

Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee
Budget Saturday
January 10, 2015

Selectmen Members Present: Mike Gowing, Katie Green, Janet Adachi, Peter Berry, Franny Osman
Finance Committee Members: Margaret Busse, Bob Evens, Doug Tindal, Steve Noone, Mike Majors, Mary Ann Ashton, Roland Bourdon, Bill Mullin

Town Staff Present: Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager/IT, Town Accountant, Finance Director, Town Assessor, Veteran Services, Human Resources, Highway Superintendent, Engineering DPW Director, Council on Aging, Acton Memorial Library, Building Commissioner, Planning/Zoning Board of Appeals, West Acton Library, Police Chief, Fire Chief, Municipal Properties, Natural Resources, Recreation/Celebrations, Health/Nursing

Chairman Gowing convened the Selectmen's meeting to order. Doug Tindal convened the Finance Committee to order. Town Manager Ledoux gave a brief overview of the FY16 budget.

Veteran Service

James McRae presented his budget. 5% increase in professional salaries with his 34 hour workweek and Beverly Hutchins serving as assistant. Budget otherwise remaining the same with no change. Herman Kabakoff asked how many he served 3 years ago vs. now. Jim cannot estimate how many he assists with claims as he has a "revolving door". Finance did not have any unanswered questions.

Human Resources

Marianne Fleckner presented her budget. Finance did not have any unanswered questions.

Highway/Transfer Station & Recycling/ Engineering

Corey York and Dick Wait presented the DPW/Transfer/Recycling budget. Bill Mullin – any funds for sidewalks? –Corey stated no capital request. Corey has many projects for updating and installing new sidewalks in 2015. What portion of \$ is from warrant articles and what are gift funds (BM). (MB) what are the biggest hurdles of full trash pickup in Town? (CY) Last looked at curbside collection 6 years ago and was voted down. It is something the Town could look into again. If we went curbside we could also have a SMART program. (DT) what is % of population of Acton that utilizes the transfer. (CY) There are 3800 users with about 7000 properties in Town. (DT) Is there a program to study dangerous intersections (Kelly's Corner) with a high use of pedestrians? CY – been working with the PD with accident data and where to target future projects. (BM) – how much is in parking meter account – Finance probably knows the answer to that. Finance Department stated about \$668,000.00

Council on Aging

Sharon Mercurio presented the COA budget. (MA) can you say what has been done physically this past fiscal year and what # of PT vs. FT, and have they benefited. Kitchen renovation completed. Staff only 1 40 hour, 1 36 hour, and 34 hour for veteran. 19 hour non benefited. HK – any plans for facility upgrades this year –(SM) no. There were no further questions from Finance.

Acton Memorial Library

Marcia Rich presented the budget. Marcia addressed her increase in professional salaries. Worked with Marianne Fleckner to do a comparative study in salaries in other Towns to be competitive. (MAA) – have you seen a change in hard copy vs. digital. (MR) Digital has gone up more due to more people with tablet technology and more people are utilizing this. Minuteman has put 400,000 in Overdrive for ebooks. (MAA) Which proportion of staff is FT/PT. What will you be changing in the near future? (MR) 7 PT benefitted (1 36 hour PT). BM – 8.51 increase in professional salaries.– (MR) One salary out of line was Director salary by about \$10,000 to \$14,000 for an increase. (BM) – Acton Memorial Library Foundation how much revenue do you get from them per year? (MR) We get 22-25,000 in support from them. We give them invoices and they pay it. We also get books from it, and some programming. (BM) How much tax do they have on the balance sheet. (MR) They spend down . They do not have a live balance.

Building

Frank Ramsbottom presented his budget. Not a lot of changes from last year budget. Transferred some of the salary to the building revolving fund. BM – how much is in the revolving fund? (FR) Around 186,000. (BM) Are we charging for too much for inspection fees if they go into the revolving fund? (FR) They go to pay the inspectors. (BM) Then we are charging too much for inspection. We paid out \$166,000 out of the revolving fund last year. (HK) – in contrast you collected that money up front, so \$199,000 collected last year – you have \$180,000 against liabilities of that somewhere. You owed inspectors in anticipation of an inspection. I would like to know who we owe money to? If that is the fact, we are overcharging our citizens. I just want to know we can account for the money collected up front and would like to see the reconciliation. (DT) – are we taking account of overhead? If the money collected is going to pay the inspectors and clerical, then we are not overcharging. (HK) – Town Manager said we can't charge more than the cost of the inspection. Steve Noone suggested that Steve Barratt make a list of charges for building permits and reconciliation for future use.

Planning/Zoning Board of Appeals

Roland Bartl presented the planning budget. (BM) Bruce Freeman Rail Trail - when will construction begin for that? (RB) Starting this year to next year. (BM) Where is going to be, it is up to the bidder. (RB) No Town money will be spent in the intersections with the BFRT. No further questions from finance department.

West Acton Library

Jennifer Friedman presented the WAL budget. Her budget is not changing from last year. No further questions from Finance Committee.

Town Manager/Commission on Disability

Steve Ledoux presented the Manager budget. He outlined the two new positions of Land Use Director and Economic Development Director that will fall under the TM budget and then will be stand alone

once filled. Also, envisions the there will be one budget under Land Use falling under the position of Land Use Director. (MAA) have you thought ahead re-configuring the department head positions down the road since there will be a super director – Steve Ledoux stated yes.

(MAA) – Not convinced about the EDD position, would you think about it as a 3 year position to have a metric for evaluating the need for the position? Steve would be willing to look at that and track the efficiency of the position and the need. (HK) – suggested getting in touch with the EDD in Lowell – they are really active and report directly to the mayor to get an idea how they work.

Bob Evens spoke not in favor of the EDD and LUD positions. SN – supportive of the EDD position from a business perspective. No further questions from Finance Committee.

Information Technology/Emergency Management

Mark Hald presented the IT/Emergency Management budget. (DT) – where do you see the Town in 5 years? (MH) – no capital fund this year. (MAA) – do you have any plans to upgrade the website when you are fully staffed and do you support the Library –(MH) we support the library, and the website is due for an upgrade since it was last updated in 2009.

(BM) – any way to have access to town property tax through the Assessors online? (MH) – there is a plan to have the software used by the Assessor's office to have access to property tax. We are down 2 positions right now, but it is on the radar. One position that he would like to have is a media specialist that incorporates town website/docushare/social media content.

Emergency Management – increased salary is due to position of Assistant Emergency Management Manager. They have cleaned out the Emergency Management building the past summer to update services, energy efficiency, phone lines, radio systems. Just got approved for an FM radio frequency to utilize in case of state or town-wide emergencies. Will be constructing a new radio station. No further questions from the Finance Committee.

Police /Dispatch/Animal Control

Frank Widmayer and Rich Burrows presented the Police/Dispatch/Animal Control budget. Dispatch budget has not changed much. Animal Control – major expense was due to the boarding that was a court order, but the condo association has since reimbursed the town. Police – regular permanent salary is up. Still trying to fill positions. (SN) – how many vacancies – (FM) technically 10, there are 2 in the academy until February. No further questions from the Finance Committee.

Municipal Properties/Green Advisory Board

Dean Charter presented the Municipal Properties/Green Advisory Board budget. (BM) – is Town Hall painting available for CPA funding? Dean – asked for it last year and it was denied. (PB) – separate budget for GAB – why is that if no other committee has one? (DC) Have energy conservation analyst that works 16 hr/week for MP. GAB and MP work very closely more so than many other committees. We get lease payments from Ameresco about \$60,000/year and go into the Energy Efficiency Fund. (MAA) – FY15 budget included \$ for arborist – was the position filled? Dean – yes. (FO) How much will it cost extra for the special paint for TH? Dean – about \$15, 000 No further questions from Finance Committee.

Natural Resources/Cemetery

Tom Tidman presented the Natural Resources/Cemetery budget. Up 2% from last budget – water use at cemetery was up a bit.

(DT) – was is the status of the purchase of the Harris Street Property – did we buy it? (SL) – no we have not. The project was dropped before Town Meeting. No further questions from Finance Committee.

Recreation/Celebrations

Cathy Fochtman presented the Recreation/Celebration budget. The budget is level and reduced by .3%. Celebrations are less with about \$9000 due to the reduction of the Police Detail requirement. (KG) – will the increase of minimum wage will affect her operation. (CF) – yes it will. DOL will not impose this increase on Camps (CITs, counselors). Lifeguards and snack bar seasonal employees will be imposed on this. Will have to adjust our fees accordingly. (MG) - July 4th celebrations' donations pay for transportation and the Sherriff's Department? (CF) – no the Town does.

(MAA) – are your programs self funded – (CF) – yes.

MAA – Are the in and outs of Recreation programs – how much \$ goes in and out – Cathy I would have to look that up.

No further questions from Finance Committee.

Fire

Pat Futterer presented 3 budgets, Fire Alarm Revolving, Ambulance Enterprise.

(DT) – *what is the life expectancy on the large items? Pat – engine is 5, pump is 10, and ladder is 15, but I don't have the exact numbers. We are looking at a possible lease idea with the Town Manager.*

(KG) – Have you thought about a Community Paramedicine. (PF) – we, like many departments are beings asked to more with less. We have a Nursing Service that is already practicing this. We already go into homes and assess if their home/living conditions safe. I would rather have nursing service take care of this. I see it s a liability issue if we assess patients to see if they need further medical care.

Ambulance is down, payroll is down, EMT stipend down due to missing staff (short staffed).

Fire Alarm is level funded.

No further questions from Finance Committee

Health/Nursing/Transportation

Doug Haley presented the Health/Nursing/Transportation budget. Doug announced this is his last Budget Saturday with his anticipated retirement this year. He has attended every Budget Saturday since the very first one. (PB) – who will run the transportation – (DH) – it will go out to bid.

(SN) – what is a fixed route? (DH) It will run 11 hours a day 7 days a week. Need to work with Planning to fully define the actual 13 mile route.

(JA) – does the transportation with cross town, engineering, road runner – do they overlap? (DH)

Transportation enterprise fund covers the hard operations- vans, drivers, etc. Cross Town handles the soft operation – dispatchers.

(MB) – Will fixed route system still have the dial a ride? Doug – yes.

No further questions from Finance Committee.

Finance (Accounting, Town Clerk,/Elections, Assessors, Collector, Finance Director)

Lisa Krauss presented the Accounting budget – budget up 9.6% due to increase in salary, COLA. No further questions by Finance Committee.

Eva Szkaradek presented the Town Clerk budget – minor increase in budget – no questions. Election workers are now paid through Town payroll as Town employees.

(CK) – FY16 budget elections – how many elections does it cover? (ES) - 2 Town elections and 1 state.

(CK) – so the amount will vary from FY to FY. (ES) – yes.

(MAA) – do you anticipate any extra expenditures due to the change in the election worker requirements? (ES) – no I have not factored that yet.

(MB) – each election costs \$30,000? (ES) – there are different line items for different things. The total amount would be the full amount. No further questions from Finance Committee.

Brian McMullen presented the Assessor and Collector and Finance budget. Collector is a level service budget. (MG) Payment in lieu of taxes – does it fall to the collectors? (BM) – generally it is the Collector's. Return is 99%.

Brian McMullin presented the Finance Department budget.

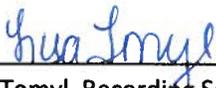
(MB) – What was the rational for putting OPEB in the operating budget. (SL) – we did it as a warrant article and educational piece at town meeting.

No further questions from Finance Committee

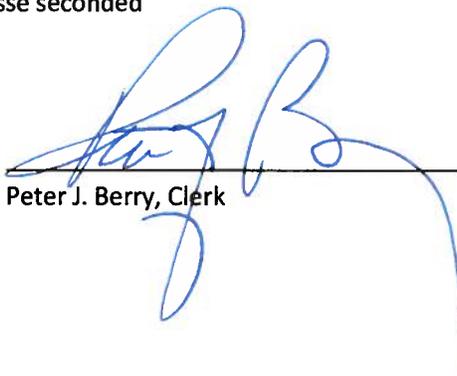
Selectmen: Mr. Gowing motion to adjourn, Ms. Adachi seconded

Finance: Mr. Noone motion to adjourn, Ms. Busse seconded

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Tomyl, Recording Secretary



Peter J. Berry, Clerk