



Town of Swampscott
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday April 27th, 2021 7:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Tim Dorsey (Chair), Mary Ellen Fletcher (Vice-chair), Eric Hartmann, Joan Hilario, Matthew Kirschner, Cinder McNerney, Gail Rosenberg, Jill Sullivan

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT

David Brodsky, Capital Improvement Committee; Rich Raymond, Capital Improvement Committee; Angela Ippolito, Planning Board; Sean Fitzgerald, Town Administrator; Ron Mendes, Asst. Town Administrator; Marzie Galazka, Comm. & Econ. Dev. Director; Max Kasper, Facilities Director; Amy Sarro, Town Accountant; Patrick Luddy, Asst. Town Accountant

Meeting called to order 7:03 PM

Approval of Minutes

None.

Public Comments

None.

Continued discussion regarding Capital Items for Annual Town Meeting

Tim Dorsey recapped the previous discussions the committee has had surrounding the proposed capital plan. He then asked Facilities Director Max Kasper to elaborate on the assessment that has been done on the Middle School and his plans or expectations surrounding addressing leaks and windows for example. The hope is that a further explanation of the needs surrounding the middle school might lead into some reprioritization of proposed capital projects.

Mr. Kasper stated that the conversation surrounding the middle school would be a lot more pervasive at this time if the New Elementary School project were not in play. He clarified that the plan for the middle school is still in its early stages; steps were taken to put a major renovation project in the capital plan in a future year to indicate the need that exists for this type of work. The Habeeb group has compiled a comprehensive assessment of the needs that the Middle School facility has; in summary nearly every building system in the Middle School is failing or near failure.

Mr. Kasper stated that there needs to be input from the community regarding which systems should be addressed and prioritized. He contrasted some of the building systems that are interwoven with the roof system which can be handled on its own. He elaborated that it would not be prudent to replace systems individually when they are reliant on other systems that are also aged and in need of replacement. For example, it would not make sense to do a comprehensive window system before an HVAC system because there are window units currently in place. Similarly, benefits would be achieved from doing the sprinkler and the fire alarm system projects together because you will likely need less alarm devices if you have sprinklers in place (the Middle School is currently not sprinklered).

Mr. Kasper reiterated the urgency that exists surrounding these projects, and his desire to not defer maintenance so far down the line that more systems fail. The facilities director's vision for the Middle School includes ungraded systems and finishes to restore the building to full functionality and efficiency.

He highlighted water infiltration as a pressing matter that may need to be addressed, and that a section of windows may need to be replaced outside of a comprehensive renovation project in order to address this issue. There is possibility of MSBA funding for window projects; he is currently exploring the possibility of pursuing this funding for a partial window replacement project.

Joan Hilario asked Mr. Kasper to clarify if there was any opportunity to pursue MSBA funding for a window project, and then explore an HVAC project that is timed along with the window project at the town's expense, or some similar approach. Mr. Kasper responded that it is possible, but the costs associated with the projects are in the millions and require a comprehensive plan and years of time to execute properly.

Jill Sullivan asked Mr. Kasper to clarify if the maintenance funding that was pursued in the capital plan had anything to do with Middle School repairs. Mr. Kasper stated that the funding asked for related more closely to Elementary School projects that are needed.

Mary Ellen Fletcher asked if an addition \$200,000 in the maintenance funding would be helpful at all to address the needs at the Middle School. Mr. Kasper responded that he would like to pursue a partial window replacement project that is funded partially by the MSBA in the next capital cycle. Ms. Fletcher asked Mr. Kasper to state the cost associated with the partial window replacement project he is exploring on the Northeast side of the Middle School. The Habeeb report estimated the cost of total window replacement at \$1.2-\$1.5M; a preliminary ballpark for the partial replacement project would be \$400,000 according to Mr. Kasper.

Chairman Dorsey asked for clarification on the MSBA application process in February relative to the project timeline. Mr. Kasper stated that he needs to do more research on the accelerated repair application, and he is not certain of the timeline yet. His assumption would be that the February application would be for a project in the following Summer.

Jill Sullivan asked Mr. Fitzgerald for clarification surrounding the timing of the MSBA accelerated repair project; if MSBA funding was awarded and a project was approved at a May

Town Meeting the timeline for Summer execution feels tight. Mr. Fitzgerald agreed that the timeline would be tight but the town should have the ability to execute such a project in the Summer subsequent to town meeting approval.

Matthew Kirschner asked for clarification that the middle school roof replacement project was on target to be completed this summer. Mr. Kasper confirmed that the project was on track. Mr. Kirschner also asked if there was opportunity to treat the Middle School windows over the Summer to seal them and extend their life until a larger window project can be achieved. Mr. Kasper stated that he did not believe treatment of the windows would achieve anything because of the level of rot that exists on the metal panels.

Jill Sullivan asked for the town staff to address the questions the committee raised in their previous meeting surrounding the harbor waterfront/pier repair capital project.

Mr. Fitzgerald summarized the work the Harbor Waterfront Committee has achieved, the various grant opportunities that are being explored to fund the different aspects of the plan, and all the public meetings that have been held to obtain input from the community on the proposed plan.

Marzie Galazka echoed the comments of Mr. Fitzgerald. She stated that the permitting process associated with the expansion and renovation of the pier has a public outreach component to ensure that stakeholders are involved in the process.

Mr. Dorsey brought up the concern of the committee that the title of the project in the capital plan seemed too broad and asked for clarification. Mr. Fitzgerald commented that the \$100,000 project includes \$20,000 to match the \$80,000 state grant for pier renovations, and the other \$80,000 worth of funds is for studies related to the other components of the harbor waterfront plan.

Angela Ippolito was recognized by Chairman Dorsey. She commented on concerns she has that the studies and plans were not a component of the master plan. She voiced concerns that work related to the pier has a lot of public opposition, and concerns that the plans are incomplete.

Mr. Dorsey recognized Jackson Schultz in the meeting. He commented on the transparency that has been incorporated in the development of the Harbor and Waterfront Plan. He highlighted that the town has allocated funds to address feasibility studies for major projects in the past and stated that \$80,000 of the Harbor and Waterfront plan would help address the feasibility study.

Mary Ellen Fletcher asked Max to clarify if the Swampscott Yacht Club will be making any contributions to the capital improvements proposed for the Fish House in the capital plan. He stated that there is no plan to receive any funding from the Swampscott Yacht Club – the repairs do not relate directly to any of their usable space.

Matthew Kirschner asked for an update surrounding the Johnson Park project. Marzie Galazka responded that the park project is subject to Chapter 91 permitting due to its proximity to the ocean. She desires to pursue grant funding once final design is complete, but it hopeful that the

project can be done Summer 2022 if the grant funding is acquired this year. The priorities of the project surround restoring the historical elements of the park and updating structures.

Public engagement, direct abutters, and the town will be engaged to ensure that everyone is aware and supporting of the project. A visioning process was followed last Summer to try and engage the public early and find out what they desire for the park. Timing wise, Marzie would like to have construction occur in Spring 2022 so as not to create a hazardous construction area during the summertime when pedestrians cross through the park to reach the beach.

Gail Rosenberg asked for clarification surrounding whether the basement renovation in town hall is a priority, because this was a question that was brought up in a previous meeting.

Mr. Fitzgerald spoke briefly about the investments that have been made in town hall, and he asked for the Finance Committee's support of the basement renovation project. Activating this space would unlock a lot of opportunity to synergize investments that have already been made in Town Hall.

Continued Review of FY 2022 Proposed Budget

HR

Mary Ellen Fletcher asked Sean to confirm the split associated with the DEI coordinator position between Town/School because she heard conflicting information.

Cinder McNerney asked Mr. Fitzgerald to speak to the downside surrounding contracting with a consultant to identify goals for the incoming DEI coordinator hire. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that two consultants have been hired already to work with the community. Ms. McNerney asked Mr. Fitzgerald to clarify if he has researched the cost associated with hiring another consultant. Mr. Fitzgerald spoke to some of the research he conducted.

FACILITIES

Mary Ellen Fletcher asked for clarification surrounding the vacant positions listed in the facilities budget. An admin position, and facilities management function is now shared between the town and school and the budget is reflective of that. The Building Commissioner has taken on an official role to support the facilities department which is reflected in the budget. Mr. Kasper is drafting a job description for an additional position – a mechanical systems technician – who can monitor and respond to some of the needs the town's buildings have.

Mary Ellen Fletcher asked for clarification surrounding the split of these positions between the town and the school department. Max Kasper spoke briefly to the splits, which vary depending on position. The finance team also provided clarifying information relative to the split; the maintenance salaries line includes 2 FTE and 2 Headcount.

TREASURY

Mr. Dorsey asked for clarification about any adjustments that the Town Administrator might suggest relative to the Treasurer/Collector role that will be vacant shortly. Mr. Fitzgerald

clarified that he is not recommending any changes to the budget for the treasury department currently.

DPW

Mr. Dorsey asked town staff to explain the increase in the contracted field maintenance line which was a question item identified in a previous meeting. Amy Sarro commented that the increase in cost is related to catch-up work relative to field maintenance, as well as the transition to organic chemicals.

Mary Ellen Fletcher asked for clarification if the shade tree costs in the operating budget could be shifted to capital. Mr. Fitzgerald commented that the shade tree line in the operating budget should remain where it is because it is a recurring operating cost and the capital project is to address the backlog of shade trees that need to be planted.

SOLID WASTE

Mary Ellen Fletcher asked for information surrounding the bulk fee costs; she commented that based on her analysis she felt that fees being charged are excessive relative to the cost of the additional trash that is thrown. Mr. Mendes clarified that the fees are a component of the solid waste program as a whole and the bulk stickers are not a separate program. He also commented that fees are set by the Select Board so the conversation may be better directed to them.

SENIOR CENTER

Mr. Dorsey asked Mr. Fitzgerald to summarize the proposed changes in the Senior Center budget. Administrative position's hours have been increased by 5hrs a week; the activities coordinator has been brought to full time; an outreach worker may be promoted to a program director. Overall increase to Personnel Lines is appx. \$39,000.

An adjustment was made to decrease adult care services by \$15,000; revised budget request for the senior center is \$275,054 based on the conversations with the interim senior center director. Consensus was not met with the interim senior center director surrounding the proposed budget. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that he felt the town has made good efforts to expand the senior center over the past few years and is optimistic that program expansion will continue. The town accountant Amy Sarro commented that she is still in communication with the interim Senior Center director.

Mary Ellen Fletcher asked for clarification surrounding the difference between the proposed senior center budget and what Senior Center staff felt they needed. Mr. Fitzgerald commented that he has to manage all departments budgets to the bottom line. Jill Sullivan asked for the total change in FTE based on the changes to the budget. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the senior center is now +1.0FTE between the increases in hours worked for the various positions.

Cinder McNerney asked for clarification surrounding whether the existing services at the Senior Center are expanded with the increase in the staffing, or if the expansion of service will primarily occur when the Director of Elder Services is hired. Mr. Fitzgerald commented that the staffing changes made in the budget create additional bandwidth to coordinate programs and provides the director with administrative support for new grant opportunities and initiatives.

On **MOTION** (Jill Sullivan) and **SECONDED** (Gail Rosenberg) it was **VOTED** by **ROLL CALL** to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 PM.

True Attest,

Patrick Luddy

Patrick Luddy, Assistant Town Accountant

Minutes APPROVED by vote of the Finance Committee 8/2/2021