March 24, 2021

Budget Meeting of the Finance Committee held on Wednesday, March 24, 2021 beginning at 6:01 p.m. in the Selectmen's Conference Room and conference call.

Please be advised that by Order of the Governor: Order suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law, G.L.c.30A, Sec. 20 which limits public access – this meeting will be conducted over conference call and recorded for public access. Eric Gregoire, Anthony Alves and Kim Collins were present in the Selectmen's Conference Room. All other members attended by conference call. The recorded meeting will be publicly available through LCTV.

Members present: Anthony Alves, yes; Susanne Boyea, yes; Joan Cavallo, yes; Maureen Downing, yes; Christopher Ganhao, yes; Richard Moskal, yes; Nicole Parker, yes; Beverly Tokarz, yes and Eric Gregoire, yes.

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

At this time the committee met with Gary Blanchard, the IT Director to discuss his Level 1 budget. His budget is $399,450 and additional items as well. Mr. Blanchard said the amount is a zero funding which includes a 2% increase for staffing and a 0% for everything else. He has 2 ½ staff members.

Ms. Downing asked what systems are in place so that the Town can be secured to outside hackers? Mr. Blanchard said that there are fire walls in place, Antivirus and Malware in Place. Ransom Ware and User Intervention. They just received a Cybersecurity Awareness Grant. He's hoping that all the employees will participate in it to help educate people what they should and shouldn't be clicking on when browsing the internet. He hasn't officially requested a Level 2 Budget, but one of the items that he's requesting funding for is to expand the existing Antivirus Software to manage email. Their current email, if there is a problem are caught by Antivirus software, but he would like to expand that, using the same software all cloud based which runs the firewalls and antivirus software. That would be a 3-year contract at a cost of $8,500 to implement email protection. All of the email would go through them before coming through the regular email server. Most of the virus' come through email these days.

Ms. Downing asked if that is a one-time cost? Mr. Blanchard said it's for 3 years. There is a set-up cost of $850 which is included in the price. Then it would $7,500, in that area, going forward. Mr. Alves asked if the entire amount is paid the first year? Mr. Blanchard said it is. Ms. Collins said that there is a budget report that everyone has for the Level 1 requested budget and then there is an additional request for $80,000. Her breakdown is $65,000 for the Payroll HR Automation, $10,000 for a 3-year Security Program and $5,000 for MUNIS Support. He said that he never filled out a Level 2 funding report. Ms. Collins received those numbers from an email for approximate numbers. The correct numbers would be a change from $10,000 to $8,500. Ms. Collins asked if there were any programs, items etc. using COVID money that will need to be funded going forward and if so, was it taken into account in the Level 1 budget? Mr. Blanchard said that there won't be anything this year and the next two years going forward. Most purchases were for 3 years. Looking forward, three years from now, if people will be working remotely and things of that nature including conference calls, there would be a cost of $6-7,000 for the remote login server plus software. He doesn't foresee to many more expenses. He does his best to get

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items on a three -year contract. The anti-virus software is $10,000 every 3 years. He spreads the cost out so the actual dollar amount is paid for in multiple years. It's how he monitors his budget.

Mr. Ganhao asked if the $5,000 MUNIS support is annually? Mr. Blanchard said that the reason he added MUNIS to his budget is because it increases 4% each year. When there was a zero-budget increase for 6 years straight, he ended up $30,000 in the arrears. If he can add on some money each year, he won't have that problem. The average is $3,000 extra each year, not $5,000. That is for the MUNIS Contract, support etc. It's $80,000 per year. The Harpers Payroll Service is $68,400 for the initial setup. That includes a $2,000 _____ charge, so going forward the cost would be $66,000. It's a payroll service to take care of pay checks. They charge by the number of checks that are printed each month. If the Town could be paid like the school are, there could be a savings there. Also, this would be taking over certain portions of the MUNIS software. Once the program is fully implemented, the Town wouldn't have to pay for the support on the MUNIS modules. He doesn't know the exact cost. The Harper Software is a paperless payroll system. Right now, there is a paper check for every employee. The Treasurer processes the W-2's etc. This would do away with all the labor associated with the checks. There might be a person in the Treasurer's Office retiring soon and they may not have to hire another person if this system is in play. The employee's salary would cover a portion of the system. He explained the process and the supplies that would be saved to the committee. Most regular for-profit businesses are using this type of payroll service. Ms. Collins said that the amount of work and time consumed by both the Treasurer's and Accountant's offices and all of the departments is a lot of input, mistakes are made and a lot of time is consumed. It's a huge opportunity for the Town to move forward in terms of processing HR payroll. They also do the 1099's and W'2s. Mr. Blanchard said the cost is $66,374 with the one-time added charge. It's billed on a monthly basis. This includes all payroll that goes through the Treasurer's Office, including the school.

Ms. Parker asked if the Town has the module through MUNIS. She is very familiar with MUNIS since she uses it in her job. It could be done on their own instead of using the service. Mr. Blanchard said the Town does have the payroll module but it requires printing the checks and do all the manual labor involved, which is a lot of work. The module that Ms. Parker was talking about would add more work for Mr. Blanchard and other employees. The package includes the HR Module. It gathers all the information into the system and people can change their deductions etc. with an app on their phone which would save more paperwork. Will payroll be more centralized? Mr. Blanchard said it's almost de-centralizing the work. Presently every department fills out worksheets and then are entered by the Treasurer's Office and checked by the Accounting Office. With this system, the department would log into the system and enter their information and then it would get approved by the Treasurer and Accounting Offices. Ms. Collins said the actual data entry will go away and everybody would have a standard schedule and would adjust the schedule for time taken off, etc. which would be approved by the supervisors. Ms. Parker said that if the Town is going to spend $65,000 a year to support the module, a payroll clerk could be eliminated. Mr. Gregoire said it would be contingent upon the situation and evaluating personnel. Mr. Blanchard will be involved if changes are needed. Ms. Collins said that she has a total of $81,874 for requests for Level 2 budget. She calculated $60,374 for the Automation, $3,500 for 3-year security; $5,000 for MUNIS Support. He said $3,000 for MUNIS Support would be find. The adjusted total is $79,874.00.

At this time the committee met with HR Director, Carrie Ribeiro to discuss her budget. Mr. Gregoire has a total of $149,639 for her Level 1 budget. She sent background information to the committee. She would like to increase staffing needs to comply with her workload. She gave a brief history of her department. The HR Department was established in 2014, at which time Ms. Ribeiro was hired. In 2017 she was approved for a part-time employee at 18 hrs. per week. In 2019 her position was re-classified. In 2021 she still has a part-time clerical person. The department has grown. With the size of the employees for the Town, she would like to increase the secretarial position to full-time. Presently she shares the individual with the Veterans Services. He has 10 hrs. per week. The secretary was housed in the Veteran's Services office. During COVID he didn't need the extra hours, so the 10 hrs. carried over to the HR Department. She is now working for HR, 28 hrs. per week. She went on to inform the committee of her present duties, which are extensive. She also prepared a draft of her job description. She also takes care of work-related injury claims. Civil Service Chapter 41, 111F claims etc. Special Harassment Training, with online platforms is also one of the duties. In order for Ms. Ribeiro to be giving support and advisement to department heads, she's hoping to get the hours approved. She is taking on some of the responsibility, as she helps with the day-to-day work of the secretary. These duties should be shifted over to the individual, but at this point, she can't do that because of the part-time hours. She showed the scenario from the 18 hrs. to the 28 hrs. and then the 18 hrs. to the 35 hrs. The Steps are budgeted as well. She doesn't know if the Veterans department will need the 10 hrs. that he had before COVID closed the Town Hall.

Ms. Downing asked if the Selectmen approved the increase. Ms. Ribeiro said that she has an appointment with the Selectmen next week. She spoke to the Town Administrator about the increase and she is in support of the changes. Ms. Collins said that the added hours are in the Level 1 budget, because she thought that the Selectmen approved the increase. She will correct the numbers. Ms. Ribeiro explained the 1.94% increase to Mr. Alves; his figures are a 2.2% increase. Ms. Parker questioned the Step increase, COLA etc. Ms. Riberio said it's a LATOS Contract. Ms. Parker wanted to know if the Contract was costed out. Ms. Riberio said there is a Classification Study Article on the Warrant for Town Meeting. Ms. Parker said it's more to let the residents know how much money the Contracts are going to cost the Town year after year. Is there a future outlook of the Classification Plans or Union Contracts? The Board of Selectmen and individual departments negotiate and approve their contracts. Ms. Parker said the increases are very expensive and is HR costing out the Contracts? She asked how is the Town is affording all the increases that are given to the employees through Contracts? Ms. Riberio explained the steps involved in contract negotiations. Ms. Collins said that she is not involved in any of the negotiations so she is not costing out any of the contracts. She's not sure that they calculate out an overall cost of a 3-year contract. She feels that should be look at, because by the third year the cost is extensive. Mr. Gregoire said that is something to advocate for. He feels conversations should be had with the Selectmen, and Town Administrator about a new perspective on what the expenses are for the full term of the contracts. Ms. Riberio said that overtime is an issue with the Steps, regular pay etc. Ms. Downing said that in the contracts if someone is due a Step increase and a 2% cost of living increase, there is a 4% increase to their pay. Maybe going forward, if it's a bad year leave the guidelines flat because of the contract increases. That is something to think about going forward.

At this time the committee discussed the small department budgets, starting with the Finance Committee's Budget.

There is a 2% salary increase and a Reserve Fund Article of $100,000 in General Expenses.

The Town Accountant's Budget: Ms. Collins said the General Expenses were not increased. The only increase is a Step for one employee and in her contract, she would be eligible for a merit increase and cost of living increase. Ms. Parker asked about the amount received for Longevity. Ms. Collins explained that after 5 years the amount is $250. The school contracts are a larger amount. Ms. Parker questioned the $1,750 Longevity. Ms. Collins explained that one of her employees has been working for the Town for 33 years, her Longevity is $1,500 plus $250 for Ms. Collins Longevity. Mr. Gregoire said that these are items collectively bargained for and what the Town has agreed to. Ms. Parker said that she was uninformed and wanted to be informed as to what exactly the Town gives. For the record, she doesn't think that they don't deserve it, she was just surprised.

Mr. Gregoire would like to invite the Veterans' Agent to meet with the committee to understand what his budget looks. Mr. Gregoire would like to see if Mr. Segundo still would continue with the need for a part-time secretary for office coverage. Mr. Gregoire gave the committee an outline of what departments they will be meeting with in the next few weeks. The DPW/Sewer, Golf Commission and Recreation Commission will have to be scheduled when those outstanding budgets are received. Ms. Collins has not heard anything from those departments at this point. She will check in with them. Mr. Gregoire also would like to extend an invitation to the Board of Assessors to meet.

Ms. Parker asked if the committee talks about the entire budget and all of the increases or is that not the prevue of the committee? Should she be talking about the employee increases and cost out contracts? There are several increases and some are not contractual. Is it the committee's job to talk about the increases and policies, whether their sustainable over the years? Do we have to give increases to the employees every year, contractually or non-contractual? Is she overstepping, does anyone every question the increases etc.? Mr. Gregoire said that it's fine to inquire. Part of the function of the Finance Committee is to provide transparency and oversight of what occurs and how things work. There are very few positions that are not contracted. The Finance Committee does not have a formal say in costing out contracts. The committee can request information and try and understand over a period of time to make better decisions on how things are funded and the impact it has over years. The role of the Finance Committee does not dictate change. We can advocate for a change to the right audience. We have the opportunity to bring up an issue and raise concern with the appropriate parties who do some of that work. He agrees that there are practices that we can and should be doing around some of the subjects, which are being decided by other boards. There are very few situations where people are getting an increase, not contractual or a baseline possibility adjustment.

Ms. Downing responds that these issues should be discussed, because there is a time shortage, the budget should be starting in late fall and discussing large areas of increases. Contracts are decided in a vacuum. It would be nice if these issues could be discussed and convey to other people when making the contracts to consider certain things. Someone who is a union member will get the 2% recommendation, plus their Step, plus Longevity. Someone who is not a Union

member will just get the 2%. Those are a handful of people that work just as hard as anyone else. When recommending the 2%, people forget that some employees get additional money. Some of these issues should be discussed. Ms. Parker knows that this is an advisory board and don't make any decisions, just advise. She feels that residents should know exactly where the money is going. When contracts are negotiated does the contract say specifically that when someone becomes full time, they still get their Step, 2%, Longevity etc. or does someone have leeway over those issues? She doesn't want to step on anyone's toes, but when she sees individuals making more money than the Town Administrator, who is involved in every single aspect of decisions, salaries become exorbitant and these things should be taken into consideration. Maybe the Selectmen should be more informed about these issues. Mr. Gregoire said that anyone can review a contract.

Moved by Ms. Downing, seconded by Ms. Cavallo to adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting at 7:33 p.m.
Mr. Alves, yes; Ms. Boyea, yes; Ms. Cavallo, yes; Ms. Downing, yes; Mr. Ganhao, yes; Mr. Moskal, yes; Ms. Parker, yes; Ms. Tokarz, yes; Mr. Gregoire, yes.

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