

**MINUTES
TOWN OF HARWICH
JOINT MEETING
FINANCE COMMITTEE AND SELECT BOARD
GRIFFIN ROOM, TOWN HALL
732 MAIN STREET, HARWICH, MA 02645
SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 2024 - 9:00AM**

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PARTICIPATING: Peter Hughes, Chair, Bob MacCready, Vice Chair, Mark Kelleher, Clerk, Mark Ameres, Dan Tworek and Michele Gallucci

SELECT BOARD MEMBERS PARTICIPATING: Julie Kavanagh, Chair, Michael MacAskill, Vice Chair, Jeff Handler, Clerk and Don Howell

ALSO PARTICIPATING: Joseph Powers, Town Administrator, Meggan Eldredge, Assistant Town Administrator and Kathleen Barrette, Finance Director

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Kavanagh called the Select Board Meeting to order on Saturday, March 2, 2024 at 9:00AM and opened the Public Hearing. She recognized a Cub Scout who was present.

Hugo Lewton, Cub Scout explained that he is working on his Communication Merit Badge towards becoming an Eagle Scout.

Mr. Hughes called the Finance Committee to order.

Mr. Powers introduced Ms. Eldredge and Ms. Barrette and gave an overview of what will be covered at this meeting, both required by the Charter and not required. He also noted that the Finance Committee is required to have a Public Hearing. That Hearing will be held on Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 6:00PM at Town Hall. Mr. Powers commented on the Select Board and Finance Committee's expectations at this meeting. He emphasized that he recommends deliberate action and caution going forward.

II. REVIEW THE FY25 OPERATING BUDGETS FOR TOWN DEPARTMENT

A. Joint Budget Meetings:

Morning session 9:00 am -noon:

Discussion on Sources and Uses

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Mr. MacAskill asked for an update regarding Overlay Surplus.

Ms. Barrette responded that the Board of Assessors has a meeting scheduled for March 29th and she believes Overlay Surplus will be discussed at that time.

Mr. MacAskill requested that the Board of Assessor's inform them if/when they have projections.

Mr. Hughes commented on the estimated increase in revenues and expenses.

Mr. Kelleher asked for clarification on Inter-fund Transfers which Ms. Barrette explained.

Water/Wastewater Department Department

Gary Carreiro, Water/Wastewater Commissioner was present and introduced Dan Pelletier, Water/Wastewater Superintendent. Commissioner Thompson and Commissioner Donahue were also present.

Mr. Carreiro asked questions regarding changes in the Budget and Retained Earnings which Ms. Barrette answered.

Discussion continued regarding the documentation of the transfer of funds and what the Department of Revenue requires.

Select Board members agreed that without a specific directive from a higher power, the Water Commission should rely on what they have done in the past.

Discussion followed with Mr. Pelletier explaining what they have done in the past noting percentages of the Operating Budget and the Water Enterprise Fund, also noting the minimum balance of 1 million and why it is necessary.

Mr. Carreiro commented that he would be comfortable leaving the \$159,000 as it was and subsidizing from the General Fund.

Mr. Hughes requested information on what the potential impact may be on the water rates.

Mr. Powers referred to the MUNIS reports which are in the Budget Books and asked Mr. Pelletier to explain the impact on certain line items.

Mr. Pelletier responded with the answers.

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Mr. Powers noted and confirmed for the record that they are discussing the \$638,284 in the Total Expense line just above the Grand Total in the column that reads Projection Level Three.

Discussion followed regarding those line items.

Mr. Thompson commented on the need to have a definite amount in the Budget.

Ms. Donahue commented on the need for a discussion on which Special Purpose Funds are paying for specific items.

Ms. Kavanagh suggested that the Commission could return for another discussion with more material. She noted that what they have been doing has been working and that they need to document what they are doing and why it is being done that way. That discussion will be at the March 13th meeting.

Mr. Pelletier responded to Mr. Hughes' question regarding the 2025 Budget and the revenue to support it, giving details.

Mr. Powers noted that the Community Forum on the Phase 3 Construction Projects is scheduled for Thursday, March 7th at 7:00PM at the Community Center.

The Water/Wastewater Commission adjourned.

Police Department

Mr. Powers acknowledged the pending retirement of Chief Guillemette.

Chief Guillemette and Deputy Chief Considine were present.

Chief Guillemette gave an overview of the Police Department's status noting the present staffing crisis. He especially noted the cost of overtime.

Mr. Powers referred to the pertinent pages in the packet and the amount requested by the Police Department.

Board and Committee members asked questions regarding the School Resource Officers and the need for reimbursement from the schools. It was agreed that further discussion is needed for a solution.

Mr. Powers congratulated Deputy Chief Considine as the incoming Police Chief.

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Fire Department

Mr. Powers noted that Chief David LeBlanc and Deputy Chief Craig Thornton are present. He referred to the pertinent pages in the packet and the amount requested by the Fire Department.

Board and Committee members asked questions regarding the Enhance of Services (EOS) and staffing which Chief LeBlanc and Deputy Chief addressed.

Mr. Hughes suggested options for dealing with the housing issue and ways to entice prospective town employees to live in Harwich.

Mr. MacAskill commented that, regarding Enhancement of Services, it would be helpful for the Board to have more detailed information. He requested the comments, the amount of the request and the explanation for all the Enhancement of Services, to be supplied to all the Select Board and Finance Committee members.

Ms. Kavanagh called for a five minute break.

Department of Public Works

Mr. Powers noted that Lincoln Hooper, Director of the Department of Public Works is present. He referred to the pertinent pages in the packet and the amount requested by the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Hooper noted that Sean Libby, Facilities Maintenance Manager and Kyle Edson, Vehicle Maintenance Manager are also present. Mr. Hooper commented on the concerns he had expressed prior to the last snow storm, noting that all the truck/plow drivers exceeded his expectations. He expressed his thanks. Mr. Hooper gave an overview of the Department's Budget.

Board and Committee members asked questions regarding the Department's EOS, forecasting and budgeting for maintenance on the Town's buildings, status update on maintenance overall, update on the C&D Contract and the Procurement process. Mr. Hooper answered the questions.

Mr. Hooper had the Buildings Maintenance Graph with him. Copies were made for all Committee and Board members.

Mr. Hooper will get the detailed information about the EOS to the Town Administrator for distribution to Board and Committee members. He explained the scope of the work that Mr. Libby is currently doing and how this EOS would help him move towards the goal of completing other maintenance projects.

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Mr. Hughes suggested possibly contracting out some of the services to allow Mr. Hooper and Mr. Libby to complete pending projects.

Mr. Libby responded with updates on what he has done towards contracting out.

Mr. Kelleher requested a copy of the Harbormaster's Engineering Report for the generator at the Harbor.

Mr. Hughes asked if the use of solar panels for back up battery energy had been considered.

Mr. Libby responded that he had looked into solar panels and explained why they would not be beneficial.

Discussion followed regarding the funding for a position being requested and why the funds cannot be moved from what has already been designated, for the unfilled position of Town Engineer.

Mr. Powers asked all Board and Committee members if there is a consensus that they should be creating a position, Enhancement of Services, relative to Facilities Maintenance.

Board and Committee members expressed that they would be in favor of more information and additional discussion regarding that position.

Discussion continued with questions from Board and Committee members regarding Green Energy which were answered by Mr. Hooper and Mr. Libby.

Mr. MacAskill referred to line 9 on Free Cash Certification regarding the salary for a Town Engineer suggesting that some of that money can be used to help Mr. Libby finish pending projects.

Mr. Powers explained the process in place to transfer funds and noted that the Administration is keenly interested in getting the position of Town Engineer filled.

Harbormaster

Mr. Powers noted that John Rendon, Harbormaster is present. He referred to the pertinent pages in the packet and the amount requested by the Harbormaster.

Mr. Rendon gave an overview of the Department's status. He explained in detail the increase in the dredging cost and how it affects his budget. He noted two previously approved Articles with funds for dredging the are still available. His preference and recommendation would be to draw money from the two Receipts Reserved Funds to offset the cost of dredging and gave his reasons.

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Mr. MacAskill referred to the money that the Harbormaster turned back this year questioning if it could be turned back around but also acknowledging that the funds go to Free Cash.

Ms. Barrette explained the process to carry forward Special Articles to move funds.

Mr. Hughes relayed a message from Dana DeCosta who is not present but watching remotely. He suggested returning the FinCom Reserve Fund back to \$250,000 from \$50,000 to cover Departments that want a reserve.

Mr. Kelleher noted that 8 of 11 Cape towns charge more for mooring permits to non-taxpayers. He asked that the Harbormaster, after his busy season, bring to the Select Board the data showing the revenue increases if the non-taxers were charged increased fees.

Mr. MacAskill explained the process to bring an item before the Select Board.

Mr. Powers noted that the two funds referenced by the Harbormaster are already contemplated in the Inter-fund Transfers.

Mr. Rendon clarified that the two funds that he previously referred to are the Receipts Reserved Funds, one for the Mooring Fees (#1621) and one for the Waterway User Fees (#1626). Those funds are separate from Article balances.

Board and Committee Members asked additional questions which Mr. Rendon answered.

Ms. Kavanagh stated that the meeting will pause for a break until 12:30PM.

12:00 p.m. to 12:30 p.m. Break

Afternoon session 12:30 pm start:

Ms. Kavanagh continued the Select Board and Finance Committee Joint Meeting at 12:30PM.

Treasurer/Collector

Mr. Powers noted that in the absence of a Treasurer/Collector, Kathleen Barrette, Finance Director will be presenting. He referred to the pertinent pages in the packet and the amount requested by the Treasurer/Collector.

Ms. Barrette noted that without a Treasurer/Collector on staff, they have been utilizing a consulting firm's services which they will continue to do through this year and into FY25. She gave a description of the budget items in detail.

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Mr. MacAskill commented that if a qualified Treasurer/Collector is hired, the consulting firm's services will not be necessary.

Mr. Powers noted and read Chapter 41 Section 40 regarding a Temporary Treasurer/Collector. He explained that Eric Kinsherf, CPA of the Consulting Firm mentioned will be training the Temporary Treasurer/Collector, Andrea Ackridge. He gave a description of Ms. Ackridge's responsibilities. He noted that he was able to execute a Chapter 30B Contract to run from March 1st through June 30th of this year.

Ms. Barrette noted that the current contract was funded under Professional Services.

Board and Committee members asked specific questions regarding a Budget Line Item that appears in a second place and requested clarification.

Ms. Barrette replied with an explanation that the same expense is not being charged to two lines. The Treasurer's salary has to be maintained but they will not be expending it until a Treasurer/Collector is hired. The consulting expenses will be charged against Professional Services. She also noted that the EOS that Mr. Powers referred to for additional staffing is not related to the line items being discussed. Mr. Barrette gave a brief history of the staffing issues in the Treasurer/Collector's Office.

Board members asked additional questions which Mr. Powers and Ms. Barrette answered.

Mr. Hughes emphasized the importance of clarifying the confusion on these line items and suggested taking the discussion off line until it is resolved.

Ms. Kavanagh agreed and suggested that this discussion be tabled until the information can be presented in a way that is easier to understand.

Mr. Powers noted for the record that in the present budget documents for Fiscal Year 2025, the Administration Budget does not include an EOS under Salaries and Wages. Under the Department line for Expenses, funds are included that were not coded as EOS but were included as a budget increase year-over-year. He would contemplate that as an EOS although it was not coded as such. He suggested that it will be a policy discussion in the short term.

Mr. MacAskill requested specific information on the 45.5% increase. He also requested specific information on the \$56,015.82 EOS.

Assessing Department

Mr. Powers noted that Carly Jones, Director of Assessing was present. He noted the pertinent pages in the packet and the amount requested by the Assessors' Office.

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Carly Jones, Director of Assessing gave an overview of the Assessors' Budget requests.

There were no questions from Board or Committee members.

Youth & Family Services

Mr. Powers noted that Ashley Symington, Director of Youth & Family Services is present. He referred to pertinent pages in the packet and the amount requested by Youth & Family Services.

Ms. Symington gave an overview of the Department's requests noting an EOS for additional staff.

Mr. MacAskill spoke to the EOS and asked Ms. Symington about the Monomoy School District and if part of this expense coming from their budget.

Ms. Symington has not had that conversation with anyone at Monomoy but she did explain the benefits of having someone not involved in the schools to give parents and students options. Ms. Symington gave a description of where the focus is now and what her goals are for different age groups. In general, regardless of ages, she is focusing on preventative services. Specific age related programs are fairly equally balanced.

Board and Committee members asked questions regarding programs, one on one services, Mental Health Services, early intervention and a partnership with Chatham, high demand times for services and clients' alternative funding sources.

Ms. Symington responded with answers.

Mr. MacAskill asked for the information on Ms. Symington's study regarding what off-Cape towns are doing regarding staffing.

Information Technology

Mr. Powers noted that Sarah Eaton, Director of Information Technology (IT) is present. He referred to pertinent pages in the packet and the amount requested by IT.

Board and Committee members asked questions regarding the EOS and the current contract with Barnstable County.

Mr. Powers described in detail what the contracts are, which may continue to be necessary and which will go away naturally. He also noted the contract with HubTech.

Board and Committee members asked additional questions which Ms. Symington answered.

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Rec and Youth Services

Mr. Powers noted that Eric Beebe, Director of Rec and Youth is present. He referred to pertinent pages in the packet and the amount requested by Rec & Youth.

Eric Beebe gave an overview of the request, noting an error and giving the correct information; \$24,687.50 should be corrected to \$12,687.50. Mr. Beebe noted in detail, the reasons for the increase in expenses. He also explained the EOS requests.

Board and Committee members asked questions regarding the process of attaining CORI's on volunteers, the live date for MyRec and the use of the gymnasiums at the 204 and the Community Center and the amount of revenue that goes to the General Fund. It was determined that engineering is paid through another source and not needed as a line item for Rec & Youth.

Mr. Beebe responded with detailed answers.

Cemetery Department

Mr. Powers noted that the information being distributed is from the Cemetery Director.

Mr. Powers noted that Robbin Kelley, Cemetery Administrator is present. He referred to the pertinent pages in the packet and the amount of the Cemetery Department's request.

Robbin Kelley, Cemetery Administrator gave an overview and the reasons for the (EOS) request for an Administrative Assistant.

Board and Committee members asked questions and made comments regarding coverage if/when Ms. Kelley is on vacation and the need for a process to have someone trained to assist, disadvantages of having a one person department and advantages of adding a part-time person.

Mr. MacAskill suggested a future conversation about how this Department is being run and the possibility of a shared position. He also asked about the process of indexing and if there are any subcontracting or services available to assist with that process.

Ms. Kelley explained what is involved in the process of indexing lots.

Community Center

Mr. Powers noted that Carolyn Carey, Community Center Director is present and had distributed a Budget Narrative document. He referred to pertinent pages in the packet and the amount requested by the Community Center.

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Carolyn Carey, Community Center Director expressed thanks for being allowed to have a Program Specialist, noting what an asset she has been to the Community Center. Ms. Carey gave an overview of the work done behind the scenes at the Community Center and how it benefits the community. She gave an overview of the Budget Narrative noting in detail the reasons for the asks and increases, also explains the EOS'.

Board and Committee members asked questions and made comments regarding the EOSs. They also expressed support and gratitude to Ms. Carey for her hard work and enthusiasm.

Mr. Howell inquired about the ducts and having them cleaned as it is an environmental issue.

Ms. Carey responded that the Highway Dept. has taken care of the building throughout the years.

Mr. Hughes suggested looking into solar energy or other ways to offset the cost of the utilities.

Ms. Carey will track usage of the use of the new gas furnaces.

The Harwich Channel

Mr. Powers noted that Jamie Goodwin, Harwich Channel Director is present. He referred to the pertinent pages in the packet and the amount requested by the Harwich Channel.

Jamie Goodwin, Harwich Channel Director gave an overview of The Harwich Channel and described the requests in detail.

Mr. MacAskill asked Ms. Goodwin what they need or want moving forward.

Ms. Goodwin responded noting the need for more hearing space and meeting space and giving the reasons for the need. She would also like every single Board and Committee to be voluntarily filmed.

Mr. Howell expressed his concerns about Comcast and suggested that Ms. Goodwin consider now, things that she may need in the future.

Ms. Goodwin explained the amount they get paid from Comcast and how that figure is calculated with the cable subscriptions.

Board and Committee members commented on the great work being done at The Harwich Channel. They also asked additional questions which Ms. Goodwin answered.

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Administration

Mr. Powers, Town Administrator noted the pertinent pages in the packet and the amount the Department requested. He noted that the Budget he presented to the Select Board on February 5th did not include any EOSs. The Draft Budget with the Select Board at present does not include any EOSs. He explained the EOSs in detail and the reasons for them. He also explained the Expenses in detail.

Mr. Hughes asked for the status of the discussion regarding the HR position.

Ms. Kavanagh responded that the plan is to move forward with an HR position. The HR Director is a position which would require a Charter change. The Select Board will be discussing the Charter on Monday night.

Mr Hughes clarified that the expectation is that there will be an HR position with a dollar amount associated with it for this year's Town Meeting Warrant.

Mr. MacAskill commented that with the expressed support of the Board members, they would put this to a vote at the Select Board's next Budget conversation. He confirmed that it would then be included in the Budget and not going to Town Meeting in an Article.

Mr. Hughes requested that as a result of this meeting, they be given a list of the new positions, descriptions and the costs as well as the EOS items.

Mr. Ameres asked for clarification on an EOS on page 4 noting that it says \$114,000, asking if it is a scrivener's error.

Mr. Powers confirmed that yes, it is a scrivener's error and it will be corrected.

Mr. MacAskill confirmed with Mr. Powers that the \$30,00 under expenses is related to the HR position. Mr. MacAskill also asked if the step increases are under Salary and Wages.

Mr. Powers replied that he intended the step increases to be under Personnel Type Costs.

Mr. Kelleher asked if 204 Sisson is covered under Administration, explaining that he is looking for the Operating Expenses of 204 Sisson.

Mr. Powers replied that it is not but he can work with the Facilities Manager and the Director of Cultural Affairs to put that information together.

At the conclusion of the Administration discussion, Board and Committee members asked general questions.

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Mr. Hughes asked questions regarding 204 Sisson's rental fees and if those fees go to the Revolving Fund. He also asked what, if anything the Revolving Fund is being used to pay.

Mr. Powers responded by noting the pertinent page in Appendix B. He explained that renters are under license agreements, those funds should tie into the Revolving Fund under Chapter 8 of the By-laws for 204 Sisson Road Municipal Building. Other programs that may be run separately from the tenancies, should also go into the Revolving Fund. He also explained that the 204 Revolving Fund is jointly shared with the Facilities Maintenance Directors for specific items and the Program Director may use funds to offset the cost of programs.

Mr. Hughes confirmed with Mr. Powers that some of the Revolving Fund goes to pay Utilities.

Mr. Powers will supply a report of what is spent from the Revolving Fund and on what.

Mr. Hughes asked how the rental fees are determined.

Mr. Powers replied with details on how they factor in indirect costs. Those were built into the Cultural Affairs Director's assessment when she built a fee schedule that had then gone to the Select Board.

Mr. Hughes asked when they can expect the Budget with a revised set of numbers.

Mr. Powers clarified that today was a Budget Workshop. He thanked everyone for what they've done. What they all had from the outset are documents that reflect the Select Board's Draft Budget for FY2025. The Select Board will be discussing Articles on Monday. He does not recall an Agenda item specifically for Budget. The Board is desirous to have conversations to finalize the Budget and the Articles and get them to the Finance Committee. He will send Articles to the Finance Committee as they are finalized. Mr Powers expects to refine data before the Finance Committee has their Budget meeting March 21st.

Mr. MacAskill referred back to today and the EOSs. He requested that all the information on an EOS be sent to the Select Board and the Finance Committee digitally.

Ms. Kavanagh summarized that the deliverables include the EOSs from Departments requesting them as well as the report they discussed regarding 204 Sisson Road.

In answer to Mr. MacCready's questions, Mr. Powers replied that there is a standing directive to Department Heads to provide quarterly updates on their Revolving Funds. The directive also says that within two weeks after a quarter ends, they should be providing those Revolving Fund Reports. Mr. Powers commented that he would like to discuss an EOS at a future meeting that is an add-on application that turns all the accounting into data that is easily understood.

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Mr. Howell commented what additional information he would like on the Revolving Fund such as who is ordering what and who is receiving what. He expressed the need for more detailed information.

Ms. Kavanagh commented that they are not looking to create more unnecessary work.

Ms. Barrette clarified that all expenditures regardless of the fund, follow the same procedure for review and approval, everything is fully vetted.

Mr. Powers commented for the record, expressing his thanks and gratitude to the staff members that did tremendous work. He also thanked the Department Heads, their staff, the Finance Director, the Accounting and Treasurer/Collector Departments and Administration, specifically Meggan Eldredge, Danielle Freiner, Natasha Lyon, Carol Campos and Ellen Powell. He also thanked all Board and Committee members for participating.

III. REVIEW WARRANT ARTICLES

Mr. Powers noted that the Warrant Articles have not yet been finalized. He will send them to the Finance Committee as they are finalized.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The Finance Committee and the Select Board moved to adjourn. Motions seconded.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Judi Moldstad
Board Secretary

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