

## Finance Oversight Committee Meeting Minutes

**April 27, 2023**

Present: Dawn Starks, Chair, Matthew Boucher Kathleen Hill, Jim White, Jay Seyler, Town Council President Ralph Page (ex-officio), Superintendent of Public Works Bruce Fenney, Director Of Information Technology Ryan Quimby

Attending: Town Manager Mary McNally, Deputy Town Manager Tom Christensen, Kim Collins, Director of Finance, Town Council Vice President Marilyn Richards, Christine Saulnier, Greg Thompson

Location: Meeting was held in the COA Media Room

Meeting Called to Order: 1:30 pm by Dawn Starks

Starks asks committee members to introduce themselves.

Seyler volunteers to take meeting minutes.

Meeting minutes of April 20, 2023 were reviewed. Starks noted that a School Committee forum regarding the new high school proposal, taking place on May 18, 2023, was stated as May 8, 2023. Thompson confirmed the meeting is May 18, 2023. Page noted the date to expend ESSER funds is stated as November 30, 2024; it is confirmed the date should be September 30, 2024. Hill motions to approve minutes from previous meeting with noted amendments. Seyler seconds. Voting YES to approve are Hill, Seyler, Starks and White; Boucher abstains.

Public Works Superintendent Bruce Fenney distributed printed budget overview and reviewed budget of each division within Public Works. Only line items with significant positive or negative changes are noted, but Fenney stated he is open to questions on any other line items. Highlights include:

- Building Facilities Division
  - 3.0% (\$12k) increase in full time salaries due to step raises and cost of living adjustments (COLA)
  - 7.5% (\$9k) increase in appointed salaries due to step increases
  - 25.9% (\$25k) increase in school maintenance, due to increased cost of materials
  - 10.7% (\$9k) increase in Professional/Technical-Others, consisting primarily of labor and materials for outside contractors. The increase is due to inflation.
  - 6.6% (\$10k) increase in Building Repairs/Supplies, due to inflation
  - Overall increase for this division is 7.7% (\$69k)
  - Page asked for clarification between line items “clothing” and “uniforms.” Fenney explained “clothing” is an allowance for several items such as boots and cell phones and “uniforms” include items that are in the union contract.
- Highway Division
  - 1.6% (\$19k) decrease in full time salaries. Fenney commented last year there were 11 positions available in this department and were having trouble filling them. Following a meeting with the union, four skilled laborer positions were shifted to laborer positions

which reduces this line item. By moving these positions to laborer positions, this allows for employee advancement within the department.

- 8.6% (\$9k) increase in Appointed Salaries/Wages, which are salaried employees in the department
- 23.5% (\$2k) increase in Other Services-Police Detail for road details and traffic control; Starks asked if the Town of EL pays overtime and whether that practice is guided by Massachusetts State law. Fenney responded “yes” to both.
- 137.9% (\$90k) increase in Professional/Technical Others, consisting of line painting and outside contractors. The majority of this increase, \$69k, is the result of a transfer from the Board of Health to assist in funding the landfill water quality monitoring and gas monitoring.
- 24.3% (\$10k) increase in Groundskeeping Supplies for planters town-wide, tree planting, field maintenance and fertilizer; the increase is primarily due to inflation.
- 15.4% (\$2k) increase in Other Supplies-Uniforms, due to a required increase in the uniform contract with UniFirst. White asked if the increase is due to a new contract or an increase in an existing contract. Fenney replied it is an existing contract.
- Total division increase is 5.7% (\$109k)
- Sewer Division
  - 8.2% (\$14k) increase in Appointed Salaries/Wages for salaried employees
  - 42.9% (\$9k) increase in Energy-Electricity due to inflation. White asked whether these increases are what all tax payers are experiencing, or if it is only the town. Fenney replied this number applies to the town itself, based on the contract in place with the utility company.
  - 7.25% (\$75k) increase in Other Purchase Serv-SWSC, based on a projection from Springfield Water and Sewer Commission. Starks noted that in past years, there were efforts to keep water & sewer increases at a minimum for tax payers. For FY24, \$0.35 is requested
  - Total division increase is 6.7% (\$125k)
- Snow & Ice division has no increases. Starks commented that the Snow & Ice division is the only division allowed to run a deficit because in the event of a blizzard, it is a health and safety concern for the town citizens.
- Waste Collection Division
  - 10.0% (\$2k) increase in Part Time Salaries/Wages, due to minimum wage increases and the addition of eight, 3-hour/day openings to address requests from residents for the transfer station to be open an extra day during the fall.
  - 25.0% (\$20k) increase in Garbage Removal due to contractual increase in tipping fees and garbage removal, with McNamara Waste.
  - Total division increase is 20.5% (\$22k)
- Water Division
  - 7.1% (\$12k) increase in in Appointed Salaries/Wages for salaried employees
  - 154.0% (\$8k) increase in Energy/Gas due to inflation
  - 29.2% (19k) increase in Energy/Electricity due to inflation
  - 18.2% (\$6k) increase in Solar, for solar utility usage

- 3.5% (\$57k) increase in Other Purchase Services-SWSC based on a projection from Springfield Water and Sewer Commission.
  - Total division increase is 4.8% (\$123k)
- Utilities Division has a division increase of 34.2%, or \$451k. Financial Oversight Committee deemed it unnecessary to provide details; however, Fenney pointed out that rates are expected to be lower following FY24.
- Stormwater Division
  - 7.3% (\$2k) increase in in Appointed Salaries/Wages for salaried employees
  - 16.7% (\$2k) increase in Repairs Vehicles (maintenance costs) due to inflation
  - Total division increase is 4.3% (\$12k)
- Total increase to the Public Works budget is 14.9% (\$652k) but Fenney pointed out that if utilities increases are excluded, the increase in FY24 budget is 4.6% (\$200k).
- Page asked if tax payer stormwater rates will increase; Fenney stated residential rates will increase by \$7/year and industrial/commercial rate will increase by \$50/year.

Director Of Information Technology Ryan Quimby reviewed the Information Technology budget with a brief overview of the department:

- The IT Department was consolidated with the Town and School Departments in 2007; Quimby has been in the department for 24 years. IT performs tasks ranging from fixing Chrome Books to installing modems in police vehicles.
- 33.3% (\$17k) increase in computer repairs; this line item is to address general unscheduled repairs not itemized as capital. The increase is due to aging technology
- 34.6% (\$108k) increase in software, which includes MUNIS, phones, antivirus software; included in this line item are the following:
  - MUNIS is \$97k (5.0% increase)
  - Cisco \$17k
  - GIS \$13k (\$4k decrease)
  - Exact Vision for security cameras \$10k
  - Secure Link \$14k
  - Gmail \$37k
  - Palo Alto \$25k (2 firewalls)
  - Vision (assessing software) \$18k
  - Open Gov (software used by Building Dept., Health Dept. and Clerk's office) \$36k
- Starks asked how many employees are in the IT Dept; Quimby stated there are nine
- Page noted that the Town of EL and the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative both use the gas software; he asked if costs beyond gas (software and maintenance of pumps) are shared. Quimby replied this subject is currently under discussion.
- Hill asked if it is anticipated that interns will be hired during summer vacation to help with computer hardware. Quimby replied there will be two full time interns hired for eight weeks.
- Hill asked how many devices there are town-wide; Quimby replied approximately 4,000

The School Committee budget was revisited; Starks opened the floor up to any questions.

- Page stated his copy of the School Committee budget shows “Projection Level 2.” He asked if there was a difference between that and “Projection Level 1.” After discussion, it was determined there is no difference.
- Hill noted three para professionals at Meadow Brook School are currently being paid through the ESSER grant and as of July 1, 2023 the intention is to migrate these salaries into the School Committee operational budget. Hill asked Thompson if there is an alternative plan to retain these employees, in the event these positions are not approved. Thompson indicated he cannot commit to a plan of action at this time.
- Page asked the combined salary of the para professionals; Thompson replied it is approximately \$75k

Starks provides a brief overview of next meeting’s agenda. Hill motions to adjourn, seconded by White. Voting YES to adjourn were Hill, Seyler, Starks, Boucher and White. The meeting adjourned at 3:03pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jay Seyler