

Shutesbury Finance Committee
Tuesday, February 8, 2022, Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

Members Present: George Arvanitis, Ajay Khashu, Jim Walton, Susie Mosher, Melody Chartier, Jim Hemingway, Bob Groves

Members Absent: None

Town Administrator: Becky Torres

Non-Members present: Ryan Mailloux (Treasurer), Kristen Burgess (Police), Leslie Luchonok, Mike Vinskey

Meeting called to order at 6:32 PM

1) Police Budget Review (Kristen Burgess)

- a) Police budget has been level-funded across all categories, including salary, wages, operating, and cruiser maintenance.
- b) Total budget = \$219,254.
- c) Police wages line will be subject to negotiations with the police union. The prior contract included 3% annual increases. Negotiations for the current contract are ongoing.
- d) AK asks whether the cruiser maintenance has been sufficiently funded in the past. Kristin clarifies that as long as we stay on top of things, the current funding level (\$5,471) should be sufficient.
- e) GA states that we have a full-time police chief line in the budget but asks when we expect to have that person hired. There is no timeline in place.
- f) JH asks what happened to the plan of having someone from the Highway Dept perform maintenance to the police department's vehicles. BT responds that we did try this for a couple of jobs but it quickly became apparent that it was not sustainable. The staffmember who had been identified for this work is now only doing part-time snowplowing.
- g) SM asks how many officers this budget covers. Kristin responds that last year there was significant staffing inconsistencies. This budget is hoping to reflect a chief, and 2 full-time positions. Budget also includes 2-3 part-time roles for coverage purposes. BT clarifies that the department's goal is to fund 16 hours of shifts per day plus a chief. This budget accomplishes that.

2) Treasurer Budget Review (Ryan Mailoux)

- a) Unemployment budget: Treasurer requesting \$10,000. This line could be volatile if something significant occurs. Last year we contributed \$5,000. Only ~\$700 was spent. We have had few unemployment claims in the last few years. Several committee members prefer that we maintain this level of funding for FY23. **BT will allocate \$5,000 for our draft FY23 budget.**
- b) Veterans Benefit: Treasurer requesting \$12,000. Last year this line was funded at \$5,000 and there has been no activity. Treasurer agrees that we should fund this line at \$5,000. **BT will allocate \$5,000 for our draft FY23 budget.**

- c) Treasurer budget: Treasurer is requesting \$12,280. Last year this line was funded at \$11,450. There has been an increase in postage. There is a line item that has been added to the budget for the treasurer's cell phone plan (\$780). Ryan states that he needs to be available to respond to questions/requests from town employees at all hours of the day. BG states that police officers require cell phones because they are sometimes outside of radio coverage. Ryan responds that although he a part-time employee, he needs to be available outside of those hours that he is in the office. MC asks if the IRS requires employers to provide phones and coverage to employees who are expected to be available 24-7. AK states that whatever we decide to do with respect to Ryan's request, the town should have a written cell phone reimbursement policy.
 - d) Tax Title budget: Treasurer is requesting \$8,500 (level-funded). This line covers the costs for filing land court fees and attorney fees. We haven't expended much of this line yet, but Ryan believes there will be some expenses later this year. JW clarifies that we have accumulated \$13,000 of unspent funds. GA states that this line seems a little high. BG suggests that we fund this line at \$2,000 for this year. SM suggests we fund this line at \$5,000 and see where we go from there. **BT will allocate \$5,000 for our draft FY23 budget.**
 - e) Short-Term borrowing: Treasurer is requesting \$5,000 for this line which covers fees to do short-term borrowings. Last year this line was funded at \$2,000. Ryan states that next year is shaping up to be an unusual year because of the number of capital projects that are on the schedule (culvert, roof, etc.). BG suggests that we level fund this line. **BT will allocate \$2,000 for our draft FY23 budget.**
 - f) OPEB Trust budget: Treasurer is requesting that we contribute \$50,000 to the OPEB fund. The updated actuarial study is close to complete. GA suggests that we ask the actuaries for their recommendations on the best options to fund the OPEB liability. AK suggests that we invite the study's author(s) to a Fin Com meeting to discuss their analysis and recommendations.
 - g) Actuarial budget: Treasurer is requesting \$2,000 for this line. This is what we funded last year. The current balance is \$6,200. The cost for the study last time was \$6,000.
 - h) Medicare Tax: Treasurer is requesting \$43,900. This includes a 3% COLA assumption.
 - i) Health Insurance Budget: Treasurer is requesting \$553,000. This assumes that we add one family and one individual. This assumes a rate increase of 2%. BT clarifies that there will not be a rate increase for FY23. Ryan states that he knows of 2 employees that are planning to switch to family coverage when open enrollment begins. Fin Com will revisit this topic at a later date. The floor is \$520,000, and the committee will discuss whether we want to increase this amount.
- 3) Discussion of 1/25/2022 minutes.
- a) There is some confusion about what Kevin Rudden communicated about the utilization of third-party vendors to conduct assessments of utilities and personal property. AK agrees to send the relevant portion of draft minutes to Kevin to have him clarify. We will revisit these minutes at our next meeting.
- 4) Final prep for 2/10 Four Town meeting

- a) Several Fin Com members reviewed video of the Feb 3 meeting of the Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools Committee.
- b) AK: It is encouraging to see that the regional school committee seems inclined to support the goal of adopting a 100% modified statutory assessment method by using grant funds to bridge the gap for FY23.
- c) BG: The guard rails concept may not be necessary to utilize as a smoothing mechanism because the 5-yr rolling average aspect of the modified statutory method already accomplishes the goal of smoothing the impacts of the statutory method.
- d) AK: I don't think we should be too concerned about the guard rails concept because it is likely to only be an issue for this fiscal year as we transition from 65% to 100% modified statutory. That is a big jump. It shouldn't be a big factor moving forward if we remain at the 100% modified statutory method.

5) Initial FY23 budget review

- a) BT will send us a preliminary budget document.

6) Elementary School Budget Discrepancies

- a) SM spoke with the U28 Finance Director. She is preparing a separate document that details the full and partial positions that will be funded using ESSER and School choice funds.

7) Committee Reports

- a) AK and BG for Capital Planning: Highway dept. is seeking to replace its 2003 Sterling dump truck. The body has significant rust and it is getting hard to locate parts as Sterling stopped making trucks in 2008. This will be a significant expense and this is bad time to be purchasing any type of vehicle. Fire dept. is seeking to purchase a new SUV to be used by the next fire chief. Approximate cost would be around \$55,000.
- b) SM asks if there is an update on the recycling/hauling contract. BT responds that we will have a request for bids out next month.
- c) GA for Personnel Committee: Committee is analyzing the recently received FRCOG wage and salary survey. Committee will discuss COLA at next meeting.
- d) JW for Fire Dept Hiring Committee: Group is close to making recommendations to the select board for how we should move forward.
- e) SM for Police Study Group: The survey has gone out. There will be a workgroup that will compile the data.

8) Future Meetings

- a) Feb 10: upcoming 4 Towns Meeting
- b) Feb 22

Meeting adjourned at 9:13 PM