

## **Aquinnah Joint Finance Committee and Select Board Meeting**

March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Minutes

*This meeting was held via videoconference*

Members Present: Allen Rugg, Tom Murphy, Mark Foster & Howard Goldstein (alternate member)

Also present: Accountant Emily Day, Town Administrator Jeff Madison, Select Board Gary Haley, Select Board Julianne Vanderhoop, Admin Assistant Sophia Welch, Select Board Chair Jim Newman, Chief Belain, Treasurer Sibel Suman, Emergency Manager Forest Filler, Board of Health Member Sarah Saltonstall, Board of Health Chair Jim Glavin, Board of Health Assistant Karen Colombo

- Allen called the meeting to order at 9:34am

- Mark motioned to accept the 3/12/21 meeting minutes. Motion was seconded by Tom. The Committee voted 3-0, the motion passed.

- The committee briefly discussed the rough estimate that the pandemic has had on the Town's finances: net bottom line is an estimated negative to the Town of \$165,000 (exclusive of any relief the Town may receive under recent legislation).

- **Open issues:** 3% COLA, increased hours of certain employees, police and fire contracts, Board of Health and Library.

- **Current estimate of override:** if all proposed budgets and warrant articles are approved the Town is facing a \$85,000 override

- **Board of Health:** Board of Health has not approved the proposed budget. Increase in Up Island Council on Aging assessment and wages, an overall 2.5% increase from FY'21 budget. Since BOH has not formulated a final budget, the Committee deferred review to another meeting.

- **3% COLA:** \$17,915 impact to budget (exclusive of Police and Fire contracts); including Police contracts impact is \$31,367 (excluding fire contract); in FY'21, when pandemic hit, employees proposed to exclude a COLA given the unknown impact on finances; Committee concurred that the \$17,915 is a reasonable expense for a 3% COLA for employees.

- **Additional Hours:** proposal to increase Accountant hours from 20 to 25, Accounting Clerk hours from 11 to 15, Treasurer from 30 to 35, \$500 increase to Property Manager wages, and DWP Foreman hours from 35 to 40. Committee identified the need to bulk up the Finance Department capabilities (Treasurer and Accounting) and noted that they have not increased their hours in the time that the Fin Comm has been functioning and recommended the associated increase in hours. Similarly, the Committee also recommended the \$500 increase for the Property Manager wage. Proposed Foreman hour increase was discussed at length (\$8,500 increase to wages). Given the proposal for a new mower and trailer (increasing efficiency) and outsourced tree work contract proposal, two Committee members expressed reluctance in recommending the 5-hour increase. Gary will bring the Fin Comm's comments on the matter before the BOS at the next meeting.

- **Fire Chief:** proposed 3-year contract includes a \$5,500 increase each year beginning at \$45,000 for the first year (11% increase from FY'21 budget); Select Board is still in preliminary negotiation stages; until a contract is agreed upon, Fin Comm agreed to add a 3% COLA to the FY'21 Fire Chief contracted amount; Jeff noted that the Fire and Police contracts need to reflect the nature of the community and current "chiseled in stone" contracts tend to put the Town, in the long run, at risk.

**- Police Department:**

- **Budget:** Select Board and Police are still negotiating the contracts; proposed budget reflects a net increase of less than 1% and 3% COLA; Chief Belain outlined the decreases to the budget (time off relief, personal days, training relief, overtime, communications compensation, and training expense) and increases (on-call line item and 3% COLA); Fin Comm agreed to move along with the proposed budget with the expectation that this budget goes to town meeting and encouraged the Select Board to bring this budget to town meeting.

- **Warrant Articles:** replacement of Chief vehicle and potentially another vehicle (both are 2014 vehicles and have exceed 100,000 miles); given the hit of the pandemic, vehicle articles were removed from FY'21 warrant; Jeff noted that the town has adopted the Green Communities policy which includes the town's commitment to reducing fossil fuel and commitment that any new vehicles purchased would be electric; Jeff raised the question whether this purchase was appropriate; Jeff noted the option of bringing the fairly new off island car to the island and outfitting it for a police vehicle; Police and Select Board need to discuss the number of vehicles, type, financing and future planning.

**- Emergency Management:** existing budget includes \$1,000 stipend and \$1,000 for expenses; Forest Filler, Emergency Manager, discussed the proposed \$5,000 warrant article for an all-island emergency management coordinator (flat amount for all 6 towns); Jeff noted that, given the current climate, this is worth investing in for 1 year to see where it goes.

**- Library:** 2.31% overall increase to budget (step and COLA for library director and 3 library positions); expenditures reduced by 8%; budget complies with the States mandate; there was brief discussion regarding the impact of COVID on the library and 2021 operations.

**- Community Programs:** no change to budget (\$3,000).

**- Animal Control/Dog Officer:** no change to budget (\$6,000 pay and \$1,200 for expenditures).

**- Cultural Council:** no change (\$1,500).

**- Recreational Facilities (parking lot and restroom):** no change (\$55,000 for wages and \$8,800 for expenditures); Town may want to consider decreasing wages next year and increasing expenses for restroom cleaning to accommodate outsourced cleaning contract instead of presenting it as a warrant article (routine expense); similarly, Allen noted that it may be beneficial in moving the annual Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) payment and County warrant articles back into the budget as they are routine expenses (no net effect on override).

**- OPEB:** \$50,000 contribution; determined liability calculation for unfunded post-employment benefits; approx. \$600,000 remaining to become fully funded, that is if the Town does not pick up more benefited positions; Sibel noted that the Town should consider increasing the annual contribution.

**- Warrant Articles:**

- \$9,000 for mower and \$2000 for trailer: Tom noted that he had met with Emily, Jeff and Jay to discuss possibility of purchasing a tractor instead of a mower, however, they agreed that the purchase was not viable (not enough efficiency to justify the purchase for numerous reasons).

- \$15,000 for trimming of trees along Lobsterville Road, Lighthouse Road and Moshup Trail: request from DPW for the contracted work of 5-6 days of tree trimming; approx. \$2,000-\$3,000 for annual maintenance trimming; matter of trimming was deferred to the Select Board.

- Town vehicle leases: off island car and DPW dump truck.

**- Open Issues:** Police and Fire contracts, warrant articles and final budget.

- Select Board will be meeting April 6<sup>th</sup> to review final budget and warrant articles. Finance Committee agreed to meet on Wednesday, April 14<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 for a final review of the budget and warrant articles.
- Meeting adjourned at 11:05am.

Respectfully submitted,

Sophia Welch