

February 7, 2022 Minutes
Town of Sharon Finance Committee Meeting

Present: Daniel Lewenberg, Patricia-Lee Achorn, Anja Bernier, William Brack , Brian Collins, Gordon Gladstone, Charles Goodman, Ann Keitner, Ira Miller, Jada Wang.

Not Present: Arnold Cohen.

Also Present: Krishan Gupta - Finance Director; Eric Hooper – Department of Public Works, Paul Linehan – Capital Outlay Chair, Fred Turkington - Town Administrator, Jim Wright – Fire Chief.

1. Dan Lewenberg, Chair, gave opening remarks:

This meeting is being held via remote means through the Zoom online platform pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021.

Mr. Lewenberg thanked Arnold Cohen for serving on this Committee and wished him and his family the best after Mr. Cohen gave his notice to retire from the Committee this week.

There are openings on the Finance Committee and any interested parties are encouraged to inquire with Cheryl Weinstein.

2. Capital Outlay Committee Presentation – Paul Linehan, Chair:

Capital Outlay uses a planning tool that enables them to avoid having the Town buy large items within the same fiscal year. Capital projects have minimum requirements that the acquisition have a life of at least 10 years and cost at least \$10,000, Requests from Town departments for this fiscal year:

- a. Police Department:
 - a. 3 cruisers - \$195,000 cash request. The vehicles will be hybrids which are more expensive but ultimately will save money as they use less gas when idling. The Police Department is planning on making hybrid cars standard in their department. Police vehicles are more expensive than other cars because they require extra items such as lights, etc.
- b. Fire Department:
 - a. Ambulance - \$435,000 purchased entirely from the Ambulance Reserve Fund. No money will need to be borrowed to make this purchase.
 - b. Deputy's vehicle - \$60,000 cash request. This will save on using the pumper truck which is more expensive to run. Deputy's current vehicle will be passed down to another person in their department.
 - c. Hose – large / small diameter - \$35,000 cash request. This is an NFPA scheduled replacement.
 - d. Firefighter bunker gear - \$125,000 cash request. This is an NFPA scheduled replacement.
 - e. The Fire Department has contributed \$650,000 to the budget this year as they had \$1.2 million in reserve from insurance, etc. saved from several years
 - f. Civil defense - \$100,000 cash request. Additional funding for replacement quarters.
 1. Hopefully the Town is days away from the land swap being completed which will then be forwarded to National Parks for approval. Will put out a bid and should have building estimate cost by the warrant publishing deadline. Total for this building is now \$490,000. Have already spent \$25,000 working to prepare for the land swap.
- c. Department of Public Works:
 - a. Roadways and sidewalks - \$620,000 cash request. Majority are in the Heights area. Replacing where water main work was done over the past 4 years
 1. \$600,000 Chapter 90 (gas tax) reimbursement
 - b. Dry storage units - \$40,000 cash request. The existing units are no longer watertight and are rusty

- c. Replacement shed - \$10,000 cash request. Previously had scavenged an old shed to use which is now rusting and needs to be replaced
- d. Underground fuel storage tanks - \$450,000 cash request. These need to be replaced with double-walled and interstitial monitoring
- e. Truck - \$255,000 cash request
- f. Trackless multi-purpose tractor - \$200,000.
- g. The process is to go through active projects first and ask why they haven't been completed. If there are surplus funds will return those to the Town. Shifting funds to a different project requires Town Meeting approval
- d. Schools. Requested capital items include:
 - a. Electrician truck - \$50,000 cash request. Will be a Ford F250 with plow
 - b. Chrome books - \$120,000 cash request
 - c. Classroom projectors - \$112,000 cash request
 - d. Classroom audio system - \$130,000 cash request
 - e. Small teacher replacement - \$75,000 cash request
 - f. Education fleet - \$71,750 cash request
 - g. Elementary schools playground surfacing - \$305,000 cash request
 - h. Total for Schools requests: \$1,214,750
 - i. General Fund debt for Schools: \$979,750.00
- e. Total for Town and Schools requests: \$5,132,224
 - a. General Fund debt for Town and Schools: \$2,729,750
- f. Infrastructure projects and improvements are investments in the Town. Capital projects can cost more later when repairs and replacement costs are higher. Capital costs are typically pretty steady year to year as they are planned out and are often far less than Town projects such as building the high school and library. Mr. Gupta constantly monitors the Town's debt service. This year \$300,000 will be added, but next year \$200,000 will be taken off.
- g. Water. Although Water appears with Capital Outlay is not actually a part of their budget and they do not vote on it:
 - a. Water main replacements - \$1,250,000. Some existing mains are cast iron built in the 1890's
 - b. MWRA connection - \$150,000. We pay Norwood to use some of their infrastructure
 - c. Water meter replacements / installations - \$350,000. These are purchased and will be installed soon
 - d. PFAs - well treatments – design: \$816,000
 - e. PFAs – well treatments – #2 and #4 wells: \$7,784,000. 2 wells exceeded DPP maximum allowable limit for wells. Treatments will also help with water discoloration issues from iron and manganese
 - f. Total for Water requests: \$10,350,000
- h. Grand total for cash requests: \$15,482,224
 - a. General Fund grand total debt for Town, Schools and Water: \$2,729,750

3. Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles –

- a. Amend Charge to Lake Management Study Committee:
 - a. Colin Barbera, Chair Elect, discussed that the Lake Management Study Committee reports to the Conservation Commission. This Committee originated in 1969 to look at invasive weeds and algae. Currently would like to broaden the scope of their charge and provide recommendations for short- and long-term solutions. They work with the Health Department, DPW and other stakeholders, educate and engage the Town to solve the challenges facing Lake Massapoag, which is so important to the Town
 - b. Would like to add a voting member, which would help to have quorums with a body of 7, rather than 6. Currently do not have anyone representing Recreation
 - c. There is a continuing problem with algae, but no comprehensive testing has been done since 2016
 - d. Will have a CPA request for funds and go through the operating budget process. Currently working with an allocation of \$7,000. Monies were set aside last year for treatment which couldn't be done because of an algae bloom

- e. Would like to contract professional services for \$9,000 to test 6 sites. Will use volunteers and the Conservation Commission intern to collect some samples.
 - f. Are looking into becoming a site on the Neponset River Watershed
 - g. Board of Health already tests E. Coli weekly at beaches and monthly at other sites on the lake. Looking at joining with DPW to test stormwater rainfalls which go into the lake. Heavy rains can cause flushing into the lake and testing afterwards would be beneficial to the community.
- b. Stormwater Protection Bylaw – Peg Arguimbau
 - a. Over a year ago had the idea that the Conservation Committee could be the authority for stormwater. Worked with a consultant to create draft bylaw. Present bylaw details will be moved and there will be some logistical differences
 - b. Brian Collins is writing up this article for the warrant.
- c. Historic District on East St – Jim Grassfield
 - a. Both homeowners are proponents of making #228 and #300 East Street an historic district. Historic districts offer stronger protection against demolition than historic designations. One is the former home of historic figure Deborah Sampson and the other of Ed Rufich, who had a strong connection to the cotton mills in Sharon
 - b. Ann Keitner is writing up this article for the warrant.
- d. Approve Ambulance Billing Contract – Chief Jim Wright
 - a. 30B has the option to do two 1-year renewals for this contract, but Town Meeting has to approve to extend it to 5 years
 - b. Ambulance billing is a complex process which takes several months to transfer to a new contracted company. Looking to add 2 years so that it will be 5 years before having to potentially change vendors as it is required to be put out for bid.
 - c. The current company is doing an outstanding job. They are paid 5% of what the Town collects and charge no other fees. Hardware and software are both included in the contract, such as tablets for electronic ambulance records, which the contracted company services and replaces as needed
 - d. Ira Miller is writing up this article for the warrant.
- e. Amend Fine for Licensed Dogs – Rachel Oles, Animal Control Officer
 - a. Sharon requires dogs to be registered with the Town
 - b. Non-criminal complaint fine is currently \$25, but MA General Law requires the fee to be \$50. Sharon is not in compliance with State law
 - c. Committee discussed that if possible, the wording of this article could be written in such a way that if the State changes the fine amount that Sharon's would automatically be updated without having to bring to Town Meeting again
 - d. Monies collected are payable to the Town Clerk's office and go to the General Fund
 - e. Ira Miller is writing up this article for the warrant.
- f. Outdoor Water Use Bylaw – Eric Hooper, Department of Public Works
 - a. Intent is to codify mandatory water restrictions in place each summer, and also to control outdoor underground irrigation systems to make sure they are being used correctly and not leaking. Need to request the Select Board to implement this on a seasonal basis. If voted on at Town meeting this will be placed in the Water Department's rules and regulations
 - b. Eventually will require a second meter that will monitor separately. Deliberately left out the time frame from this article because this will be a complex implementation. Will register underground irrigation system owners in the first year regarding owner names and system types. Registering systems and adding any requirements will be a 2-3 year process
 - c. Ira Miller is writing up this article for the warrant.
- g. Accept deed in lieu of foreclosure – Ashcroft Road land donation to Conservation Commission – Fred Turkington
 - a. This article is being pulled.

- h. General bylaw change to increase expenditure limit for solid waste and recycling fund – Fred Turkington
 - a. The Revolving Fund has a ceiling unless approved by Town Meeting. The ceiling is targeted to be above \$1.8 million so are seeking an increase to \$2.5 million. This will allow the Town to continue to run this program at current costs
 - b. Recycling is approximately 3 times less expensive than disposing of trash. Revenue comes from the fees that residents pay, one grant, and payments for plastic bags, which pay for the expenses at Farnum Road and the Recycling Manager
 - c. Fees to individuals are not changing with this article
 - d. Patricia-Lee Achorn is writing up this article for the warrant.
- i. General bylaw change to amend the beach / boating fees (Chapter 120)
 - a. This article will raise the fees from \$20
 - b. Fees go to the General Fund – Miscellaneous Local Receipts
 - c. This article will be discussed more in depth at a later meeting
 - d. Jada Wang is writing up this article for the warrant.
- j. Personnel bylaw change to rename Columbus Day – Kianna Pierre-Louis
 - a. There is one instance of Columbus Day mentioned in Town’s documentation. This would be changed to Indigenous People’s Day. Must be voted by Town Meeting because it is a bylaw change
 - b. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee (DEIC) approved the name change and sent an advisory opinion stating that Italian heritage is very important but as Italian heritage is recognized in the month of October, and given the level of historical trauma to indigenous people, the DEIC would like the name changed
 - c. The School Committee has also made this change. The Select Board has had lengthy discussions and voted for this change as well
 - d. The Committee discussed that this may be contentious at Town Meeting and it would be appropriate to hear from an opponent, if there is one
 - e. Ann Keitner is writing up this article for the warrant.

4. Bond rating affirmed by S&P Global – Krishan Gupta

- a. Will hold this agenda item until the next meeting.

5. Town exposure to COVID-19 related health care costs and need and/or options to mitigate – Fred Turkington, Town Administrator

- a. Mr. Gupta stated that COVID relief funds have been allocated and the Town is eagerly awaiting reimbursement.
- b. Will hold this agenda item until the next meeting.

6. Liaison updates:

Schools - Ann Keitner:

Ms. Keitner stated she had sent an email and video to Committee members and asked them to review prior to the joint School and Finance Committees this Wednesday.

Standing Building Committee - Gordon Gladstone:

No update given.

Library - Charles Goodman:

No update given.

Planning Board - Arnie Cohen:

No update given.

Community Preservation - Patricia-Lee Achorn
No update given.

7. Minutes to be Voted

No minutes to be voted.

8. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair in 48 hours:

The Finance Committee has received various email communications from residents regarding full -day Kindergarten and other topics.

Upcoming meeting dates include the Priorities Meeting on February 17.

9. Adjournment:

Motioned: by Anja Bernier, **Seconded:** Ann Keitner to adjourn. **Voted:** 10-0-0.
Meeting adjourned at 10:23 pm.