



Town of Swampscott
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, April 3rd, 2023 - 7:00 PM
Virtual meeting

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FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Eric Hartmann (Chair), Naomi Dreeben, Joan Hilario, Cinder McNerney, Adrian Rodriguez, Suraj Krishnamurthi, Erik Schneider.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Matthew Kirschner (Vice-chair), Sunit Shah.

OTHER TOWN STAFF

Graham Archer, Chief of Fire; Gino Cresta, Director of Public Work; Amy Sarro, Director of Admin. & Finance; Patrick Luddy, Town Treasure/Collector; Trang Vu, Assistant Town Accountant

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM

Public comment

None

Review FY2024 Budget

The Committee welcomed Fire Chief Archer to come to present his department budget. The Committee would like to understand more about the department's budget challenges, especially surrounding overtime, changes in minimum manning.

Chief Archer commented that he feels confident that the budget meets the needs of the department for FY2024. They have gone over the budget in *Overtime* for 2 years because of long-term vacancies with injury sick leave and civil service transitioning. He has been working closely with the Director of Finance to calculate all potential backfills for vacation and holiday to come down to this proposed budget. Responding to Eric Hartmann's question about "perfect budget", Chief Archer confirmed that he budgeted on the assumption that everybody takes their full allotment of vacation and time-offs. Sick time off and injuries are unexpected, but the good news is that the new hiring process outside of civil service is easier and faster.

Regarding FY2023 *Overtime* line item which has already run over the budget in FY23-Q3, Chief Archer commented that this has been a hard year with many sick and injury leaves. He would not expect the same for FY2024, so this line is still budgeted at the same level for FY2024.

Naomi Dreeben asked if the department is fully staffed now. Chief Archer mentioned that they were fully staffed for most of the year until they had 2 retirements in December 2022 and February 2023. They have a new entrance exam scheduled soon to hire new firefighters.

Director of DPW Gino Cresta joined the budget discussion. He mentioned that the Cemetery is his most concern right now and that he wants to make improvements using the operating budget. He hopes to do it this year because of the reduction in his *Personnel* line item. The improvement is to prevent damage to the cemetery lawn whenever they dig another grave opening.

Director of Adm. And Finance commented that she will work on year-end shuffle projection and see if there is any support for this project.

Responding to Erik Schneider's questions on *Shade Trees*, Mr. Cresta commented that they have enough people to complete the project for a certain number of trees. Town meeting gave them \$40,000 to plan trees a few years ago and this number was the price if they hire a company to come and plant trees. They decided to do it in house to better utilize the received money and 100 trees over the past two years have been planted by DPW staff. He also updated that the town has the Tree Committee which meets once a month and comes up with a list of reasonable kinds of trees that will survive well in the town. The town is doing a big street paving project in May which he thinks is one of the best investments we have ever made in the town.

Regarding the plan for beach seawall repair, Mr. Cresta mentioned that they need to complete Kings Beach first because it was in bad shape and then move over to Fisherman's Beach. Finishing seawall repair is his biggest priority, which costs totally around \$3.5M.

For *Townwide Traffic Improvements* capital request for FY2024, Mr. Cresta commented that it is to make some improvements to the intersections and areas around the new elementary school.

Mr. Cresta also gave an update on the sewer work with Lynn as requested by Cinder McNerney. There is still a significant amount of work that needs to be done in that area and they can evaluate the results this spring.

Gino Cresta commented on Erik Schneider's question about the pier floats replacement that we might have to put the old ones in for part of the season if not the whole season and the bid is ready to put out in the next couple of weeks.

Chief Archer was back and continued his discussion on Capital request for FY2025 on a new fire truck. He commented that their fire trucks are approaching 20 years old and the company which manufactured them is no longer in business. It made the maintenance challenging since many parts are proprietary to that company. He also mentioned that there is a growing demand for it from other communities that can make the waiting time up to 30 months from when we order to when we receive the truck. The cost to keep current old truck moving is getting more and more expensive.

Old and new business

Mr. Hartmann confirmed that the Police Chief will attend our meeting next Monday to discuss his department budget. After that CIC will join for Capital projects discussion.

Amy Sarro mentioned that she got the firm number for *Property casualty insurance*, *Worker comp* and *Police & Fire injury*. There is a reduction of \$9000 in *Property Casualty Insurance*. The Committee suggested using this amount for DPW cemetery improvement as mentioned earlier by DPW Director.

Chairman Hartmann asked the updates on estimated revenue. Amy Sarro commented that there is a net increase of \$276,753 in State Aid.

The letter is another item that the committee continues to work on.

The committee would like to have the Town Administrator to join meeting on Monday.

On **MOTION** (Naomi Dreeben) and **SECONDED** (Joan Hilario), it was **VOTED** to adjourn the meeting at 8:10PM by **ROLL CALL**.
ROLL CALL: Erik Schneider (YES), Adrian Rodriguez (YES), Suraj Krishnamurthi (YES), Cinder Mcnerney (YES), Eric Hartmann (YES).

True Attest,

Trang Vu

Assistant Town Accountant

Approved by vote of the finance committee 07/10/2023