

**Finance Committee Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 18, 2024, at 5:15 pm
Bellingham Municipal Center
Arcand Meeting Room**

Finance Committee Members Present: J. Allam (Chairman), J. Collamati (Vice-Chairman), K. Keppler, J. Kuzmeskas, J. McCarthy, B. Boyd

Finance Committee Members Absent: All Members Present

Meeting Commenced: J. Allam called the meeting to order at 5:15 pm.

K. Keppler made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 15, 2023, Finance Committee Meeting, as submitted. K. Kuzmeskas seconded. Approved 6/0.

Public Hearing: DPW Director, Jesse Riedle gave a brief summary on each of the of the Department Accounts listed below for the FY25 Operating Expenses and Salaries.

FY25 Highway Budget has increased due to creating the new foreperson role positions as listed: Parks Foreperson, Infrastructure Foreperson, Facilities Foreperson, and Mechanic Foreperson. These are not additional roles but are elevated positions within the CBA.

The new DPW office building is currently under construction and has been incorporated into the FY25 estimates. The new office is on track to be completed by September of this year.

Contracts were recently updated and have added GPS tracking into the trucks to support all drivers, as well as the Town. Camera installations in all of the DPW buildings has been negotiated and will be installed to ensure the safety of everyone at each location.

FY25 Tree Warden Budget is a continuation of dead tree removal, similar to recent years. This is in addition to the regularly scheduled tree projects that take place through the Tree Warden.

FY25 Snow Budget – Snow has been limited this winter and had a lesser need to call in plow vendors for large storms. The salt shed is currently 75% full. It will be topped off to full by year end.

FY25 Fuel Budget for vehicles is an estimate based on the average consumption and multiplied by the average gas/diesel rate. Reflecting gas rate of \$3.80 per gallon and diesel price of \$4.20 per gallon.

FY25 Cemetery Budget is level funded and does not have any foreseeable expenses beyond what is currently being budgeted for.

FY25 Parks and Recreation Department Budget includes changes for staffing year-round with a dedicated parks employee. Historically this position was vacant for the months of January and February. The change will allow the position to be used for the DPW operations, including snow and ice events.

FY25 Water Budget includes revising the DPW truck driver, operator, pipe fitter positions in order to create foreperson roles, adding on-call standby duty and reassigning vendor charges to properly align several budget accounts. The new roles have been divided into their proper budgets and will be presented in different budget items.

The increase also includes an annual sludge removal from the Hartford Avenue Treatment Facility which should be done on an annual basis going forward.

FY25 Sewer Budget includes revising of the DPW truck driver, operator, pipe fitter positions to create the foreperson roles, adding on-call standby duty and reassigning vendor charges to properly align several budget accounts.

FY25 Stormwater Budget includes revising of the DPW truck driver, operator, pipe fitter position to create the foreperson roles, adding on-call standby duty and reassigning vendor charges to properly align several budget accounts.

A line item showing decrease is reflected due to a street sweeper lease being paid off. The two current street sweepers are both being used and are in good condition.

FY25 Trash Budget is level funded from the FY24 budget. There is currently a contract out with the company and will be provided to the Committee once the new numbers are delivered to the town. Committee members will not take action on the trash budget tonight and will wait for the new contract to be received.

J. Collamati made a motion to recommend the DPW accounts, excluding the Enterprise Funds from tonight's recommendations. Seconded by J. Kuzmeskas. Recommended 6/0.

Public Hearing: Chief Fitzgerald and Lieutenant Russell from the Police Department were present to discuss the FY25 Police Department Budget. Chief shared an FY25 Budget Request PowerPoint with members present.

An FY25 Financial Needs Analysis was provided and shows the need to fund staffing and contractual obligations, address the unfunded liabilities in salaries, accreditation training requirements, moving yearly fleet replacements into the operating budget, and continuing to provide quality police and 911 services to the community.

The FY25 expense increases are due to the increased costs from vehicle maintenance, price increases on services that have been purchased, MPAC membership for accreditation increases, supply chain challenges, BAPERN to fund radio system updates, and training courses, as well as other items.

Budget challenges for salaries was explained to Committee members in regard to holiday pay that is currently an unfunded liability and is greater than \$140,000 at straight time. Approximately 60% of time off requires an overtime backfill to have the shifts covered.

J. McCarthy made a motion to recommend the Police Department line items as presented. Seconded by K. Keppler. Seconded 6/0.

Public Hearing: Chief Miller and Deputy Milot from the Fire Department were present to give a brief summary on the FY25 Fire Department Budget.

Chief Miller gave an update to members regarding the Collective Bargaining Agreement adjustments to meet up with the current increase in the contract. Overtime wages for trainings and seminars have increased due to some of the 5 contractual trainings, OSHA requiring live burns, and yearly paramedic trainings.

The Department is currently working to increase the number of personnel on each shift in order to continue having a prompt response time for all parts of town. This will especially help with the amount of traffic and residents that has increased at the north end of town.

Dues and Memberships funds are used to cover multiple items, which includes all payments to the Fire Chief's Association, Fire Prevention Association, Norfolk County dues, radio dues, the defib monitoring company that has to come into maintenance yearly due to it being proprietary, conventions, as well as covering a lot of contractual items from outside vendors.

There has been an increase in the purchasing of supplies due to the fact that in the past they were replaced by the hospitals. Replacements are no longer provided from hospitals, and everything is back on the community that does their own service.

The hiring of additional staff would also allow an additional person to be added to south station instead of having just 2 staff members there daily.

K. Keppler made a motion to recommend the Fire Department general ledger accounts as presented. J. Kuzmeskas seconded. Recommend 6/0.

Public Hearing: Ms. Chuckran and Mr. Fraine were present to answer any additional questions that members had regarding the current FY25 Budget and also discuss any additional departments that would need to attend a future Finance Committee Meeting.

New Business, Emails, Correspondence, Bills:

B. Boyd made a motion to approve the invoices from Finance Committee Clerk, Tina Griffin, for the months of December 2023, January 2024, February 2024, and March 2024, in the amount of \$318.32 each. J. Kuzmeskas seconded. Approved 6/0.

The next Finance Committee Meeting will take place on Monday, March 25, 2024, at 5:30 pm, in the Arcand Meeting Room.

J. Kuzmeskas made a motion to adjourn at 6:44 pm. Seconded by B. Boyd. Approved 6/0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tina M. Griffin
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