**Finance Committee & Board of Selectman FY20 Budget Meeting Minutes**

**Town Hall ~ March 23, 2019**

**Sturbridge, MA**

**Call to Order:**

The Board of Selectman (BoS) chair called the shared budget meeting to order at 8:30am. The following Finance Committee members were present: Kathy Neal (KN), James Waddick (JW), Jared Burns (JB), Karen Davis (KD), Larry Morrison (LM), and Michael Hager (MH). Joni Light (JL) arrived at 8:40am. Bruce Boyson (BB) and Kevin Smith (KS) were absent. The following BoS members were present: Priscilla Gimas (PG), Michael Suprenant (MS), Mary Dowling (MD). Chase Kaitbenski (CK) arrived at 9:00am. Mary Blanchard (MB) was absent.

Speakers: Barbara Barry (BBa), Finance Director, Ted Kozak (TK), Interim Town Administrator

Guests: Becky Plimpton (BP), Joshua Hyde Librarian, Butch Jackson (BJ), DPW Director, Tom Ford (TF), Police Chief

**Highlights of the town’s FY20 budget:**

BB started the meeting with a thorough review of the current town finances and financial outlook. She reiterated concerns in the 5-year budget forecast and the significance of some of the challenges she faced. Fire Department and Police Department personnel increases, pension increases, and education increases make up for many of the new monies needed. This denotes that the cost of the town’s services is growing at a higher rate than the annual increase to the levy limit and increases in revenues. This will cause more serious concerns for the FY21 budget if this trend continues. Discussion continued among the committees.

**Library – Becky Plimpton**

BP described her needs and substantiated her request for an additional position to her department. The Program Coordinator was added to her budget at 15 hours per week at a Personnel Committee confirmed Level 4 salary/wage grade. She proceeded to answer questions on her budget. Two members of the Library Board of Trustees were also present.

**DPW -Butch Jackson**

KN asked about the various requests for equipment from Betterment and Capital budgets. BJ explained that the utility tractor and lawn tractor are different, and both are needed for upkeep of properties. BJ reviewed his staff, commenting on some upcoming potential retirements. He then explained the Implementation System for Sewer Collections planned to be added to the budget in phases. While this will be an increase in expenses, it will be included in the rate to customers out of the Sewer Budget and not the operating budget.

After the DPW discussion, the two committees reviewed the additional line item for “stipend” in the BoS budget. TK explained how he felt it necessary to add to their budget as a “thank you” for their service, and perhaps a way of covering any out of pocket expenses they may incur. It was brought up by both committees this stipend went to town meeting a few years back and the town voted it down.

**Police – Tom Ford**

TF went through the changes to his budget and discussed his staffing request. The notable difference is the absence of the request for an SRO which was approved in the most recent Special Town Meeting and is included in his operating budget salaries. He is also asking for four additional full-time dispatchers. There was continued discussion on the funding of the SRO, as well as a review of the dispatch operations.

Discussion moved to the Betterment and Capital requests. Notable items being the $15,000.00 request for a drone, and the purchase of simunition guns. MS brought up a valid point to review on the purchase of the associated ammunition from Capital as it is an “expendable” item and does not fall into the classification of a capital purchase. TF said he would investigate the cost of the ammunition for the amount requested. Discussion moved to the training of police officers, and potential grants from the department.

The Board of Selectman dissolved their meeting unanimously at 10:55am.

The Finance Committee continued discussion on the Reserve Fund Transfer requested by BB. A motion was moved by JL to approve a $400.00 transfer from Free Cash to the Town Hall Supplies Account (11932-54000) for $200.00, and to the Center Office Supplies Account (11942-54000) for $200.00; JW seconds. Motion was approved 6-0-0. Both supplies budgets were insufficient for end of fiscal year.

JB moved the motion to adjourn; KD seconds. Meeting adjourned at 11:00am.

/jell