



Town of Swampscott
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 28, 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, Eric Hartmann, Matthew Kirschner.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Suraj Krishnamurthi

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT

David Kurz, Interim Police Administrator; Ruben Quesada, Chief of Police Department, Graham Archer, Chief of Fire Department; Patrick Luddy, Treasurer/Collector; Trang Vu, Asst. Town Accountant.

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm.

Public Comment

None.

Discussion on FY 23 proposed budget and, as applicable, meeting with department heads and/or Town or School leadership

Finance committee welcomed new Police chief Ruben Quesada to the town.

Eric Hartmann commented that he would have expected the Fire and Police department budgets to follow a similar approach given that both departments had ongoing Collective Bargaining Agreement discussions. The Fire budget is largely held flat to last year, but the Police budget is representing changes to many line items.

MaryEllen Fletcher asked how the overtime is budgeted in both departments. She also would like to know whether leaving civil service affects minimum manning.

Chief Graham Archer mentioned that the major factors are the number of vacancies, contractual time-off. The Fire Department looks at the historical average numbers and make an annual analysis to be able to project overtime. He confirmed that leaving Civil Service doesn't directly affect the minimum manning but helps the department to have some more flexibility in shift scheduling.

MaryEllen Fletcher questioned on "Education" and "Training" line in Police Department's budget.

Chief Kurz commented that he would like to have police officers to have better education and training which will lead to better decision making. He did not think education and training had been done well in the past and he emphasized how important it is to improve this aspect.

Tim Dorsey mentioned to a reduction in “Overtime” lines in Police Department’s budget. Chief David Kurz emphasized that Police Department had a difficult time last year regarding COVID, protests, vacancies which caused the overtime increase. This year budget was built with the hope that everything will get improved.

MaryEllen Fletcher asked both departments on how their hiring process is going.

Chief David Kurz confirmed that Police Department is in the process of interviewing 3 candidates and Town Administrator has chosen one so far. Town Administrator recommended to have candidates who had successfully passed both the written and the physical agility tests. Chief Kurz mentioned that all the candidates are highly qualified with bachelor's degree which makes him strongly believe they are going to pass the agility academy exam.

Chief Archer confirmed that the Fire Department has brought 3 permanent positions in recently. One was transferred from another city, fully trained and certified so he could start working right away. The other two candidates will be trained for 2 weeks after background and other checks, anticipated to officially work in mid-May. He emphasized that hiring procedure outside of Civil Service has given the department many great candidates.

Both Chiefs responded to MaryEllen Fletcher’s question on the cost to run the hiring process that are around \$7,700 for Police and \$5,500 for Fire per round.

Chief Archer brought up a future recruitment plan to improve the outreach to good potential diverse candidates.

Chief Quesada also expressed his thoughts from his working experience on leaving Civil Service that it will bring the Town more opportunities to hire employees from different backgrounds and communities.

Matthew Kirschner asked how “Fitness and training” lines in both departments’ budget work.

Both Chief Archer and Chief Kurz commented that it’s a new voluntary fitness incentive standard that was negotiated a part of the contract after they left Civil Service. If Firefighters or Police officers choose to take the standard tests and pass them, they get a stipend as a result.

MaryEllen asked for grants that both departments brought in and appreciated their time and hard work for doing so.

Naomi Dreeben would like to know the effects of regional dispatch. Both Chiefs agreed that dispatch services are done in a joint fashion with other communities is a valid and effective working system in managing town’s fund.

There was a discussion around the goals to achieve for Wednesday’s meeting brought up by Tim Dorsey. The plan was to have updates on Employee Benefit, Debt service, Solid wastes line items and finalize them before meeting with School staff and School committee next Monday.

Committee and Working Group Updates.

None.

Old and New business

None.

Approvals of Meeting Minutes

On **MOTION** (MaryEllen Fletcher) and **SECONDED** (Eric Hartmann), it was **VOTED** by **ROLL CALL** to approve the Meeting minutes on 03/09/2022, 03/14/2022 and 03/21/2022, as amended by Finance Committee. **ROLL CALL:** Matthew Kirschner (YES), Cinder McNerney (YES), Erik Schneider (YES), Naomi Dreeben (YES), Joan Hilario (YES), Tim Dorsey (YES).

On **MOTION** (MaryEllen Fletcher) and **SECONDED** (Naomi Dreeben), it was **VOTED** by **ROLL CALL** to adjourn the meeting at 8:3pm. **ROLL CALL:** Matthew Kirschner (YES), Erik Schneider (YES), Eric Hartmann (YES), Cinder McNerney (YES), Naomi Dreeben (YES), Joan Hilario (YES), Tim Dorsey (YES).

True Attest,

Trang Vu

Trang Vu, Assistant Town Accountant

Minutes APPROVED by vote of the Finance Committee 04/20/2022