

Final

**BUDGET SATURDAY
JANUARY 11, 2014**

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TOWN CLERK
ACTON

Selectmen Members Present: All

Finance Committee Members Present: All

Town staff Present: Town Manager, Asst. Manager, Town Accountant, Finance Director, Asst. Assessor

Chairman Adachi convened the Selectmen's meeting to order. She stated that she wanted us to stick to the schedule and to focus on FY'15 issues. No questions from the audience will be taken.

Ms. Clifford convened the Finance Committee to order.

Mr. Ledoux gave a general overview of the meeting and the preparation that took place in order to have this meeting. The overall proposed operating budget is up 3.5%, subsidies are down 40%, and OPEB is up 23% for the town side.

**HUMAN RESOURCES/VETERAN SERVICES:
MARIANNE FLECKNER AND JAMES MCRAE**

James McRae spoke about the needs of the Veterans in town and his work in finding them services and doing outreach. The proposed increase in his budget is to help the veterans in town.

Mr. Sonner asked about the numbers of veterans we currently serve. Jim projected 800 veterans and more than 30 widows. They did a mailing last week and he expects to have more veterans contact him. He noted that there are income limits for some services.

Mr. Clough asked about other towns coming to Acton. Jim said he has had issues with veterans from other towns contacting him for services, particularly with veterans from Boxborough. He has helped with questions but not benefits.

Steve Noone asked about the highest and lowest level of services that people are receiving. The maximum allowed is \$2,000.00 per month, and is low as \$1,400.

Margaret Busse asked about the amount of money needed and increasing the budget and asked if the unspent money goes back to general budget in Free Cash. Jim said that it does.

Pat Clifford asked other staff he collaborates with. He works with Community Services, nursing, and COA.

Marianne Fleckner discussed the changes in the budget from FY 14-15. She wanted to thank the Employee Recognition Committee for their work. She spoke about three new

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projects: succession planning, mentoring, and promotion of current staff. She noted that they have drafted the 5 year plan. They will use this over the years in planning.

She spoke about the changes due to the Federal Affordable Care Act and the town's new wellness program. She discussed the savings for self-insured managing 111F costs. They will have more time if it is taken from their work assignments.

The Senior Work Program is a high demand program and there is an increase in the line item. She said it is a jewel for the community and the seniors. They can work and receive \$1,000 per year to apply towards their property tax bill. She wants to increase the program to 79 hours per senior and to pay them \$14.00 per hour. It is a very well received program.

Pat Clifford asked about any plans to updating the Segal Study. Segal was asked to do a study on classification and placement. They are now working on job descriptions and then will develop what the salary should be for the position.

HIGHWAY/NESWC

Corey York gave an overview of the Highway Department and what types of services they perform. They went through the budget items and Green Initiatives.

Bill Mullin spoke about NESWC and sees a business opportunity to use unused equipment to have a cash flow. Doug Tindal did not agree with rental of equipment and said we could not charge enough to get the physical use compensated.

Cory said they thought about these issues and insurance inter-municipal agreements and he feels that the needs for equipment time are the same.

Bill asked about what other towns are doing about NESWC liability.

He asked if the fly ash issue has been resolved.

ENGINEERING

Corey spoke about Quarry Road Drainage and Commuter Parking lot. John Sonner asked about Quarry Road, and if the funds stay open with no time limit. Corey said they don't expire.

COUNCIL ON AGING

Sharon Mercurio outlined the services of COA and the operating budget. She spoke about the COA van and building services such as yearly cleaning. They provide a lot of rides to our citizens. They want to increase the exercise program by 2 classes. Our Minuteman assessment is increasing. Transportation has decreased because of the van scheduling. Sharon said that the kitchen renovations are needed and that the kitchen is used daily. The kitchen is original to the building and needs to be renovated. Parking is still an issue.

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Ms. Adashi asked how many newsletters are sent by email. Sharon said they send 400 by email at this point out of 2,500. Janet asked if they had a commercial kitchen, if they could actually cook the food at the center.

FinCom asked about how much the building can hold during meal time. Sharon said 120 people per day. The capacity is based on 100 for septic. 8:30 – 2:30 are the busiest times during the day.

Pat urged the COA to gather information in conjunction with Asst., Town Manager to look at this.

FIRE

Chief Futterer discussed the budget issues. They are asking for level funding. The ambulance funding has gone up this year to provide the best possible service. He spoke about the professional development program and the plan to train paramedics.

POLICE

Chief Widmayer spoke about the dog control duties and noted that they have added duties and additional training is needed. They try to find homes for abandoned animals instead of killing them or sending them out. Janet asked about boarding costs for animals and owners not paying.

Pat Clifford asked about fees and dogs as well as wild life. Chief Widmayer said the department handles rabid animals and the state takes care of deer.

Dispatch – increased due to error in FY14. They are correcting this issue and that was around \$30,000. They are required to adhere to State mandates and the costs were covered by a grant and they will need to do an audit.

Margaret Busse asked about regionalizing dispatch as it was discussed by the Acton 2020 Committee. He has tried to have other communities join us to no avail. The facility has room for it as it was designed correctly with that in mind.

Police – salaries are up as we have added officers approved by town meeting. We added the four officers in January of this year. They want to get more officers on the road and spend less on overtime. We are generally down 5-6 officers at one time and it costs to fill the shifts at overtime.

He noted that it take 9 months to a year to hire and train new officers and they try very hard to keep them once we get them. Their goals are to protect the town and its citizens.

Four years of collective bargaining was concluded and they had to spend money for those contract obligations.

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Mr. Clough asked about special duty officers. The Chief said that contract officers have special assignment designations and they get a stipend of \$150 per month.

Mr. Gowing said we will have a civil violation of \$100 for marijuana and he asked how that has played out. The Chief said that he feels it will become legal throughout the state but he plans on doing nothing at this time.

Ms. Green asked about officers in the schools. The Chief said that they had 3 and now have 2 and fill in time with another officer. They lost funding which reduced it to 2.

He said once he gets his positions count up he will reassign the third person. He feels the over time will decrease in the future budgets.

Mr. Gowing spoke about changes at the school, should Boxboro be asked to help fund this. The Town Manager will talk to the Supt. Frank feels Boxboro will become involved as we are a regional situation.

PLANNING/ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Mr. Bartl was out and Mr. Ledoux offered to relate any questions to Roland. GIS is under IT now. Mike asked about the request for a new position in planning and if this was not supported by the Hill. It was not a priority.

Margaret Busse spoke about Roland's request for staff and said that it seemed that we did not invest in long term planning and she personally believes the town needs to invest in planning. She feels it is a good investment and we need to be reactive in some of our planning issues. She felt having an EDC director in place in the next two years would make sense.

Mary Ann Ashton talked about cross training and wanted a quick update status on this, Right now we are busy digitizing documents and will move out personal and set up the way we like it and cross training will continue to take place.

WEST ACTON LIBRARY

They are requesting a small increase in substitute librarians as she needs to fill the spaces because volunteers have moved on and now needs the coverage when she is out. Everything else is level funded.

Mr. Sonner asked about the circulation and items they hold. 14,000 in circulation of books, cds, etc. has remained steady. They are starting to have Sunday hours and will use a gift account to pay for this. They are using the Windsor Ave fire station for book sales and it is working out very well. They have installed donation shelves and it is a very nice situation. They get a tiny bit of funding from State. She usually gets \$600-\$700 per year.

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TOWN MANAGER/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT/CELEBRATIONS/GREEN ADVISORY BOARD

They have a decrease due to a vacant position. Otherwise we are level funded. They over spent in 14 because we had an opportunity to participate in MMA/ Suffolk Public Administration course. Employees are allowed to take courses if chosen by MMA. We had 5 last year and now, we only have 2 attending and as the other communities have become aware of the program and are participating.

Salaries are down due to the vacancies and other issues.

Mr. Sonner asked about continuance of the MMA program. Steve said we could only have two positions this year.

Mary Ann asked about legal costs. She asked about sharing legal costs with the Water District. Steve will be following up once the Special Counsel is named for the Knox Trail case.

Doug Tindal felt that we need to EDC, Planning and Design Board work together. He felt we needed to have those functions not staffed by the Town Hall.

Mr. Ledoux suggested a Summit of the three boards EDC.

Pat Clifford asked about parking and funds allotted. Changes to the meters will come out of commuter parking fund and will resolve many issues at the lot.

INFORMATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Mark Hald discussed his budget. It is relatively the same as last two years and they have accomplished major upgrades to Munis and will be moving to the Cloud. The region is also getting rid of their servers. They will be working on updating. He continues to work with the Schools.

Mr. Gowing asked about long range plan for I-NET and what we are going to do to keep the buildings connected. Mark noted items such as wireless and public safety being connected to the Library. They are continuing to discuss spare or new infrastructure.

Mr. Gowing asked about cameras and having security cameras at the train station and COA building. Mark said that we have an article to put these in once the new parking lot is completed.

MUNICIPAL PROPERTIES GREEN ADVISORY

Dean Charter discussed his budget and spoke about utility bills and savings that have taken place. They are looking for opportunities to become more efficient. They have two projects and are requesting an arborist position. He needs crews to do tree work in bad weather and is important and they rely on contractors and Highway. Upgrade to HVAC system at town hall has out lived its life.

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Mr. Gowing asked about street light upgrades. Dean and Cory York have been looking into this.

Ms. Green asked about the undertaking of programs and Dean felt perhaps, they have picked the low hanging fruit already when it comes to energy efficiencies. They are still looking for opportunities.

Ms. Adachi asked about air conditioning at the School Street emergency building. He is hoping to put in new unit and that will be in the capital budget.

Bob Evans asked about the heating of the house at Morrison Farm.

Mary Ann Ashton said they have done a great job on utilities savings and sharing ideas with the school. She questioned Asa Parlin House and monies to maintain it. They hope to only spend \$500.00 of the total and they are in process of trying to demolish it. HDC has power over that area. HDC said they will not support demolition, offering to the public for purchase and taking it away. He doubts we will be able to get through the issues and doesn't see it until 2016.

NATURAL RESOURCES / CEMETERY and RECREATION CELEBRATIONS

Tom Tidman outlined the Natural Resources Budget and capital item they are proposing, including the Harris Street property. They discussed the goals of obtaining this property.

MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Marcia Rich discussed the library and the number of materials they possess. She spoke about the costs of service contracts. They have redesigned their web site. It gives them a good opportunity to showcase materials. She has issues with Minuteman and she has to guess the amount we will be assessed.

She was asked about cd's and downloadables. At this point 80% is now spent on data bases. They track the use of the computer terminals.

Mary Ann Ashton would like a break out of what has gone for books, periodicals, and non print materials over last five years. She noted that high school students are frequent users and that they use the library especially weekends. Could they be open more hours? Marcia noted the over time rate that needs to be paid and that no one wanted to work Sundays.

BUILDING

Frank Ramsbottom presented his budget and said there were no major changes.

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HEALTH/NURSING

Doug Halley updated the boards on hi budget items.

Doug spoke about the Transportation Line Items. They are looking for commitments to continue with the transportation vans. Heather York updated the Board on the Nursing Services capital and budgets. Septic Enterprise is level funded.

Sealer of Weights is required by State and is level funded.

Food Service line item purchase of vehicles

Hazardous Waste level Funded

Storm Water level funded

Sewer fund includes the operation to run the plant.

Heather York noted a slight increase in the Nursing Enterprise Fund. They supply home health elders in Acton who are at risk. They see a continuing trend in At Risk patients. They are trying to find where folks are in order to aid them.

FINANCE (ACCOUNTING TOWN CLERK/ELECTIONS, ASSESSORS, COLLECTOR AND FINANCE DIRECTOR)

Steve Barrat spoke about the budget and their support at town meeting.

Town Clerk had no changes in their budget. Town Meeting and Elections budget includes printing and copying for elections printing and copying.

Brian McMullen spoke about the assessor and finance budgets. The Assessor's budget is a slight increase due to re-classifications and steps. The assessor is responsible for assessing the properties in town.

Finance is working with the schools on regionalization. We refinanced the twin school and maintained our AAA designation. He noted that the OPEB was accepted.

He discussed APS Health Insurance for retirees and noted that those costs are now under our care. We will also carry all the debt and town's share of the sewers

Collector's – They collect the taxes and perform collection of the tax title and excise Tax as well as consulting.

Mr. Sonner wanted to know the break down on personnel. Brian offered to produce the spread sheet for next year.

Mr. Clough asked about new line item for APS Health insurances for the schools retirees. They are looking at these costs at ALG discussions and hope they transfer funds to us to make us whole.

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TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Doug Halley reported that transportation grants are drying up and that there are cash flow problems which they have been working on as a Tiger Team. In FY13, \$55,000 of the grants are going to Park and Ride, \$128,000 for Dial a Ride and rail shuttle.

Mr. Sonner asked about the service and Doug stated it is level funded.

FINANCE COMMITTEE OPEB TRUST FOR 2015 FOR RETIREE HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS

Steve Noone and Pat Clifford spoke about OPEB Trust

Christine Joyce

K. S. G. Z
Clerk

Date: 10 March 2014