



Town of Swampscott
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 21, 2022 – 7 PM
Virtual Meeting

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Tim Dorsey (Chair), Mary Ellen Fletcher (Vice-chair), Joan Hilario, Cinder McNerney, Erik Schneider, Naomi Dreeben, Matthew Kirschner, Suraj Krishnamurthi, Eric Hartmann.

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT

Sean Fitzgerald, Town Administrator; Amy Sarro, Director of Admin & Finance; Patrick Luddy, Treasurer/Collector; Trang Vu, Asst. Town Accountant.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm.

Public Comment

None.

Approvals of Meeting Minutes

On **MOTION** (MaryEllen Fletcher) and **SECONDED** (Joan Hilario) it was **VOTED** by **ROLL CALL** to approve meeting minutes on March 7th, as amended by Finance Committee. **ROLL CALL:** Eric Hartmann (YES), Erik Schneider (YES), Cinder McNerney (YES), Suraj Krishnamurthi (YES), Matthew Kirschner (YES), Naomi (YES), Tim Dorsey (YES).

Discussion on FY 23 proposed budget

Select Board

MaryEllen Fletcher had a question relating the \$14,000 increase in Community Program of Select Board budget.

Town Administrator Sean Fitzgerald responded this increase is to help Town management to engage and support community initiatives.

Town Administrator

Amy Sarro responded to MaryEllen Fletcher's question about Executive Assistant salary of \$90,000 that the amount includes one full-time Executive Assistant to the Town Administrator and a part-time admin who is going to support the entirety of Town Hall.

MaryEllen Fletcher asked about the funding for Senior Work off program.

Amy Sarro mentioned that this is a tax abatement program, so it's not a line in the budget because the money they earn immediately offset their tax bill.

Joan Hilario had a concern about whether the new Executive Assistant would be responsible in part for maintaining the transparent communication with the community that had been enhanced by the prior strategic communication director.

Town Administrator Sean Fitzgerald gave an update on the Town staff hiring: Chief of Police, Building Inspector, Executive Assistant positions have been filled; Town clerk and HR Director positions are in the process of final interviews.

Accounting

Amy Sarro confirmed that the amount of \$65,000 is the quote from the auditors, an additional of \$5,500 fee will be paid from School budget.

Assessing

Amy Sarro confirmed that Assessor Director is still a part-time position with a contract.

Legal/ Insurance

MaryEllen would like to know the final expense for Town Counsel Contract in 2021.

Amy Sarro answered that we spent \$198,775 in 2021 and it was larger than typical because of legal costs relating to the protests.

Human Resources

Sean Fitzgerald mentioned that he would like to recognize employee contributions by having \$30,000 in "Performance Management" this fiscal year.

Tim Dorsey commented on retention strategies that look at more than just salary such as employee recognition and other ways of communicating the valued and importance of the work the employees do for the Town.

Tim Dorsey confirmed that Salary Reserve includes dollars for raises that haven't been yet agreed to our CBAs. He asked if Salary Reserve line item is a moving target.

Amy Sarro confirmed that it is currently a moving target. She also commented that the amount of \$158,531 is not likely to be enough to cover all the CBAs that come through or the increase for non-union personnel.

MaryEllen Fletcher asked if we violate the policy if we use Free cash to cover for personnel in general operating fund. Tim Dorsey confirmed that we have traditionally used Free Cash to fund the first year of a collective bargaining agreement agreed to after the Budget is approved.

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There was a conversation about the need and fund to hire a Diversity Coordinator under HR budget. Amy Sarro mentioned that we previously got a consultant who got paid from Town Administrator's contracted consulting and that identified the need for a larger-scaled consultant. She mentioned the Town can use ARPA to get a consultant identify the Town's needs and set expectation to the full-time Diversity Coordinator we are going to hire.

Matthew Kirschner began a discussion about HR generalist and Benefit Coordinator position. MaryEllen Fletcher had a question about the raise in this position salary. Joan Hilario commented that the budgeted HR generalist and Benefit Coordinator salary is reasonable in terms of Swampscott size.

Amy Sarro mentioned that the Town's intention in the future is to have one shared HR Director to oversee the Town and School.

Joan Hilario brought up the question regarding Employment Screening line item in which the anticipated amount is much lower than last year. Amy Sarro commented that this line item might vary depending on the numbers of new hires each year.

Employee Benefits

Amy Sarro mentioned that some of the health plans can go up as much as 12% on their premiums based off the current enrollment. She predicted an increase in Employee Group Health of \$72,000, but still waiting for more information from Open Enrollment.

Town Administrator Sean Fitzgerald commented that he asked the school to pay about 20% of the health care increase costs, equally \$100,000.

Joan Hilario asked Sean Fitzgerald if Swampscott was an outlier in asking the School Department to fund part of the Healthcare line item from the budget.

The Committee decided to leave this topic open for a further review.

Community Development

MaryEllen Fletcher had a question about \$31,000 drop in "Contracted Consulting Services". Amy Sarro responded that we had requested to transfer this additional amount in appropriation in Special Town meeting in December to cover fund needed for Windsor Park.

Building Inspector

Town Administrator confirmed that the Building Inspector Chief will include \$80,000 from Building department budget and \$10,000 from Facilities budget under Assistant Facilities Director line.

DPW

Tim Dorsey decided to leave DPW budget open until the Committee has budget discussion with Director of Facilities next meeting.

Committee Updates

None.

Old and New Business

None.

On **MOTION** (Joan Hilario) and **SECONDED** (MaryEllen Fletcher), it was **VOTED** by **ROLL CALL** to adjourn the meeting at 8:50pm. **ROLL CALL:** Erik Hartmann (YES), Matthew Kirschner (YES), Erik Schneider (YES), Naomi Dreeben (YES), Suraj Krishnamurthi (YES), Cinder McNerney (YES), Tim Dorsey (YES).

True Attest,
Trang Vu

Trang Vu, Assistant Town Accountant

Minutes APPROVED by vote of the Finance Committee 03/28/2022.