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ACTON

**Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee  
Budget Saturday  
January 9, 2016**

**Selectmen Member Present:** Katie Green, Peter Berry, Janet Adachi, Franny Osman, Chingsung Chang  
**Finance Committee Members:** Mike Majors, Margaret Busse, Doug Tindal, Stephen Noone, Roland Bourdon III, Bob Evans, Shuyu Lee, Jason Cole, Dave Wellinghoff

**Town Staff Present:** Town Manager Steven Ledoux, Veterans Service Officer James MacRae, Human Resources Director Marianne Fleckner, Highway Superintendent Dick Waite, Engineering/DPW Director Corey York, Council on Aging Director Sharon Mercurio, Memorial Library Director Marcia Rich, Building Commissioner Frank Ramsbottom, Planning Director Roland Bartl, Citizen's Library Director Jennifer Friedman, Information Technology/ Emergency Management – Kristen Alexander and Matthew Frost, Police Chief Frank Widmayer & Deputy Police Chief Rich Burrows, Municipal Properties Supervisor Andrea Ristine, Natural Resources Director Tom Tidman, Recreation/Celebrations Director Cathy Fochtman, Fire Chief Pat Futterer & Deputy Fire Chief Robert Hart, Health Director Sheryl Ball, Nursing Director Heather York, Transportation Director Doug Halley, Finance Director Steve Barrett, Town Clerk Eva Szkaradek, Chief Assessor Brian McMullen.

This meeting was recorded.

Chairman Green convened the Selectman's meeting to order. Mr. Ledoux explained the Town Charter requires an appointment of an Assistant Town Manager in the absence of the Town Manager as the current Assistant Town Manager is out on medical, so Mr. Ledoux proposed to appoint the Police Chief Frank Widmayer as Assistant Town Manager in the Town Manager's absence. Ms. Adachi move to approve appointment in accordance with Town Charter, Ms. Osman seconded. All Ayes (5-0).  
Rex Lane Modular Housing – Mr. Ledoux requested to defer to the January 25, 2016 Board of Selectmen meeting.

Chairman Majors convened the Finance Committee to order.

Town Manager Ledoux and Steve Barrett, Finance Director gave a brief overview of the FY17 budget and introduced Matt Selby (prefers to be called Selby), the Land Use Economic Development Director who began on January 4, 2016. Marianne Fleckner gave an overview of the collective bargaining process and status of union contracts.

**Veteran Services**

James McRae presented his budget. Worked for town for 4 years. Only .56% change in budget. No questions from Board of Selectmen or Finance Committee

**Human Resources**

Marianne Fleckner – Town employee for 7.5 years presented her budget. Mr. Berry inquired how many employees are out on injury, Ms. Fleckner stated about 4 or 5, mostly Fire and PD.

Mr. Noone suggested that the town should put more money into tuition reimbursement than the current \$200.00. Ms. Green inquired about how much advertising is online and/or paper advertising depending on the position.

#### **Highway/Transfer Station/Recycling/Municipal Properties/Engineering**

Corey York 20 years, Andrea Ristine 20 years, Dick Waite 32 years

Engineering –

Highway – 98% toward salaries – increase 4.6%

Municipal Properties – down 2% overall most budget is salaries and buildings.

Finance Committee questioned a budget line item regarding Morrison Farm capital budget to approve for \$110,000? Ms. Green explained that it is not in the budget but potentially renovating the house using Habitat for Humanity and working with Morrison Farm Committee. Finance Committee member noted that there was already \$125,000.00 into the house for renovation. What is the need for additional money for renovations. Mr. Ledoux pointed there is an asbestos issue that needs to be cleaned up before continuing renovations. Habitat (for Humanity) is very interested in the house. Meeting with Morrison Farm Committee next week regarding the house and with Habitat (for Humanity). Electricity and plumbing not up to code. Finance Committee noted that it seems that for \$200,000 you could build a new house. Ms. Ristine stated that the Historical District Commission/Historical Commission will not let us knock it down. Mr. Ledoux added that once the purchase of Harris Street property is completed, the shed will be moved to that location.

Roland Bourdon – reduction of trash to 40% - why is the budget up for it? Mr. York explained the need to get a full year of PAYT under the belt to see what the total amount will be and not to cut the budget too much to get a full assessment.

Mr. Bourdon inquired if the swap shed is going to be re-opened. Mr. York explained that the swap shed is closed in the winter – volunteers operate it.

Ms. Adachi noted that it still seems to be misunderstanding with people on who pays for the cost of the transfer station. Users need to understand that it's the users that do.

Ms. Adachi inquired about the Windsor building and if the Citizen Library is still being used for storage as well – Ms. Ristine affirmed it was.

Ms. Adachi inquired to Ms. Ristine if someone has filled your previous position – there is a temporary employee for now.

Ms. Osman inquired to Mr. York if he considered having an electronic application to report potholes, etc. Is that something you would consider (public view of requests).

Mr. Bourdon noted that Town Hall has full flush toilets vs. less water toilets and how about the Asa Parlin house for a Habitat for Humanity project? Ms. Ristine noted that the Town Hall has the lowest of water bills, and the Asa Parlin house is an unsafe structure to enter.

Sewer – 1.7 million budget – increase of 1.2% have some capital items – bike lane safety study looking to set up a feasibility study, second South Acton commuter lot landscaping, third Prospect and Main traffic study, new utility truck, parker street bridge, painting of Town Hall, street lighting – out of energy efficiency fund, yard tractor for transfer station, sewers – ongoing capital replacement program going on there (equipment replacement, pumping and storage)

Mr. Wellinghoff – train station – termination of the rail trail on the south side would be cost saving for the landscaping

Ms. Woolley Busse – re train station landscaping, what is the total parking lot fund and is it going toward the transportation fund? Mr. York - not sure what the fund is but looking at 5 year plan re potential .

MB --what is the amount. Mr. Barrett – we will look into what the exact balance. MB there are limited uses to the parking lot fund.

Town Hall painting –at some point there was suggestion cwas that gift source would cover cost – what is a gift source? Ms. Ristine – it was not a gift source ,it was CPC funding. Mr. Ledoux - There was a gift source of about \$3000.

Mr. Bourdon – how much to paint the historical colors vs. white

Mr. Evans –previously purchased police cruisers from the parking lot fund – can we still do that? – Mr. Ledoux – no, there are specific laws that indicate how to use the money to purchase items.

Ms. Adachi – Parker St bridge – hope to do it dry weather, so during the summer? – Mr. York - yes.

Ms. Green – Prospect and Main study – what happened to the Acton center study? – waiting for more public comment, looking to make a presentation in late fall. The tool trucks – are they being turned in? – Mr. Waite – yes and will be keeping them locked down

### **Council on Aging**

Sharon Mercurio – 5-year employee.

Ms. Wooley Busse – total number of seniors? – SM – 4489

Capital Items – SCSC asking for \$300,000 design funds for new Senior Center

Mr. Noone – last time we asked for \$\$ for design, it was declined. Why are we bonding now – requires 2/3 this time? Mr. Barrett –we can legally bond cost over 5 years and there are other proposals on the table as well. It is legal to bond design costs. SN – what if that fails? SB – valid point why you wouldn't consider bonding.

Mr. Wellinghoff – where do you draw the line on what is bonded and what is not? SB – lot that goes on – sit with a spending total that we want to hit. Every year we look at capital projects that are bought before – this project is ready to move forward. Mr. Evans – surprised the cost has doubled in a year. Combining 3 services at the facility. Abandoning the Audubon location. Ms. Green – if Town Meeting 2017 approves the building it won't happen overnight, the current location is being considered for the Recreation Department in the future. Mr. Tindal would like to see some sort of business plan with the projection of senior usage in the future. Consider renting a space for ten years then see if usership and location works, then renew the lease.

### **Acton Memorial Library**

Marcia Rich –

### **Building**

Frank Ramsbottom – 9 year employee. General fund – purchasing notebooks (electronic tablets). Slight increase in office supplies. Revolving funds – same as last year.

**Planning/Zoning Board of Appeals**

Roland Bartl presented his capital project of the Kelly's Corner Design Project. Mr. Noone – expect rest of the funding will be paid for federal and state – Mr. Bartl stated that that is the expectation. Mr. Noone asked how long on the waiting period on the TIP – Mr. Bartl - rail trail took longer than expected. Goal is to have design completed in roughly 5 years and construction to begin immediately after as soon as the TIP funding comes through. Project does not include underground utilities – it would substantially increase the cost, likely double the cost.  
Operating budget – no change  
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**Citizen's Library**

Jennifer Friedman – 9 years – budget not changing. Ms. Osman inquired how Citizen's Library uses Windsor Building. – Ms. Friedman stated that the library uses the first floor of the Windsor building for book sales.

**Town Manager**

Steve Ledoux – 8 years – Salary budget consists of Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager, moved Community Service to Manager budget due to her location next door and better involvement with her services.

Mr. Tindal noted that the Manager Department has spent \$175,000.00 on legal fees with regard to the Walker property – Mr. Ledoux would have to confirm total. Mr. Tindal inquired if there was anything in the works that will drive up legal fees in the future. Mr. Ledoux stated possible land purchases in the future – it is a guess. Nothing we anticipate at this point. Ms. Adachi noted that Board member salaries remain the same.

**Information Technology/Emergency Management**

Kristen Alexander – 15 years – increase in encumbrances due to the nature of IT services. Many projects require a purchase order up front and spend as invoices come in. Mr. Tindal– when will the IT update committees on the website? Matt Frost – will make a note to have the committees updated on the Town website

Matt Frost – 3 years - increase in MIS equipment, telephone line Emergency Management budget

**Police/Dispatch/Animal Control Officer**

Frank Widmayer – 39 years

Rich Burrows – 3 years – presented the police budget – call volume up 3900 from 2014 (26,700). 91% of budget is personnel. Overall budget reduced by 1.6%.

Ms. Wooley Busee – what is driving the increase in call and the nature – Mr. Burrows stated 250000 calls coming in for assistance and staff in the field that come across during a shift, increase in substance abuse – 12 drug overdoses and 2 deaths and 7 saves with narcan. Received a grant for a jail diversion program and works with the town of Acton. Increase in domestic violence.

Ms. Green inquired if the school detail officers are funded by school or through police , Mr. Widmayer stated it is funded by PD

### **Natural Resources/Cemetery**

Tom Tidman – 27 years – presented the budget for Natural Resources – increase in water due to installation of new community garden in South Acton, a onetime increase for a plow to put on their tractor to plow the walking path at NARA, and a purchase of a F350 truck for cemetery to replace aging vehicle

Mr. Berry inquired if the new community garden will be open in Spring – Mr. Tidman stated no.

Mr. Majors inquired if there has been a request for a dog park , Ms. Fochtman stated that we (Natural Resources) have had 2, there is an unofficial one at Great Hill not run by the town. Mr. Tidman noted that he is open for discussion on logistics of location of one and who will oversee it.

Cathy Fochtman – 9 years – presented the Celebration budget. No further questions.

### **Fire**

Pat Futterer – 3 years –presented his budget General Fund / Capital Fund Items

Robert Hart – 28 years

Mr. Majors ask if based on businesses in Actonthe Fire Department/Police Department were equipped to handle emergencies? Mr. Futterer stated yes, but not for Hazardous Materials and that thay have to call the state team, but do have 1 employee that is trained in special HazMat conditions.

Mr. Bourdon asked the age of the truck and the ambulance. Mr. Futterer stated that Engine is 16, but can't remember the age of the ambulance.

Mr. Bourdon inquired if the Fire Chief wanted to replace the command vehicle with the same size vehicle?

Ms. Wooley Busse inquired about how many fires the Fire Department responded to. Mr. Futterer stated approximately 5000 calls per year, 1500 ambulance, 90 were fire calls, 8 were full fires.

Mr. Noone asked what percent of calls are for North Acton , Mr. Futterer responded 45%

Ms. Green noted that ALS services haven't happened, and Mr. Ledoux responded that Town commenced bargaining with fire union in 2013 and reached an agreement in fall of 2014, and the ratification did not pass. They recently changed counsel.

### **Health**

Sheryl Ball – 27 years

### **Nursing**

Heather York – 11 years. Mr. Noone noted that revenue from patient visits is under \$200,000 per year – down from where it was a couple years ago and wondered if the marketing effort was having any impact. Ms. York stated that personnel increase line is to coverage for the weekends. And running at \$144,000 for revenue currently. Ms. Wooley Busse questioned if the marketing is having an effect. Ms. York stated that the marketing taskforce began this past February and has published a 3 page FAQ published on the website. Can't really comment if the marketing is working since it just began earlier this fall. Our referrals are increasing.

Mr. Tindal stated that it is premature to pass judgment this early.

### **Transportation**

Doug Halley – 38 years. Mr. Halley gave his budget presentation. Ms Wooley Busse – parking fund and uses – only can be used for the rail shuttle – Mr. Halley - transport that goes to train station. MB - \$116,000 from parking fund, rail shuttle is \$100,000, assuming rail shuttle bring in most fees. Mr. Halley – yes. MB - Rail shuttle is popular does it make sense to raise fees? Mr. Halley - after the fees are raised we would have to assess if charging the right fees. MB - What is the ridership of CAT – Mr. Halley– 40 riders a week. We haven't push it too much just wanted establish a route now moving forward with more publicity. Mr. Evans stated that the MBTA covers 50% and Transportation is covering less than 5% - where is this going be in 5-10 years? Ms. Green noted there is hope for increase in ridership – not anticipating it to get to 50%.

Revolving fund – Ms. Busse inquired on what Acton money is paying for in the \$325,000. Mr. Halley responded that Acton pays \$15,000.

Ms. Osman clarified that for years the Town has been spending money on door-to-door services – the improvements is now we have dispatch available from 8:30 – 4. Transportation is now available for not just seniors and people with disabilities.

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

Eva Szkaradek – 21 years – Most of the budget has shifted to the Finance Department budget, so overall budget has decreased. Election budget has decreased – budgeted for 5 nights for TM so dropped to 3 nights.

Lisa Krauss – 22 years – no real changes – only increase is 4 FTE increase in steps and COLA.

Brian McMullen – 24 years

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Steve Barrett – 16 years – collector budget 1.05% increase, 2.5 FTE, Finance Director budget – 40% of spending is in Finance, lot of costs are housed there – budget up 3.5%

Mr. Noone inquired about the Middlesex Retirement Board pension and if it is still correct . Mr. Barrett stated that it was moving along at a 6.5% funding level.

Steve Ledoux– Capital Planning Committee Charge – looking for something that incorporated regional schools into the charge – put together a draft charge. In volume 2 of electronic budget, page 304.

Ms. Busse questioning why you would need the school Superintendent included. School was looking to do the same type of committee. Does like the charge the way that it is.

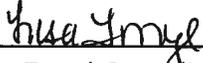
Mr. Noone likes the charge – need to give people the opportunity to make decisions on the large capital projects coming through the best way to spend the money.

Mr. Berry mentioned that putting school finance director on committee is a good idea.

Mr. Ledoux stated that the committee would make the recommendations what capital projects (that are over \$100,000) would be funded each Fiscal Year.

Ms. Adachi moved to adjourn, Ms. Osman seconded. All Ayes (5-0)

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Lisa Tomyl, Recording Secretary

  
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Janet K. Adachi, Clerk