

REGULAR MEETING PUBLIC SERVICE COMMITTEE of June 1, 2023

Meeting of the Public Service Committee was held in the office of the DPW, 50 Manca Drive at 8:00 AM on June 1, 2023.

Members Present: Councilor James M. Walsh, Chairman; Councilor Alek Dernalowicz;
Councilor George C. Tyros; Christine Harty, Administrative Assistant

Attendees: Mayor Michael J. Nicholson; John Richard, City Auditor; Dane E. Arnold, DPW Director; Rob Oliva, City Engineer; Trevor Beauregard, Community Development & Planning Director; Sophie Dorow, Conservation and Planning Agent; Daniel Forte, Athletic/Recreation Director.

CALL TO ORDER

Councilor James M. Walsh called the meeting to order at 8:07 am.

OPEN MEETING RECORDING

ANNOUNCEMENT – any person may make a video or audio recording of an open session of a meeting, or may transmit the meeting through any medium, subject to reasonable requirements of the chair as to the number, placement and operation of equipment used so as not to interfere with the conduct of the meeting. Any person intending to make such a recording shall notify the chair forthwith. All Documents referenced or used during the meeting must be submitted in duplicate to the Secretary of the Committee, pursuant to the Open Meeting and Public Records Law. All documents shall become part of the official record of the meeting. There was no one present taping the meeting.

REVIEW OF BUDGET WITH DEPARTMENT HEADS

Mayor Michael Nicholson begins stating the budget is level funded with a few exceptions. Included is a two percent cost of living adjustment for non-union employees and the union contracts have all been settled and are reflected in here for all the contractual obligations. There are reimbursements to the general fund in the enterprise accounts for indirect costs associated with the personnel that assist in the operations of those departments.

Review of Public Works Budget. Director indicates no comments prior to review, will answer questions as they are raised. *Note Mayor's prior statement of cost-of-living increases for non-union employees.*

Councilor Alek Dernalowicz on line item 490, Parking Meter Maintenance, inquires if the budgeted amount is to address meter issues? Mayor indicates that's what is anticipated, also looking to swap out meters in less trafficked areas with those not working as well in the heavier trafficked areas. At the height of the meter replacements City was taking in approximately 90k, currently down to 30k. Also looking into some new alternatives, meter kiosks, sensors. Assessing the different financial and operational options for new meters.

Councilor James Walsh, adds in FY22 spent 5,100.00, FY23, 3,500, inquires as to why 20K is in budget. Dane indicates items are purchased later in the FY toward summer months. This year line painting bid is up to 35K from previous 18K, will likely need to request additional funds.

Councilor Alek Dernalowicz inquires on what items Director had put down, new vehicles and equipment wish list in budget, curious what those items may be. Dane, Cremation vaults, salt shed, one ton dump, six-wheeler with plow, utility truck for sign shop, efficiency repairs to old DPW building, one million for road resurfacing expense, guardrail improvements, playground equipment, etc.

Mayor indicates Department heads were asked in memo late December of what things realistically would be needed to run the Departments.

Councilor Walsh inquires with Auditor on free cash purchases after it is certified, would it be reflected in FY? John indicates it would show in that year, could also be reflected in encumbered monies from previous year.

Director Dane Arnold states Street Lighting account is waiting a National Grid credit. Rob states the accounting is 95% complete in updating their records, reaching out monthly to touch base, credit coming should be substantial. Conversion was done in 2019, error in billing was found last year, hoping for resolution soon.

Councilor George C. Tyros inquires of line item 505, Vehicle Fuel. Last years budget was higher, anticipating lower prices? And line item 488, Repairs & Maintenance, up one-third? Dane, increased based on the repairs, also down a few mechanics, sending repairs out for private work. Hopeful utility rates are not as high as last year. Mayor, we're able to sign contract on electrical rates with lower kilowatt rate.

Councilor James Walsh inquire of line item 492, Cemetery Maintenance. Dane, looking to purchase lawnmower, shortage, waiting for one with the right price.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended at this time.

Review of Survey Budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Mayor indicates 2% cost of living increases for the non-union employees.

Rob, states reflected under salaries is new job description, GIS AutoCAD technician.

Councilor James Walsh inquires of line item 471 EPA NPDES. Rob indicates it is the yearly funding for MS4 general permit compliance. Outside consultant to help with reporting and compliance. To be encumbered for upcoming requirements and reporting, ex. next year pilot project for stormwater.

Mayor indicates in both Public Service and Survey Departments, salaries are split. Capital Improvement line item, 2.9 million reflects everything on capital improvement plan.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended at this time.

Review of Conservation Budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Mayor indicates 2% cost of living increase for the Agent, is a split position with the planning board. The board and commission salary wages are set by Attachment C of the compensation schedule. Termination pay is from Mayor's unclassified account, transferred to departments when needed.

Sophie has no additional comments.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended at this time.

Review of Airport Budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Regarding wish list from department, request for Department Head position to become full-time. Also noted is 2% cost of living increase. Budget is flatlined from prior year. However, more activity at airport recently, anticipating funds used this coming FY will be closer to budgeted amount.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended at this time.

Review of Water Budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Indicates 2% increases for non-union employees, funded by enterprise account. Notes line item 815 Taxes Other Towns, paid to Winchendon, Templeton for land

Water Department owns in other communities. Dane notes Indirect Costs increase due to insurance and benefits.

Councilor James Walsh inquires of Line 801, Energy & Utilities, pending bills? John, 210K spent to date. Dane, would not cut the 380K, was increased a bit with last budget do to unforeseen increasing energy costs. Inquiry of Indirect Costs accuracy? John states it is calculated within a spreadsheet containing a large amount of variables with an accuracy within 2%. Is audited each year if a viable formula, with no findings.

Councilor Alek Dernalowicz, inquiry regarding decrease of Line 785, Clerk Assistant Salary. Explained by John as new employee in position and split salary.

Councilor James Walsh, inquires, Line 811, Contract Operations, Veolia? Dane, yes and is split between water and sewer. In addition, hard to estimate the CPI, last year projected increase was 4%, actual was 9%.

Councilor George Tyros, Line 805, Professional Services, inquires if project to project basis. Dane, yes, some years less mandates than others.

John explains any funds unused in the budget fall to retained earnings to be certified, similarly to free cash.

Councilor James Walsh, Line 814, Facility Maintenance. Dane explains, currently have 150K Scada and computer upgrade at Crystal Lake, and 30K high service pump out of service right now. Have 40K in valves at Snake Pond to replace and 35K in pumps and piping.

Councilor, line 817, Interest Outside Debt increase? Dane, due to Water Project, did not have draw down schedule for last two years, had to estimate. Now with loan taken out can plan for the next 20 years.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended at this time.

Review of Sewer Budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Indicates same increase as previous enterprise account. Dane, Facility Maintenance noted, new roof and heaters are needed within the facility if money available.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of Line 745, New Equipment, anticipating any particular items? Dane, yes a 1-ton vehicle to be split between water/sewer.

Mayor, Taxes of Other Towns, Templeton only. Also, does not include grant Chris Coughlin recently obtained of 1.58 million dollars for upgrades to Water and Wastewater Facilities.

Councilor James Walsh, anything budgeted in Water planned for transmission line? Mayor, when grant funds come through federal earmark, will be accounted for in grant account, has already been signed by President Biden. Also have an additional earmark in upcoming federal budget for upgrade to James St. Pump Station. Will inform Committee if in final version of budget.

Councilor Alek Dernalowicz, Energy and Utilities, inquires of current status. John, 150K spent to date.

Councilor George Tyros, televised sewer lines and relining under service or operations. Dane line item for repairs to mains, not enough to cover but would have to put in request to complete the work. Plan to do more relining but no list to date.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended at this time.

Review of Recreation Budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Mayor, playground, and general recreation. Holiday Lights and Decorations, given annual as donation to Square Two Department as well as other Christmas decorations. Celebration account used for any general events throughout year. Playground equipment we know

will need more than what can afford, is a City revenue, not enterprise. Need at least 150K to replace equipment at Oliva Case. Items as such, or new playground at Bailey Brook will be funded by free cash or grant.

Dane, plan to encumber balance to cover replacement of wooden structure at Oliva Case, also contacted recently by Realtor Group and informed of 7,500.00 donation to new equipment.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended at this time.

Review of Municipal Recreation Budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Mayor, is the summer program, solicit donations to offset some of the operations. Director Daniel Forte has done great job, anticipate about 450 in participation, currently at 350 applicants.

Dan states last year participation topped off at 325, says outgrew High School, try to be as enterprise as possible, raise and spent down. Moving to Elementary School. Cost is in area of 165K to staff and operate program. Costs of staff increased; costs of materials increased. No staffing issues, many applicants. Have expanded staff from 40 to 60, huge jump in younger groups where ratios must be different staff to child. Funds are allocated to offset minor equipment.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended at this time.

Dane informs of two requests to Finance. One for sludge landfill, response to MEPA comments, the other for annual Cover Material.

Motion to adjourn, Motion made by Councilor George C. Tyros, second by Councilor Alek Dernalowicz to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 AM. Roll Call vote: Councilor Alek Dernalowicz yes, Councilor George C. Tyros yes, Councilor James Walsh yes. Motion Passes.

Next meeting scheduled for June 15, 2023, at 8:00 AM.

All documents submitted at this meeting are stored in the office of the DPW, 50 Manca Drive, for any review.

Respectfully submitted:

Christine M. Harty, Administrative Assistant