

**Advisory Committee Meeting
Town of Foxborough
Wednesday, January 27, 2021**

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TOWN CLERK

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FOXBOROUGH, MA 02035

In attendance: Larry Ooi, Bernard Dumont, John Mahoney, Daniel Peterson, Sharon Weiskeger, Brian Guild, Brad Palter, Paul Ivanovskis, Thom Freeman, John Martin, Dennis Keefe, Bill Keegan, Mike Johns, George Samia, Marie Almodovar, Lance DelPriore and Bob Worthley

Absent: No one

Minutes: Taken by Tracy Rozak

7:05 p.m. Meeting called to order by Larry O.

Dennis made a motion to approve the 10/14/20 meeting minutes as submitted. Bernard seconded the motion and Jack, Sharon, Paul, Brad, Brian, John, Dennis, Thom and Larry all stated aye they were in favor and it was voted to approve 10-0-1.

7:06 p.m. Town Manager Update - Bill Keegan

Bill stated he will be presenting the warrant for the annual town meeting with 20 articles for consideration. He stated they are having a special meeting within the annual meeting because they didn't have the special town meeting in the fall. The special meeting deals with revenue from FY21 and the annual meeting deals with revenue for FY22. Bill stated he presented the budget to the Board of Selectmen last night and it went pretty well.

Larry asked Bill to give an update on the revenue projections and outlook of state aid. Bill stated the Governor came out with a projected proposal that shows an increase of 3.5% in unrestricted local aid and a 3.7% increase in chapter 78. The offset is whatever changes there may be from the state. The charter school usually has the biggest impact on us. Bill stated we are looking at a pretty flat state aid number that we carried into the current fiscal year and that served us well. Bill explained the long process of budget review and expects to have the final numbers in late June.

Bill stated he kept the new growth number low and he thinks we will see some of that rebound that people are talking about in the 2nd half of FY22. We may see some fans back in the stadium in the fall but he's not sure about concerts as it all depends on how fast we can get the inoculations done and reach herd immunity. The only number he is a little concerned about is the new growth for this year. He is not seeing many new building permits come out and new

construction is slow due to the high cost of materials. The Fire station project has been resolved and they will pass papers in April and start construction.

Dennis stated we can see high level year to date expenses but asked if we will be able to look at the line items year to date. Bill stated he can get him that information. Bill stated our expenses are on the low side because employees have not been traveling and some positions have been swapped out with lower paying salaries. On the overall expense side, we are running at 50% and he mentioned the health insurance holiday they had and that there will be another one in June which will generate free cash to use into the next year.

7:40 p.m. 410 Highway / Tree & Park - DPW Director Chris Gallagher

Chris stated this includes highway, tree & park and equipment maintenance and you will see some reallocation from one division to the next. Vehicle repair had been broken out per division but has now been put under equipment maintenance. As far a salary, we had approval to add a mechanic and a staff person to DPW but when COVID hit those positions were pulled. We have had some people leave and we looked at restructuring. For instance, he took one of the labor positions from the highway that had been vacated and moved it over to the equipment division. The salaries are all union contract based and are negotiated which includes their increases. Expenses increased for training of staff. DLS for the state and our insurance company is doing a lot with OSHA regulations for our group. We need to start writing and putting SOPs in place. He added Engineering and Architect as a line item so they can hire an engineer to look at any drainage problems. Larry stated there was a request for a sweeper last year and another request this year. Chris stated it is the same one but the lease agreement had not been finalized so that accounts for the different numbers.

Chris stated there is a design project going on at East Street and Cocasset. It is going to be redesigned for safety reasons. They plan to use Chapter 90 funds. Also East Belcher Road is currently being redesigned as it needs to be widened at the peak of the hill. Paul asked about making sidewalks ADA compliant. Chris states this is in the works and involves an inventory of the slopes and widths of all the intersections in town. He has to allocate some of the road paving budget to do some of that work but most of this can be handled internally by the highway department.

7:50 p.m. 450/460 Water & Sewer Enterprises- DPW Director Chris Gallagher

Chris explained that the DPW consists of Sewer & Water, Highway, Tree & Parks and Equipment Maintenance. Chris explained that salaries come from the Enterprise fund which means they are not funded by the general fund. Their budget has been approved by the Water & Sewer Commissioners. One of the big things on the water side was a large bond that we have to start paying on. This was a planned increase that was calculated into the rate increase. Some of the

highlights in salary- we did have some retirements early in the year and they do re- assess each position after someone leaves.

Chris stated you will see a jump in the Assistant Superintendent which is critical to the department and they split that position. There is also a Distribution Superintendant and a Supervisor below that. You will see a decrease in that as well as a decrease in the Water Treatment Manager line item.

Chris explained that they did budget for some increases from last year knowing the 3rd water treatment plant would be coming online. We have to fund the electricity and chemicals for the year starting July 1st. Gas and electric prices have gone up. Chris explained postage has also gone up and a big part of that is the mailing of the annual report to all residents. As far as technology, the GIS mapping program that gives information to staff in the field has really streamlined the process. Most of the increase in educational materials and supplies goes to educating people about water conservation and storm water.

Thom asked about the expansion of drive-by water counts. Chris stated when Bob started there were about 3,000 meters that had to be manually read; now we are down to a handful. Most are done by a driver in the truck with a laptop. There are still some meters that need to be upgraded and we have the funding to do this. They had stopped going into people's homes because of COVID but are ready to continue when it is safe to do so. Thom asked if they are using data that we pay for when they are driving around. Chris stated it is a radio read and it does not require data.

Larry asked Chris where the new customers he mentioned earlier came from. Chris stated a lot is commercial but the residential population has increased. They added some subdivisions and when single family homes are torn down some are replaced with duplexes.

Jack asked what is the future outlook for wells and treatment plants. Bob stated that wells # 4, 5 and 6 are operating at 30% capacity and will need some work. There is also a pipeline to take water down from the station to the water treatment plant and that will be a significant improvement. Bob explained that approximately 30 miles of underground pipes were installed in the 1940s/50s and need to be replaced. Six inch pipes were the standard now they use 8 inch pipes. Jack asked if the water usage per person per day has changed. Bob stated it is about 65 gallons per person per day and with the conservation efforts it is about 54 gallons per person per day. Overall, we are about the same as the past few years. Jack asked if he knows how much water is lost. Chris stated they had a spike a few years ago and estimated about 100 million gallons were lost due to major leaks but we now have leak detection program.

Paul asked about the interest rate and Chris said that Hilltop Securities predicts how much it will be and they put in for 3%. George stated the rate will come down a few fractions of a percentage. It may end up at 2.5% instead of 3%.

Chris stated expenses have been pretty minor and have dropped by .6%. Chris stated some line items came out like the IMA plant design fee and legal service fees. Larry asked about the technology improvement line. Chris stated they have capital funding to get the sewer system onto SCADA which can be done remotely. Thom asked if there has been a noticeable change in flow rates since more people are at home due to COVID. Chris said it has kind of balanced out. There has been an increase in residential but a decrease in commercial buildings like restaurants and hotels.

8:15 p.m. 423 Snow & Ice - DPW Director Chris Gallagher

Chris stated this has been pretty level every year. This is the one area they can overspend if needed with local approval. George stated you can raise the amount of overage on next year's budget because you will know where you are at the end of the year.

8:17 p.m. 424 Street Lighting- DPW Director Chris Gallagher

Chris stated this is level funded at \$110,000. In 2016, they did a LED conversion and National Grids process took almost 24 months to do. We stopped paying the bills during that time. We had to bring it before the town meeting to pay it. Chris anticipates they will have enough for this year. Thom asked if there will be an evaluation done to show if there was a cost savings benefit. Chris stated that out of the \$110,000 budgeted, \$51K was for the finance payment and \$35k was for electrical costs so we are already seeing a savings. Brett asked about LED replacements. Chris stated this was completed in 2017. There are a still a few that still need to be replaced but this is minimal.

8:24 p.m. 430 Solid Waste Disposal and Collection - DPW Director Chris Gallagher

Chris stated this is a combination of two accounts for FY 2021. This involves the two landfills, a smaller one and a larger one- the majority of the operating costs goes to NRG who operates the solar field. They take care of any gases that go up into the air and the ground monitoring. There is a small increase that goes to the things we have to take care of outside of the fenced solar area. The other piece is hazardous waste day which is a large component of this budget. Every spring they host a hazardous waste day for residents to dispose of their tube light bulbs, oil based paint etc. This is a very successful event and we have been spending more than the 15K budgeted. We are increasing this to 17.5K. We have been working with Mansfield & Norton to have a regional hazardous waste day this year where resident sign up to have items collected at their doorstep or they can drop them off. Larry asked if he has any plans for the town to

negotiate for residential trash services to get a better deal. Chris stated he has not been asked to look into that. Jack asked if there is any potential for expanding the scope of hazardous waste to include things like tires and old electronics. Chris stated he has had some thoughts about it but has not done any pricing.

8:30 p.m. George provide clarification on the COLAs in the budget

George stated there is a new line item on the budget called Reserved for COLA. George explained that in previous years, the town went out and set a budget, let's say the budget was for 100k for payroll and there was a union with a union contract. They would fund the 100k and then come back to a special meeting after the budget was set and take 2, 3 or 4% of that and put it back into the budget and that is the way it was funded. The problem was if the manager said let's stick with a 2% budget, then you were stuck with 2% on top of the other percentage. They tried to fund these increases in COLAS in each one of the lines of the budget with the thought that if you put in 5% of the 100k but you don't have a contract yet but this is ok because I can't spend the money because I am bound by the union contract but if we put the money in and it came in at 5%, we close that money out and its free cash at the end of the year. The AdCom was not keen on this and we took it out but Bill later removed the Cola increases that were built in. Then there were 6 incarnations of this thing and that caused some confusion on the part of on the AdCom members.

George stated Marie created a line item this year called Reserved for COLA. She is taking the money we would have gone for at the next special meeting and put all the money in there and once each of these contracts is approved and sealed by town manger transfers the movement will be made from that account to the various lines they belong in. What does this do? It prevents us from having to come back for another special town meeting because the money already exists in there and it's just a matter of moving it. This way it is part of the overall budget even though it hasn't been put into certain lines yet. There is no way you can estimate exactly what the number will be but you go with x percent, if it goes up a little, it can be handled internally but if it goes up a real lot then you would have to go to another town meeting. This would only happen if you were way off in your estimate.

Dan asked if this is cyclical every year. George stated it will go up and down depending on how many open contracts you have at one point in time. If most on the contracts are finalized and set for three years then the number wouldn't change. If there were a lot of open contracts then the numbers can go up and down. Mike stated this concept makes the budget more predictable instead of being surprised at the end of the year. For example, if you have a long term employee retire, you have to pay out a large sum for vacation time. This helps to account for unexpected retirements because we don't know when people will retire but we can predict. Thom asked if there are any preliminary calculations through the IRS as far as anticipating what

the COLA would be for a COVID year. George stated COLAS are usually negotiated fiscal year to fiscal year. George stated he thinks COVID will be taken into account. There is a standard and he thinks Foxborough will be within that standard.

Stephanie stated there are some towns where the schools aren't getting any COLA raises. The majority of the people who live and pay taxes in this town are not employed by the town. So you have people getting much less than a 4% raise but you're asking them to pay their taxes to fund 4% raises. So next year she would like to see what other towns near us are paying so people can truly see those numbers. She has always heard we give 2 %for COLAS and 2% for merit. Most people don't get a 4% raise at their jobs. We need to get some numbers to see if we are truly where we need to be. George stated this subject is a different conversation than what we are talking about tonight. Larry stated this question should be handled at an executive session of the Board of Selectmen.

Larry stated the school committee will present their budget next week.

9:20 p.m. Jack made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Bernard, Jack, Sharon, Dan, Paul, Dennis, Thom, John, Brad and Larry all stated aye they were in favor and it was voted to approve 10-0-0. *Brian left early and did not vote.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Larry".