY26 regional school budget, given the concerns in the community
 - E. Discussed our options for the regional school funding
 - F. The Shutesbury updated excess levy capacity will be reported to all committee members

Our next meetings are December 3 at 6:00 at a special town meeting and December 10 at 6:30

Meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.