

**Finance Committee Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at 5:15 pm
Bellingham Municipal Center
Arcand Meeting Room**

Finance Committee Members Present: J. Allam (Chairman), J. Collamati (Vice-Chairman), J. Flannery, 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.

J. Collamati made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 26, 2022, Finance Committee Meeting, as submitted. K. Keppler seconded. Recommended 6/0. J. Flannery was not present for this meeting and abstained from the motion.

J. Kuzmeskas made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 2, 2022, Finance Committee Meeting, as submitted. B. Boyd seconded. Recommended 6/0. J. Flannery was not present for this meeting and abstained from the motion.

Public Hearing: Chief Gentile and Deputy Milot from the Fire Department were present to give a brief summary on the FY24 Fire Department Budget.

Chief Gentile told Finance Committee Members that the Fire Departments Salary for the Fire Chief may change from what is in the presented budget. Chief Gentile will be retiring in June of 2023 and the salary for this position may have some adjustments.

The other salaries in the presented budget are contractual for July 2023. This will also be the year that the paramedic stipend and clothing allowance will be rolled into their base salary. This is the reason that the budget doesn't show money allocated for these two items, which are still in the budget but are no longer in separate accounts.

The salaries line item also includes the addition of two new personnel that have recently been hired. Chief Gentile also has a request for additional personnel that are needed for the Fire Department. The Department is still short on manpower and requires a fair number of calls to be placed to neighboring towns if multiple calls come in at the same time.

There has been an increase in the budget for vehicle repairs. With Barrett's Truck Repair no longer in business the vehicles are being taken back to the dealer for repairs, which is more costly for parts and the hourly labor rate.

There is a change in the Dues and Memberships line. This is from being unaware of what the new Fire Chief will want to be part of for programs and memberships.

Chief Gentile and Deputy Milot's requests will be taken into consideration. Recommendations from Finance Committee Members will be made at a later date, after all Department Budgets have been presented and discussed.

Public Hearing: Chief Daigle and Lieutenant Russell from the Police Department were present to discuss the FY24 Police Department Budget.

Chief Daigle told Finance Committee Members that the Department is still short staffed on Police Officers and will be losing additional staff shortly, due to retirement, disabilities and crew that is out on injuries, etc. They are trying to backfill positions and regain manpower for the staffing shortage.

A decrease in the defibrillation line item is contractual for July 2023 and this amount is now being rolled into their base salary instead of a separate line item.

Ms. MacKinnon also notified members that in the FY24 Budget there is an elimination of the Auxiliary Police Budget. Up until the end of the FY23 Budget there has been a small increase in this line item that is being eliminated going forward.

Chief Daigle and Lieutenant Russell's requests will be taken into consideration. Recommendations from Finance Committee Members will be made at a later date, after all Department Budgets have been presented and discussed.

Public Hearing: DPW Director, Jesse Riedle gave a brief summary on each of the of the Department Accounts listed below for the FY24 Operating Expenses and Salaries.

The overall DPW Budget includes the salary for three DPW personnel, of which two would be new positions and would be funded under the FY24 Budget. Mr. Riedle explained the many tasks of the crew and the reason that new staff is essential in order to maintain the daily needs and concerns of the town. Some other increases in this budget is due to contractual agreements that have increased in order to reflect the cost of living expenses and salaries.

FY24 Cemetery Budget is level funded and does not have any foreseeable expenses beyond what is currently being budgeted for.

FY24 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.

FY24 Parks and Recreation Department Budget has some line item changes with the budget total not changing significantly. These changes were to properly align department activities.

The lifeguard salaries are not included in the town's budget, as they are provided to the town at no expense, in return for letting the YMCA have use of the beaches for their summer programs.

FY24 Sewer Budget is close to being level funded, with some of the increases being due to the equipment maintenance costs and contracts. This budget includes the door fob access, GIS Software mapping program, small increases to gas & oil, and the CRPCD is based on the capacity owned as opposed to the actual sewer flows.

FY24 Snow Budget has been milder this season and we have lesser need to call in some of the vendors for large storms as we have had in the past. The salt shed will still need to be refilled. Ms. MacKinnon let members know that there was still approximately \$100,000 in funding for the salt budget and the salt shed will be replenished at the end of the season.

FY24 Stormwater Budget has had some increases, mostly due to the sweeping pile. A substantial amount of money has been spent to reduce the departments current inventory on sweeper collections.

FY24 Tree Warden Budget is level funded for the operating budget and the department is also using the additional funding from Town Meeting for part of the multi-year tree project.

FY24 Water Budget has seen increases due to a recent PFAS pilot study to determine the best option for treating the water at the Hartford Avenue filtration plant.

The Department is also in the process of replacing outdated water meters and/or ones with high consumption. This has been an ongoing project, with the replacement being approximately 340 units per year in order to ensure accurate readings and billing for consumption.

Equipment maintenance and contracts to maintain the “Code Red” information system has had an increase for FY24.

Another added expense is the hiring of a consulting company to assist with the surveying of backflow devices at commercial properties.

An increase in dues and memberships budget is for license renewals. The crew’s licenses are valid for two years, with this year being a renewal year.

The DPW requests will be taken into consideration. Recommendations from the Finance Committee Members will be made at a later date, after all Department Budgets have been presented and discussed.

Public Hearing: Ms. MacKinnon and Mr. Fraine were present to answer questions that members had regarding the current FY24 Budget and additional departments that will need to attend a future Finance Committee Meeting.

New Business, Emails, Correspondence, Bills:

J. Flannery made a motion to approve the invoices from Finance Committee Clerk, Tina Griffin, for the months of November 2022, December 2022, January 2023, February 2023, and March 2023, in the amount of \$318.32 each. K. Keppler seconded. Recommended 7/0.

The next Finance Committee Meeting will take place on Tuesday, April 4, 2023, at 5:30 pm, in the Arcand Meeting Room. This meeting will be to discuss and vote on budget items for various departments.

J. Flannery made a motion to adjourn at 6:43 pm. Seconded by J. Kuzmeskas. Recommended 7/0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tina M. Griffin
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