

**Advisory Committee Meeting
Town of Foxborough
Wednesday February 24, 2021**

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TOWN CLERK

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FOXBOROUGH, MA 02035

In Attendance: Larry Ooi, Bernard Dumont, John Mahoney, Brad Palter, Paul Ivanovskis, Thom Freeman, Jack Martin, Dennis Keefe, Sharon Weiskerger, Brian Guild, Dan P.

Minutes: Taken by Tony Colangelo

7 p.m. Larry O.

Larry requested approval of the minutes as is for February 17, 2021. Brad P. made a motion to accept the minutes, and Brian G. seconded. Bernard D., Sharon W., Paul I., Dennis K., Thom F., Jack M., John M., Larry O. voted yes to accept. 10-0-0. Dan P. arrived shortly after the minutes were accepted.

7:05 p.m. Larry O. – Welcome Inspections Commissioner Barry Ringle

We are in the middle of taking on permit applications for building and schools. Any questions for building department.

Question: John M., Has there been any training and education for the new energy and building codes? Barry R.; The building codes have been consistent. We have new codes coming for stretch energy for the town, and some new electrical codes for swimming pools. As for training, everything is on-line and a few webinars. Jack M.; What is the stretch energy code – what does it mean to the community? Barry R.; This includes insulation materials around pipes, hot water tanks, etc. and conserves energy and results in a lot of savings. John M.; Barry, as the town adopts this code what will the cost of building in labor and materials, will it be more? Barry R.; No I think it will be pretty much the same because other communities are already doing it and contractors are already including this. John M.; Are we qualified to do the testing for this? Barry R.; No, we bring in a 3rd party that is certified to do the air testing.

Comment: Brad P. We met about your budget and it was pretty flat, nothing to be concerned about. The only question we had was where the part-time building inspector's salary was? Barry R.: Yes, that is included with the permit coordinators.

Question: Dennis K. Office supplies budget is \$1,000 but year to date it is already \$1,700?

Barry P.; That is related to IPAD's and cell phone that we needed to do inspections out in the field.

7:15 p m. Larry O. – Welcome SEMREC Executive Director Rob Verdone

Our budget request is flat at \$300,000. We have received some grants to offset our extra costs. Nothing has changed from last year.

Question: Larry O. How is your new place? Rob V.; Very nice, we have moved into our new facility in Foxborough. We are happy to grow and provide service to the community.

Question: John M. Do you have a GPS in all your vehicles units so you know who is closest?

Rob V.; No, we do not yet. The Fire Department has that and we rely on them for help with that. John M.; Can other towns, be serviced by this district Plan? Rob V.; No, Foxboro is just serviced by Foxboro. John M.; Are other communities looking to join? Rob V.; We have had conversation with others that are interested and they do not have to be a continuous town.

Brad P.; Will adding new communities result in higher costs? Rob V.; Yes, it will increase costs but should also increase grant revenue. Larry O.; Do you have the capacity to grow? Rob V.; When our new facility was built it was designed and planned for expansion. Dennis K.; 2019 costs vs. current costs – are they true savings? Rob V.; Yes, they are true savings. As we get into the 3rd and 4th year it may become less, but our goal is to expand and keep expenses low. John M.; Any concerns re: hiring employees from a new community, their health care insurance costs, etc. Rob V.; SEMRECC is a 911 district, we are not a department of the town. Our employees are separate in a municipal corporation, and they can bargain. We can bring in employees from a new town but we are not compelled to do so. Thom F.; Looking for information on grants. Are they technology grants or are there other financial grants?

Rob V.; Yes, we get technology grants but we also get grants for best practices. Our grants are audited and they have to be approved. Paul I.; If we don't bring in a new community what happens in terms of expenses? Rob V.; we have kept to our expenses to our budget and grants level, if we don't bring a new town in our expenses will just increase normally. John M.; Who authorizes for a town to join? Rob V.; Board of Directors from the 911 District and Board of Selectmen in Candidate Town after everything is reviewed and presented. Larry O.; Does it have to be a unanimous vote to add a town? Rob V.; No, a simple majority Larry O.; Bill K, do you have anything to add? Bill K.; I want to thank Rob, our Director for putting this program together. We have 4 members, a 5th member in progress, and 3 other potentials also being considered. The State wants these regional groups and provides funding for this purpose. We were the 1st town model and were used as a model for others to join. We were spending 1 million dollars for dispatch before SEMRECC and now are spending \$300,000.

7:30 p.m. Larry O. – Welcome Police Chief Michael Grace

Mike stated this is his second year doing the budget and it is very helpful having a line-item budget. We have very good community police officers. Our community changed with the COVID environment. Schools were open for the 1st half of the year. We teamed with Gillette and the fire department in this unknown environment. We were well served by businesses that came out and helped, such as Ocean State Job Lot. We are a hands-free law enforcement team now. JC's came out and partnered with the community to help. Our staffing includes 39 police officers for staffing and 24 Reserve help to operate Gillette Stadium. Our budget will go up 2.4%, a little under the maximum guidelines. 87% of our budget dollars is salary. They are paid under a collective bargaining agreement. 9% is for expenses, 4% for capital, and 10.8% for overtime. Overtime funding is controlled for specific situations. We staff 1 Sargent and 4 officers per shift. We have recently decreased overnight staffing due to the COVID. Dollars spent for overtime is controlled and documented. Larry O. mentioned that the budget book has \$80,500 for overtime training but that we have spent \$109,291 for this? Michael G. stated that the requirements for overtime training is 96 hour and it is \$109,291. Paul I. commented that you had provided very good information this year compared to last year, which resulted in a lot of questions. Michael G. also we expect we will be getting another mandate around July 1st. They are just not all set with the guidelines yet. This will be a Use of Force Training and there may be more training mandates added over the next 2 years. Bill K. comment, I served on a committee with major discussions about the state requiring all these new mandates but they haven't been funded. On the fire side – homes with fires have been given an insurance surcharge that is used for training fire fighters. The funding for police officers is tied to rental cars which hasn't produced much because of lack of rentals with the COVID crises so we need a new method to fund. Paul I. comment, that was helpful info, so we don't even know yet whether it's a funded or unfunded mandate. Brian G. asked if the stipend of \$48,000 help pay for some of the salary increases noted in the budget. Michael G. yes, a little more than ½ of the salary increases. Dennis K. comments you have improved your budget from last year. Do you budget your salaries by position taking into account COLA and step increases? Michael stated yes, and each one could be in a different step due to contracts. Jack M. asked about salaries going up 2% over last year, but over 24% over the last 3 years. Same with expenses, up 6% over this last year but up 34% over 3 years. Michael G. responded that was due to the new SEMRECC Regional Dispatch program which required 11 employees. We had to add an additional 3 new positions to help fill our building. Brian G. asked to confirm that a new Deputy Chief was added to the payroll? Michael G. responded that that was not a new addition but that one of the previous employees got promoted up. Brian G. asked were 3-patrolman added for SEMRECC? Michael G. stated yes, that the 3 positions, plus stipend, plus compensation package was \$400,000. On the expense side of the budget we had an increase of \$25,553. Most of that was \$16,000 due to computer equipment, and \$9,000 for vehicle maintenance, K-9 account, fuel, etc. We are asking town for CIP for Body Camera which will cost \$97,000 and then we will need to pay maintenance fee of \$19,000 to keep it up to date and store our data. John M. asked if any members of the police force don't have the COVID vaccine? Michael G. stated that some have and some have not. We have to be mindful that we follow protocols.

We had 6 or 7 employees that have had Covid but it was not spread through the department. John M. asked if someone in the department got it would the town be responsible? Michael G. stated, no it is a case by case review basis to qualify for a related work 111F Covid. John M. asked do we have any pending claims for the department that the town has to pay for. Question for Bill K or Mike J. Mike J. answered if related to 111F covid, the answer is no. No pending claims.

Brian G. commented it's great you are asking for a Body Camera. Why are you asking for that for the town of Foxborough? Michael G.; this technology and transparency is very important now to look into any citizen complaint. We are 5--7 years behind the west coast on having these tools. Larry O. asked are these body camera's used for cars? Michael G. answered no, these are only body camera's – they are not used for cars. Those would add another large expense. I can show the committee a 5 min. video of something taken with the body camera if you would like.

Larry O; asked for a motion to see the video. Jack M. made a motion to see the video and the rest of the member voted aye.

Jack M. Comment; After watching the video – this an extreme example of what can happen and no one knows what tomorrow may bring. Michael G. agreed this is video gives you as much info as possible. Just shows how technology is a good tool that helps investigations. Brad P. asked, first thing I thought about is wouldn't it be helpful to have a car camera too and then combine the footage? Michael G. answered, yes it would be but the cost would be a concern. In our current budget we are projecting a capital outlay to replace our cruisers/vehicles of \$204,385. In addition, three independent studies on staffing and operations which includes the additional workload for the Foxborough Police Department and the need for additional staff to meet the community requirements. They looked at everything we do and we do not fit the mold of a normal police dept. We have NFL events/concerts etc. Studies say we do not have enough staffing. Dan P. asked like last year – how are you taking care of understaffing. Michael G. stated that because of the environment out there now we don't need police officers. We can add additional staff when needed.

8:45 p.m. Larry O. – Welcome Fire Chief Michael Kelleher

I have a quick review for the year our budget is pretty straight forward. Mike K. presented a slide with a list of success they had for the past 3 years. Our point of care ultra-sound program is a highlight. Responded to a car accident in which the 1st person died and the 2nd person was in their car still alive, and we were able to diagnose the need for a helicopter to transport for immediate hospital care and the patient survived. Also, Mike K noted that railcar fires, and how to prevent & stop them are biggest problem in 2020. Covid had a significant impact on the fire department. We were called in March/April, as many other states were, to help set up a Covid test site for 1st responders and then expanded successfully. In July, Norwood Hospital flooding

and closing had a big impact on our operation because it was our primary hospital. We had to update medical and pharmacy agreements with others. In late December we went from Covid testing to administration of vaccines to our staff and members of the police force. Then we started vaccinating the elderly after we received more doses. Late November we were designated as a Class 1 Community Fire Department by our insurance service. We were of 6 fire departments so designated. A busy year in 2020 with fires, medical calls, explosive truck crash, a mill fire, and then Covid testing, etc. Our staffing includes, a Department Chief, Assistant Chief, Deputy Chief (EMS-health nurse), Deputy Chief (fire Prevention), 8 personnel to staff 4 different types of apparatus/vehicles. We became a SEMRECC member 2 years ago with 3 other towns. We received a 2021 comparison of runs and we are the busiest town and we have the least staff – very efficient. This slide we received was for the months of Jan & Feb 2021. We need to travel more miles, which increases time, for hospital calls since Norwood Hospital closed. Bill K. stated this is not an easy fix. We have a committee working and looking at everything needed to rebuild Norwood Hospital, but it looks like it will take a least a couple of years to get them to reopen. Also, we don't know what size they will be and what services they will provide if they reopen. Jack M. I just want to ask about the slide you showed us the towns population and number of runs to hospital – does that take into account the miles of interstate highways to deal with? I think we will have more? Mike K. stated that highways probably drive more correlation between calls than population. Also, we have 9 hotels. Jack M. comment, maybe Bill K. should talk to our local representative and senator to see if state should be supporting some of this? Bill K. answered yes, but it's not just a Foxborough problem, other communities are involved that are close to highways. We probably need to make a record of responses of those close to a highway area. Mike K. mentioned the issue with Rt. 495. It takes quite a while to get out there and can be challenging some times and we have some data. Jack M. my question is can we have an interim solution where we can have a utility entrance and exit at the intersection of Rt. 495 and South St. Mike K. answered maybe a potential. Our budget summary for ambulance services; 35% of ambulance receipts go towards funding our whole budget. Our overall budget is up 6.64%. Our Grant from SAFER pays for 3 FTEs's. Salaries make up 92% of our budget. Expenses make up 8% which include, capital outlay, personal protective equipment, consultant, for our cost accreditation process.

Brad P. asked, can you detail the amount of the safer grant awarded and if you don't fulfill how much do you have to give back? Mike K., we were awarded 1.2 million. If we don't complete, we have to payback the funding. Brad P. commented, your team did a lot of great work to get that grant. Dennis K. asked, how bad was your dept. hit with Covid? Mike K. stated we had a couple of cases in Sept. and Oct. We are 24/7 and work very hard and close together. At one point, we had 11 cases that had to quarantine or were infected. That means we lost an 8 man shift plus 3 other staff. In March, we had a meeting with our officers and planned if loose more than 25% of our people – to cover, we had to cover 56 hours work week with 3 platoons. Staff would work 48 hours straight and then have 96 hours off. This required a lot of overtime, but was effective in holding the rest of the outbreak. The bulk of this overage was covered by Cares Act (FEMA) from a budget standpoint. Jack M. similar question I had for the police dept., your

salary increase is up 7.5% for this year, but has gone up 8% a year for the last 3 years. What is the answer? Mike K. answered, last year one item was bringing in the nurse and we did not take the medical funding which is now available as a receipt. Bill K. also stated, they also added 3 FTE's over the past 3 years and that should not be a significant change in the coming years. Both the police and the fire depts. statistics on runs and responses are significantly high. Mike K. stated we are looking for the opportunity to work with partners such as SEMRECC. We are very capable and have highly qualified mechanic services and share/provide to other communities when they need it. They are willing and happy to pay us for these services.

Thom F. asked, since we are ranked as #1 Fire Department, do we qualify for more grants? Mike K. stated we are in a position to be recognized. We save on insurance and town wide businesses will save on insurance too – 5-7% on insurance policies starting March 1st. Thom F. asked when will we see these insurance savings, FY'20-21 or FY'21-22? Bill K. answered, not sure. Property insurance going up right now because of other issues and that is happening nationwide. We may see the effect of this next fiscal year. Dennis K. commented I was impressed in the overview of point of testing program. Do you see this positive in reducing viruses in other departments? Mike K. stated, this really saved us financially & manpower to be able to have this quick testing. We purchased one of these machines for the school dept. Dennis K. asked, which one are you using? Mike K. answered, it is called the, Abbott ID Now, which provides benchtop molecular CCI test. Bill K. commented, Foxborough is one of the few towns open, mostly because the fire dept. was able to test a lot of people quickly.

9:30 p.m. Larry O. – Public Safety Building Chief Michael Kelleher

Work with Tony M., who is in charge of buildings and schools. We have a separate budget for our Public Safety Building. Major expense is the custodian salary. Supply expenses include, paper towels, cleaning supplies, winter salt, etc. We have no capital expense for this year. Larry O. Last year you put in a CIP request looking for foundation / floor repair for service bay area. Are you still requesting it? Mike K. responded yes, I plan to present again for the future and keep asking.

Larry O. Thank you - Mike K., for coming to our meeting with your presentation.

Larry O: Housekeeping Discussion for Adv Comm Members

Larry O. Bill K., Please tell us quickly about the Town Meeting and changes needed for Warrant Articles. Bill K. stated we don't need to have a special town meeting. The 4 Articles we currently have can be acted on in the regular Annual Town Meeting. Just re-open the annual meeting if we need to – no special meeting. An amendment to one of the existing articles needed; re., Revolving Funds. Larry O. asked committee members if they are comfortable with the Warrant Articles they were asked to review. There were no comments. Larry O. stated Bill K. will coordinate presentation of the Warrant Articles to the Adv.Com. We will start these

presentations at our meetings on March 10th, 17th and 24th, if needed. Brad P. asked, can you briefly state what we have to do? Larry O. stated the Articles will be presented by the respective sponsors / petitioners, we listen to the presentation, ask questions then deliberate and vote at a later date. Dennis K. asked when you assigned Articles, was that for us to look into the details and understand it? Larry O. answered, you do not have to in detail because the article might be amended and for now it's just a heads up and for you to have a general understanding of the Article.

9:45 p.m. Larry O. -- We will not be having a meeting next week. Can I have a motion to adjourn. Brian G made a motion to adjourn, Dennis K seconded. Everyone voted aye to adjourn. 11-0-0.

Larry Ooi