



TOWN OF SHREWSBURY

Richard D. Carney Municipal Office Building
100 Maple Avenue
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 01545-5398

Finance Committee

Minutes

March 24, 2022

Present: Mark Adler, Vikram Chhabra, Carlos Garcia, Judy Vedder, Denis O'Connell, Donna O'Connor, Lena Polito, Rajiv Dayal

Also Present: Kevin Mizikar, Town Manager, Kristen Las, Assistant Town Manager, Mary Thompson, Assistant Town Manager, Alexandria Martinez, Management Analyst

Absent: Allen Jarrell

1. Call to Order

Mr. Adler called the meeting order at 6:00pm.

2. Accept Minutes

a. February 17, 2022

On a motion by Mr. O'Connell, seconded by Mr. Garcia, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the minutes of February 17, 2022. Ms. O'Connor abstained.

3. Town Manager's Report

Mr. Mizikar provided an update on local receipts through the end of February 2022.

4. 6:00 PM – Department Budget Hearings

On a motion by Ms. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Garcia, the Committee unanimously voted to open the public hearing at 6:04pm.

Mr. Mizikar provided opening remarks, noting that this is the first of two public hearing sessions on the FY23 departmental budget requests and Fiscal Projection One. Mr. Mizikar noted that the FY23 budget document is available for viewing on the Town's website. Mr. Mizikar also provided a brief overview of the budget process and timeline.

Information & Technology - 6:10pm

Greg Onorato, IT Director

Mr. Onorato reviewed the budget for IT/MIS. This budget line item is part of Operating Expenses. Mr. Onorato noted that budget highlights include expansion of the department, and the ultimate goal is to staff two network system administrators, two technical support representatives, and a business analyst. Mr. Onorato advised that staffing increases are necessary as the public safety functional area needs IT support off-hours. The Town is continuing to use Whalley Computer Associates, Inc. to provide supplemental tech support. Mr. Onorato reviewed the capital and operating budget requests.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Police Department – 6:20pm

Kevin Anderson, Police Chief

Chief Anderson reviewed the Police Department budget. Mr. Anderson highlighted accomplishments of the department, FY23 goals, and significant budget changes including the proposed addition of two patrol officers and one sergeant. Chief Anderson noted that a mental health clinician is in the process of being hired. Chief Anderson reviewed benchmarks of the department to comparable communities, and noted that the department size is often compared to the Town of Westborough, even though the population of Shrewsbury is twice as large. Chief Anderson reviewed the capital improvement requests for the department that include three hybrid police cruisers, a records management software, and tasers.

Ms. O'Connor inquired how long a cruiser typically lasts. Chief Anderson advised that the typical life cycle of the cruisers is three years since they are run so frequently.

The Committee discussed how increased activity on the lakes in Town has impacted the department. Mr. Anderson advised that there is a joint task force with the City of Worcester and the Environmental Police, but the department is the primary patrol on the lake.

Chief Anderson provided an update on the new police station, noting that the project is on budget and on schedule to be complete at the beginning of 2023.

The Committee also discussed the recommendations of the DEI Task Force as they relate to the police department. John Samia, Chair of the Board of Selectmen, advised that the Board is in the final stage of engaging a consultant to work to implement the recommendations of the task force.

Fire Department - 6:46pm

James Vuona, Fire Chief

Chief Vuona reviewed the Fire Department budget. Chief Vuona advised that there is no change in staffing proposed for FY23, but staffing costs will increase in FY23 as the Town enters the last year of the SAFER Grant. The grant contributes a portion of salaries for a set number of years. The department intends to apply for the grant again in FY23. The Committee reviewed the shift schedules for the firefighters. Chief Vuona noted that the call volume of the department is up 11% over the prior year. Chief Vuona reviewed the capital request for a new pick-up truck.

Emergency Management - 7:05pm

Seth Colby, Deputy Fire Chief

Mr. Colby reviewed the Emergency Management budget. The budget is level funded for FY23. The Emergency Management department coordinates efforts across Town departments, municipalities and the private sector. Mr. Colby reviewed the goals of the department, including updates to the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP), and rebuilding the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Mr. Colby reviewed how often drills are done, and advised that the drills are typically a unified command with Police, Fire, DPW, and the School department.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Planning & Economic Development - 7:15pm

Bernard Cahill, Director of Planning & Economic Development

Mr. Cahill reviewed the Planning and Economic Development Department budget. The department oversees new planning projects, supports business retention and attraction, and advises land use and provides support to the Planning Board. The department staffs a Director of Planning and Economic Development, two Assistant Town Planners and half of an Administrative Assistant. Mr. Cahill advised that the primary budget changes include fully funding the second Assistant Town Planner out of the general fund instead of Planning Board fees. Mr. Cahill reviewed departmental highlights and major current projects.

Planning Board - 7:26pm

Bernard Cahill, Director of Planning and Economic Development

Mr. Cahill reviewed the budget for the Planning Board. The budget proposes a slight increase in operational expenses to cover the increasing costs of advertising.

Building Inspector- 7:34pm

Patty Sheehan, Building Inspector

Ms. Sheehan reviewed the budget for the Building Department, noting that the bulk of the budget is salaries and wages and the budget remains level funded. Ms. Sheehan noted that in 2021, over \$1.5 million in permit fees were collected. Ms. Sheehan reviewed the timeline for a project to reach a certificate of occupancy, noting the various departments involved in the process including the DPW, SELCO, and Health Department. The Committee discussed unique projects that the Building Department has been involved in, such as the Edgemere apartments, new Beal School, and the new Police Station.

Board of Appeals - 7:52pm

Patty Sheehan, Building Inspector

Ms. Sheehan reviewed the Zoning Board of Appeals budget, noting that it is a small budget and is level funded for FY23. Ms. Sheehan is the Zoning Enforcement Officer, and the Assistant Town Planner provides staff support to the ZBA.

HUMAN SERVICES

Health Department - 7:53pm

Karyn Clark, Director of Public Health for City of Worcester & CMRPHA

Ms. Clark reviewed the Health Department budget. The department staffs one principal department assistant, and the rest of the staff support comes from the City of Worcester, falling under the Central Massachusetts Regional Public Health Alliance (CMRPHA). The Committee discussed the impacts of COVID-19 and how priorities have shifted over the past couple of years. Ms. Clark noted that the primary budget increase is due to the increased cost to the Intermunicipal Agreement.

Council on Aging - 8:17pm

Hollie Lucht, COA Director

Ms. Lucht introduced the Council on Aging Board members in attendance and reviewed the Council on Aging budget and accomplishments during the current fiscal year. To date, the COA has assisted over 1,000 residents obtain COVID-19 vaccinations and booster shots. Ms. Lucht advised that the COA had a QCC intern for seven months who assisted with outreach and various projects, and they hope to sign on one or two interns each year in the future. Ms. Lucht advised the Committee that there will be a volunteer appreciation lunch on April 25th for the 82 volunteers who have assisted with COA operations this year.

The Committee discussed space needs for the COA. Ms. Lucht advised that some changes have been made to better utilize the space, including moving veterans services and outreach to the main lobby for easier accessibility for patrons. The COA has also utilized outdoor spaces due to COVID-19 to set up accommodations outside and will continue to do so in the near future and as weather improves.

Commission on Disabilities - 8:34pm

Kristen Las, Assistant Town Manager

Ms. Las reviewed the Commission on Disabilities budget. The budget is very small and remains level funded year to year. Ms. Las advised the Committee that the Town has received a \$100,000 grant from the state to complete an ADA transition plan. A consultant will be reviewing Town buildings and outdoor spaces to identify areas where we are deficient in ADA accessibility, including non-physical aspects such as the Town website.

Veteran's Services - 8:37pm

Justin Sousa, Director of Veterans Services

Mr. Sousa reviewed the FY23 Veterans' Services budget and accomplishments for FY22. Veterans' Services provide regional services to veterans in multiple communities. The agents hold office hours on different days of the week in different towns, including Shrewsbury, but are able to be reached via phone and email.

Mr. Sousa noted that in the current fiscal year, the agency has been able to secure donations and provide veterans in need with grocery store gift cards.

Mr. Sousa highlighted that the significant decline in benefits paid out in FY22 can be attributed to relocation of veterans, deaths, and changes to benefits. Additionally, Veteran's Inc. has moved out of the South Street location, and 5-10 veterans that were receiving benefits had lived there. Mr. Sousa advised that 75% of benefits paid are reimbursed by the State.

Library - 8:49pm

Priya Rathnam, Library Director

Ms. Rathnam reviewed the Library budget. The proposed budget includes funding additional page hours, additional seasonal circulation aid hours and funding for two teen aids to assist on Fridays. Ms. Rathnam advised that the proposed budget will allow the Library to meet the

objectives of the Library trustees, municipal requirements for state certification, requirements for hours of services and meet the growing demand for library materials. Ms. Rathnam reviewed highlights of the department and the programs and events that have been held.

The Committee discussed the requirements for materials and staffed hours and inquired if the proposed budget meets the state requirements. Ms. Rathnam advised that the materials budget and proposed staffing levels are sufficient.

Operating Support - 9:04pm

Kevin Mizikar, Town Manager

Mr. Mizikar reviewed the Operating Support budget. The operating support budget includes some shared services between the Town and School. Mr. Mizikar reviewed changes to the Group Health and Life Insurance line item, the Town's contributions to employees and retirees life and health insurance premiums. Mr. Mizikar reviewed the impact to this line item with Fallon Health no longer being a provider. There will be limited plans to choose from, but Blue Cross Blue Shield will provide a comparable plan. The impact to both the Town and employees will be minimal.

Finance Committee - 9:14pm

Kevin Mizikar, Town Manager

The Committee reviewed the Finance Committee budget. The budget primarily consists of the reserve fund, which is used for unforeseen expenses. To date, there have been no reserve fund transfers needed within the FY22 budget.

Personnel Board - 9:16pm

Kevin Mizikar, Town Manager

Mr. Mizikar reviewed the Personnel Board budget. The budget is managed by the Personnel Board and is used to adjust employee salaries and wages, including the COLA adjustment that is recommended by the Personnel Board. The budget also includes funds for centralized training for all staff.

On a motion by Ms. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Garcia, the Committee unanimously voted to close the public hearing at 9:20pm. The public hearing will continue on Saturday, March 26, 2022.

5. Review Meeting Schedule

- a. Saturday, March 26, 2022 – Department Budget Hearings**
- b. Thursday, April 14, 2022 – Public Hearing on Town Meeting Warrant Articles**
- c. Thursday, April 28, 2022 – Public Hearing on Town Meeting Warrant Articles**
- d. Thursday, May 19, 2022 – Pre-Town Meeting**
- e. Saturday, May 21, 2022 – Annual Town Meeting**

The Committee reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule.

6. Other Business

a. Review and discuss Finance Committee Report for May 2022 Annual Town Meeting

Mr. Mizikar advised that staff will prepare the draft report and will send to the Committee for comments.

7. Correspondence

a. Memorandum to the Finance Committee from Kevin Mizikar, Town Manager, regarding Proposed Dates for Actions Relative to the May 2022 Annual Town Meeting, dated February 22, 2022 – so noted.

b. Letter to the Finance Committee from Hannah Kane, State Representative, regarding Letter of Resignation from the Finance Committee, dated February 28, 2022 – so noted.

c. Letter to the Finance Committee from James Kane, Town Moderator, regarding Appointment of Donna Largess O'Connor to the Finance Committee, dated February 28, 2022 – so noted.

8. Adjourn

On a motion by Ms. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Garcia, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:26pm.