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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND TAXATION
WEDNESDAY, March 8, 2023 7:00 PM
School Committee Conference Room, Stoughton Public Schools District Office
31 Pierce Street, Stoughton, MA 02072
PUBLIC HEARING

Agenda items may be taken out of order at Chairman's Discretion

1. Mr. Vaughan Enokian, Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM .
2. Mr. Enokian asked all to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Mr. Anzivino made the motion to open the Public Hearing, seconded by Mr. Lurie. The motion passed.
Present: Vaughan Enokian, Chair, John Anzivino, Vice Chair, Eric Anderson, Chet Collins (left at 10:05pm) , Robert Desmond, Laura Gunn (left at 9:15pm), Adam Iacabucci, David Lurie, Dr. Jess Miner, Mark Struck, Joel Wolk
Absent: Dianne Dolan, Elliot Hansen, Kerry Marrocco, John Walsh
4. Town Budget – Cable Public Access Budget (FY24)
 - a) Article 12-Cable Public Access Budget Enterprise Fund- Appropriate FY24 Cable Costs
Mr. Rowe, town accountant, stated that from FY22 to FY23, subscribers increased from 3% to 5%, annual subscriber cost cap at \$.72. He said anticipated revenue from Comcast, \$358,511 and \$160,726 from Verizon, net income expected at \$467,385.
Mr. Lurie asked for a clarification of the definition of the contracts and licensing with the town. He said once the license is in place, the town negotiates with SMAC.
Mr. John Stagnone, SMAC responded that the new contract is on review with the Select Board. He added that reserve funds are being held for capital improvements. He said 5 to 6 million was used for OPEB. He said equipment is being updated.
Mr. Lurie asked the frequency of updates.
Mr. Stagnone responded replacements occur prior to being unusable.
Mr. Lurie asked what happens if the town rejects the contract.
Mr. Stagnone replied in the event SMAC disbands, the funds revert back to the town.
Mr. Lurie asked if there were plans to respond to the 2021 audit by Mark Haussman.
Mr. Stagnone indicated that this question was not on the agenda but stated that the Select Board had voted the current budget.
Mr. Lurie asked about getting the funds in a lump sum and how that money was divided.

Mr. Stagnone replied that SMAC does not get a lump sum, the monies budgeted are divided by twelve. He stated that SMAC invoices the town.

Mr. Lurie expressed concern over the 10-year duration of the contract request by Verizon.

Mr. Stagnone responded that SMAC must justify capital expenditures over the life of the contract. He added that there is no new platform relative to the current technology such as you tube, hulu, sling. He said there are on-going discussions with the State to preserve local access.

Mr. Desmond asked if membership was decreasing and if SMAC had changed location.

Mr. Stagnone said membership had decreased a bit, but they were in the same building. He said there is a new landlord who has expanded the size of the building.

Mr. Wolk asked if the sole providers of revenue were the two cable companies.

Mr. Stagnone responded yes.

Mr. Enokian asked how much of the \$0.72 per subscriber comes to SMAC.

Mr. Stagnone replied only a piece of the fee paid comes to SMAC. He said if there are no subscribers, there is no revenue.

Mr. Collins asked what portion of the fees paid by him as a subscriber goes to Stoughton.

Mr. Stagnone responded there is a line-item on subscriber invoices. The subscriber pays according to the number of boxes and programs chosen.

Mr. Ed Defelice, 200 Ethyl Way, asked who prepared the budget.

Mr. Rowe responded that he prepared the budget, as it is the town budget.

Mr. Defelice asked if the process was out-of-order, questioning the presence of two people representing SMAC, who may not have been duly elected.

Mr. Enokian disallowed the question stating that it was not relevant to a discussion on the budget. Mr. Enokian added that the question is not within the purview of the Finance Committee.

4. Town Budget

Article 26 General Fund Operating Budget FY 24.

a. Town Accountant

Mr. Rowe explained that he had been designated the finance director/town accountant in response to changes and re-classifications. He said Mary Jane Martin would now be internal auditor, and the Senior Clerk would be classified as Program administrator. He listed consultant fees at \$10,000 no change from FY23 with the school department paying 1 and 1/8 of this cost. Mr. Rowe said there have been no changes from the budget approved by the Select Board.

Mr. Desmond questioned the increase in salary of the Assistant Town Accountant from \$70,000 to \$80,000. Mr. Rowe said the salary had been increased to get a qualified applicant.

Mr. Wolk asked about the internal auditor position.

Mr. Rowe explained that the position held by Ms. Sue Herman now falls under Department 136/dept of auditing and analytics.

Mr. Wolk asked if the clerk would be part time at 19 hours.

Mr. Rowe replied yes.

Mr. Collins asked about the designation of 35 hours. Mr. Rowe responded that no one works 35 hours, he said staff is salaried, so you do the job till it is done. Mr. Collins said it is important for the public to understand that responsibilities generally exceed salary.

Dr. Miner asked for an explanation of the salary level for Ms. Herman compared to what the new person was offered.

Mr. Rowe explained that by statute the town accountant is the town auditor. He said the previous auditor did principally analysis and reported to the town manager. He said job 1 for the new hire would be to standardize town receipts policy and conduct monthly reconciliation of the bank statements.

Mr. Iacabucci asked about the management letter that refers to reconciliation of the bank statements, and asked if management would fall under the full staff.

Mr. Anzivino pointed out that as of July 1, Mr. Rowe would become the finance director.

Mr. Rowe stated that the position for internal auditor had been filled as of today.

Mr. Anzivino responded that the new hire at \$95,000 will be responsible for analysis and audits.

Mr. Enokian asked for a clarification as to payment for the new position.

Mr. Rowe responded that the new hire would be paid from the budget of Auditing and Analysis.

Mr. Defelice asked for a definition of salaried employees and union employees.

Mr. Rowe explained that certain department heads belong to a professional administrative union. He said after his retirement the town accountant position will become a non-union position.

b. Engineering

Mr. Marc Tisdelle, Director of Developmental Services/town engineer

Mr. Tisdelle said there are 2 changes: the office administrator will have expanded duties to include building, zoning, planning, and engineering departments. Mr. Tisdelle said the previous project engineer had left and a new person was hired at \$83,000 to start March 12, 2023.

He said the developmental services secretary responsible for minutes is retitled, no change in salary level.

Mr. Tisdelle explained that expenditures relative to storm water management have been rolled into the budget as it is an annual expense.

Mr. Desmond requested a job description for the position of office administrator.

Mr. Tisdelle said he will provide once the salary is approved.

Dr. Miner clarified that under project expenses, the position was ½ engineering, and ½ sewer. She suggested a name change from coordinator to coordination as this does not mean a person but a process.

Mr. Wolk asked about the GIS person, noting that the position is shared among other departments. He asked the number of professional engineers in the department.

Mr. Tisdelle responded there are two. Mr. Wolk asked if the town paid for training. Mr. Tisdelle responded yes.

2 questions from the public, Mr. Peter Murphy, precinct 2 and Mr. Defelice, precinct 6 were determined to not be relevant to the engineering budget.

Mr. Defelice asked if the building known as the Water Works Building had a DEP filing.

Mr. Rowe responded that in FY22, \$40,770 had been paid in fees, and to date in FY23, \$23,910.

c. Building and Code Enforcement

Mr. Tisdelle noted the following changes:

1. Secretarial at \$19,217
2. The hiring of a sealer of weights and measures, stipend \$7,000
3. request for .5 building inspector
4. Program administrator 1 to be reclassified, eliminating this position, salary for reclassification to be \$57,300. Mr. Tisdelle concluded that his overall engineering budget was down 4%.

Mr. Collins asked for the response time for building inspections. He said it is important to have quick responses to building permits, and code enforcement requests. He said he favored full-time inspectors for building, electric, and plumbing.

Mr. Tisdelle said the part time hire requested will give the building inspector flexibility.

Mr. Desmond commented that this department pays for itself, via revenue from permit fees.

d. Board Of Health p.41 Mr. Tisdelle said there was 1.8% increase, essentially no change.

e. Planning Department Mr. Tisdelle said there has not been a town planner since last July, and Ms. Pam McCarthy had filled in as an interim. He said the job posting had resulted in two applicants and Mr. Bill Roth, 18 years of experience had been hired. He noted that Mr. Roth's experience was broad, serving the towns of Fairhaven and Taunton. He said Mr. Roth has

experience in procurement of grants. The salary level had been increased from \$110,000 to \$112,200 upon recommendation of the town manager and to assure his hire.

Mr. Tisdelle pointed out that the consultant line was \$50,000 due to the many major projects proposed.

Dr. Miner commented that town meeting had approved \$90,371 for the town planner.

Mr. Tisdelle said the town manager has protective flexibility, and the town will have to find the money to cover this increase. He explained the difficulty in finding qualified applicants.

Mr. Anzivino commented that there is a balance in the account as the previous planner had left. But he asked if the new hire on board for April, May and June would automatically receive an increase on July 1 per town policy.

Mr. Tisdelle did not disagree, indicating that the town policy needs to be reviewed.

f. Economic Development Ms. Pam McCarthy stated that the budget has increased by 1.9%.

Mr. Lurie asked the status of the grant requested from State for the train depot.

Ms. McCarthy said the State is late in providing the contract.

Mr. Collins asked about the increase in the advertising request. Ms. McCarthy responded that the past amount of \$370 was insufficient.

Mr. Iacobucci inquired about consultant fees. Ms. McCarthy said the amount is \$10,000 and noted that some of her budget could be spent on housing.

g. Moderator page 4

Mr. Rowe explained that there was no change. The salary line from the town clerk's office had been zeroed out. Mr. Rowe said \$1,800.00 had been spent so far for public hearing notices. Mr. Rowe said, if necessary, a transfer could occur at the end of the year.

Mr. Anzivino remarked that the costs of the suburban shopper were greater than the Patriot Ledger which was giving the town a great rate.

Mr. Peter Murphy, precinct 2 inquired about the Municipal Operations budget. Ms. Walsh, the deputy moderator responded that this budget is under the town clerk's department.

h. Finance Committee Mr. Anzivino stated that there was a decrease in wages, but temporary wages were increased to include a stipend to town staff and funds for legal costs were included.

There followed a discussion about preparation and cost of the town warrant book. Mr. Anzivino stated that the warrant book would be prepared by the Finance Committee.

Mr. Rowe said that is normal procedure and the town manager can authorize a transfer from one account to another if needed.

Mr. Lurie asked if enough had been provided for legal fees. Mr. Anzivino said more information would be available later.

Mr. Struck asked about the extensive cost of mailing the book to town meeting representatives. Mr. Anzivino said he believes that by statute, the committee must provide.

5. Article 22- Unpaid bills Mr. Rowe explained that these are bills that arrive after the close of the fiscal year and require town meeting approval for payment.

6. Article 23- Rescind Unissued Borrowing Authorization

Mr. Rowe said this article included CPC funds for the Wilkin's Playground, and other projects with a total of approximately \$504,667.

Mr. Wolk asked if any new information had been received relative to the bond for the high school. Mr. Rowe said the department is waiting for an update from the School Superintendent.

Mr. Struck asked if there was documentation that the work was complete.

Mr. Rowe said the CPC had voted and signed off; therefore, the account is closed.

Mr. Murphy asked if there was a list of articles in the category of unissued authorization.

Mr. Enokian responded yes.

Ms. Cynthia Walsh, deputy moderator asked for a confirmation of the number \$504,667 for Article 23.

7. Article 24- Establish 300th Anniversary Celebration Fund

Mr. Rowe said this article is permitted under M.G.L. giving the town permission to put money into a special fund for special events. He said the fund can receive funds and expense funds.

Mr. Lurie asked who would monitor the fund.

Mr. Rowe responded that the committee for the celebration would submit requests to the town manager.

Mr. Desmond asked why not use the Community Events account. Mr. Rowe answered that the fund established for the celebration could not be a revolving fund and needed to be kept separate.

Mr. Defelice asked if there would be funds to invite the sister town, Stoughton, Wisconsin.

Mr. Rowe responded that it would be up to the committee in charge of the celebration.

8. Article 25 Deposit into the 300th Anniversary Celebration Fund the amount of \$50,000.

Ms. Walsh said that she was a member of the committee and thought perhaps this would be the only request for funds. She said the committee intends to seek funds from private sources, fund raising, and charges to participate in some events.

Mr. Lurie referred to the town of his youth, Wellington, CT. where there had been a terrific celebration of the 350th, with zero city funds spent.

Dr. Miner asked if the proposed budget line could be zeroed out.

Mr. Lurie answered that some seed money would be needed for advertisements.

Mr. Peter Murphy, precinct two, asked if such donations would be tax deductible.

Mr. Rowe answered generally, but taxpayers should consult with their tax person.

9. Article 56- Town Lake Management Program

Mr. Gerry MacDonald, chair of the Conservation Commission, listed some town-owned lakes:

Ames Long Pond, Harris, Dennis, Alberts, Woods Pond, Muddy Pond

Mr. Eric Anderson asked about the time between treatments, noting that treatments took place in FY23 and new funding was being requested for FY24. He asked if there was a cycle for treatments. Mr. MacDonald said he didn't have the answer and asked that the question be referred to Mr. James Conlon, environmental officer.

Mr. Lurie said since this is an annual request why not include it in the annual budget for the department. Mr. Tisdelle said perhaps next year.

Dr. Miner asked about the cost of application, the cost of materials suggesting this article could be a budget item.

Mr. Peter Ventresco, Central Street, objected to the amount of \$50,000 asking if all ponds were being treated.

Mr. Defelice asked about Glen Echo. Mr. MacDonald responded that Canton treats this area.

Mr. Ventresco suggested that Harris Pond would be perfect for town swimming. He said the request for \$50,000 should be increased to \$100,000.

10. Article 57 Town Hall Parking and Landscape Improvements

Mr. Tisdelle said the funding would improve the lay-out of the parking lot and add 4 spaces; He said this suggested improvement is part of the master plan.

Mr. Wolk asked if this was design stage only. Mr. Tisdelle responded yes and the project will be put out for bid.

Mr. Anzivino asked if this article could be deferred. Mr. Tisdelle said town meeting approval is needed to facilitate the construction bid.

Mr. Struck commented on the few spaces being proposed and if it would be possible to move the belltower. Mr. Tisdelle said it would increase the cost greatly. Mr. Tisdelle said there is a concept in place and public input will be requested.

Mr. Lurie pointed to slide 3 angle parking. Mr. Tisdelle said yes there will be angle parking, expanding the parking area and some of the green area will be lost.

Ms. Cynthia Walsh said careful attention should be given to not disturbing the veteran's memorial. She asked if more handicapped spaces would be available.

Mr. Defelice remarked that the town should consider purchase of an adjacent property, now in disrepair to make room for more parking.

11. Article 58- Landscape Improvements at Lucius Clapp Property Mr. Tisdelle noted that some documentation had been misidentified and would be corrected. He said this article is for design phase only.

Mr. Lurie said he was in favor of this article and asked if CPC would be involved.

Mr. Tisdelle said the CPC will be approached once the design is complete, making it possible to offer a detailed cost estimate.

Mr. Wolk and Dr. Miner commented on the cost at \$75,000 Article 57 and \$75,000 for Article 58, noting the difference in the size of the areas.

12. Article 59 Tosca Drive, Central Street and Canton Street Intersection Improvements

Mr. Tisdelle said this should be the last article pertaining to this intersection. He explained that the State will pay \$4.5 million for the project and the town of Stoughton will be responsible for providing the right-of-way, acquisition costs, road lay-out and repair of property damages. He said the request was for \$150,000.

Mr. Anzivino asked what would happen to the BAT bus stop. Mr. Tisdelle responded that OCPC is involved and will keep Bat informed. He stated that the flagpole in the park area will have to be relocated.

Mr. Wolk asked if the article would address appraisal, easement acquisition and construction costs.

Mr. Tisdelle remarked that once the right-of-way is acquired, the town would be done, and the remainder of the project would be the responsibility of DOT.

Mr. Peter Ventresco, Central Street, expressed concern about the location of the bus stop as it is used mostly by people who work on Tosca Drive.

Mr. Anzivino stated that signalization will assist foot traffic and emergency vehicles.

13. Article 60- Pine Street, Pleasant Street Intersection Improvements

Mr. Tisdelle said it is always a good idea to fix "Y" intersections and make them "T" intersections. He said the improvements assist pedestrians at the crosswalk. In response to a question from Mr. Struck, Mr. Tisdelle stated that currently there is no traffic signal. Mr. Struck asked if the road would be flattened. Mr. Tisdelle said the design will determine.

Mr. Desmond asked about the schedule relative to the Capen-Reynolds project. Mr. Tisdelle said after town meeting approval, the Capen-Reynolds project would go first, protecting the handicapped spots.

Ms. Walsh asked about the Al Silva's memorial square. Mr. Tisdelle responded it would not be impacted.

14. Article 62- Electronic Permitting Software Mr. Tisdelle said that Stoughton is one of the last of the 351 towns to add this capability. He said the permitting software will bring departments on in phases. Phase I Building, BOH, Fire; phase II Engineering, DPW, Sewer, Water; Town Clerk, Select Board phase III. Mr. Tisdelle said to require people needing permits to come to the town hall is very inefficient. He offered that the new system may increase revenue; on-site inspections will become mobile via the use of tablets; online payments will be easy to make, easy to track, and easy to follow the progress of any project. Mr. Tisdelle said GIS will be implemented; there will be a portal for automatic updates from the Building Department. He said the cost has been reduced to \$250,000 following the receipt of a grant for \$200,000.

Mr. Wolk suggested asking for the full amount, citing the fact that annual fees will be rolled in, and future costs will become an annual expense from the IT department.

Mr. Struck asked if the town would charge for the use of credit cards. Mr. Tisdelle responded yes.

Mr. Iacabucci asked the origin of the grant. Mr. Tisdelle said it was a Community Contact Grant.

Mr. Lurie said it is good that the town is making progress in this area.

16. Any other matters relating to FY24 or FY23 Budget and Town Meeting Warrant Articles.

Mr. Lurie said he was dissatisfied with the way the articles were presented. He asked if google.docs could be used.

Mr. Enokian said he has renamed some articles and Ms. Dolan had put some of the articles into google.docs.

17. Mr. Anzivino made the motion to continue the public hearing until Thursday, March 9, 2023, 7:00 PM to be held in the School Committee Conference room, Stoughton Public Schools District Office, 31 Pierce Street, Stoughton, MA. The motion was seconded by Mr. Struck and passed unanimously.

18. Mr. Anzivino made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Anderson. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 10:50 PM.



