

WEST NEWBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE - Meeting Minutes

Date & Time: Thursday, April 1st, 2021, 6pm

Location : 1910 Building, 1st Floor Hearing Room, West Newbury, MA

Attendees: Gary Roberts, Jessica Knezek, Nathan Kelly, Angus Jennings; Remotely - Joe Heyman, Jim Sperelakis, Jeff Durand, Michael Dwyer, Wendy Reed, Rick Parker

AGENDA

1. Call to Order, 6:03 p.m.

2. Public Comment - none

3. Approval of Minutes

9/15/20 - Approved, 5-0

3/24/21 - Approved, 4-0-1

4. Review and discuss budgets and articles from the following departments:

a.) Police

AJ - 2% COLA for non-union personnel; union contract is being negotiated, so we carried 2% in the budget, but is still a variable, and subject to active negotiation.

JS - what would Town need to do if the union contract is unsettled, or quite large difference.

AJ - could adjust at Fall Town Meeting, using budget amendment, or use an article as a procedural option.

GR - asked about OT wages; predecessor said we should expect it to go down. This committee supported the department against late changes attempted to be made. Need to see some justification for it at this point.

JD - OT affected by COVID impact, which actually made trainings virtual, no academy currently, lost three reserves, we have some serious staffing issues upcoming

NK - OT spending for the last year seems to make sense

JK - echo GR concerns, especially in light of letters in Mr. Burmeister's letter. Do we need 2 FT staff at all times?

JD - from an officer safety perspective, it is good to have two officers.

NK - years ago, the BOS agreed with Chief Reed that two officers 24/7 was the level of service desired, and would help the department with certification/accreditation. Reducing from two officers 24/7 is really a separate issue.

GR - suggest reducing budget by \$15K and moving that to the reserve fund in case it needs to be spent.

GR Motion - reduce OT budget by \$15,000, seconded JK

JH - we should pass the budget that is realistic. What is best for management of town?

AJ - cannot be sure about what OT will be, and if the shift needs to be covered, it will be. The Town did make a decision to go to two officers.

JD - going to be down eight shifts per week. OT is not something I want to have to use, but need to, as necessary.

Motion passes, 3-2 (GR, JK, JS in favor; NK, JH against)

GR Motion to amend Budget of Finance Committee from \$60,000 to \$75,000, seconded JK

Motion passes, 5-0

JS - please explain the \$10K for longevity, and who pays for officer when National Grid does tree work, etc.

JD - utility company pays the detail; longevity is contractual

Budget Approved, as amended, 5-0

STM - Article 11 - Public Safety Server

JH - labor seems expensive

MD - that is the going rate

Sunset Clause - end FY22

Funding Source: Free Cash

Approved, 5-0

b.) Dispatch

AJ - same issue with contract not being settled yet. Gave 2% good faith estimate.

Budget Approved, 5-0

c.) Fire

MD - Slow start due to COVID, but at this point up to around 500 calls, which is typical at this point

Budget Approved, 5-0

ARTICLES

AJ - going to recommend that the tanker truck be removed from the warrant.

MD - Looking at buying one combination truck to create a cost savings, instead of buying two different trucks, which came up through the capital process with the Capital Improvements Committee, and due to how the department is changing. Looking to get a cost on determining

the life expectancy on all trucks. Potentially looking into 2003. Looking at other grant opportunities.

GR - grateful you are continuously looking to save the Town money.

ATM - Article 20 - Jaws of Life

Sunset Clause - end FY22

Funding Source: Free Cash

Approved, 5-0

d.) Ambulance

Zeroed budget.

e.) Animal Control

3 year contract with Newburyport, FY22 costs already determined, cost effective

Budget Approved, 5-0

f.) Emergency Management

AJ - we carried 2% COLA

Budget Approved, 5-0

g.) Veterans

AJ - Veteran's benefits can be hard to predict. Hoping to have a parade next year, and in 2019 we learned what the costs to run a parade really would be. Would like to be able to offer something beyond bare bones of prior years.

JK - is there a parade this year?

AJ - probably not

JS - What actually is Veteran's services?

AJ - benefits awarded through Federal legislation

Budget Approved, 5-0

h.) Unemployment Compensation

AJ - Do not foresee paying out any benefits. Rarely do they result in an award. Good to have something in the budget.

JK Motion to reduce Unemployment Insurance from \$5,000 to \$1,500, seconded GR.

Approved, 5-0

Budget Approved, as amended, 5-0

i.) Transfers Out - Stabilization

AJ - we may get to a point where we adjust this number up in future years.

JH - how much is in stabilization? Does the Town have other Stabilization accounts?

AJ - approximately \$1.9 million, Town Free Cash, \$1.5 million Capital Stabilization. Town has many other accounts, OPEB, School, etc.

Budget Approved, 5-0

j.) Education

AJ - Budget would have come out requiring an override from Groveland and Merrimac; formula uses enrollment, and valuations; West Newbury has seen a reduction a couple of years in a row; with the amended budget the override is avoided. If Article for School Stabilization is not passed, the budget will have to have an increased amount to cover the capital expense.

JK - Curious about 0% raise for teachers, and what would happen if Pentucket negotiated and came back with a COLA raise for teachers?

NK - was the 0% raise for teachers already in the budget, or was that a factor in the amended budget to avoid the override?

AJ - do not believe they can come back; once they give us a figure for the year that is it.

Pentucket Budget Approved, 5-0

AJ - Whittier Tech reduction is due to lower enrollment from West Newbury.

JH - Curious about an explanation of the Whittier capital item, \$2 million is high for a study.

AJ - Whittier Tech is at a point where they are looking at a rehab/rebuild or new site for building, working with MSBA for potential funding.

GR - building is 50 years old.

Whittier Budget Approved, 4-0-1

AJ - we have two students at Essex North Shore Agricultural, cost is driven by enrollment. Current year is under budgeted and required and required an article last fall.

Essex North Shore Agricultural Budget Approved, 5-0

5. Communications - none

6. Adjournment - 7:16 pm