

Auburn Finance Committee
Minutes of the Meeting - March 24, 2021
Remote Participation Only

Members Participating: Anne Cavanaugh, Kevin Kennedy, Ed Coleman and Michael Marshall
Not Participating: Trevor Sansoucy
Present: Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Ed Kazanovicz

The Open Meeting of the Town of Auburn Finance Committee was being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020, due to the current State of Emergency in the Commonwealth due to the outbreak of the "COVID-19 Virus. The meeting was being recorded by Auburn Cable Television.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by the Chair Anne Cavanaugh.

The following Finance Committee members were participating remotely and could hear the Chair:

- Ed Coleman - Here
- Kevin Kennedy - Here
- Michael Marshall - Here
- Trevor Sansoucy - Not participating

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Town officials/employees -

- CFO /Asst. Town Manager Ed Kazanovicz
- Adm. Assistant Sharon Kwiatkowski

Each vote to be taken in the meeting will be conducted by roll call vote.

Ms. Cavanaugh gave an overview of the meeting agenda.

The Finance Committee considered the following transfer requests:

Department of Development and Inspectional Services #01292 Animal Control Unit
Director Darlene Coyle was participating remotely and explained the transfers.

\$400.00 from Acct. #012411-511102 Clerical-Shared to Acct. #012922-5430 Kennel Maintenance, for emergency repairs at the kennel - HVAC and plumbing.

\$1,000.00 from Acct. #012922-5338 Vaccinations to Acct. #012922-5430 Kennel Maintenance, for emergency repairs at the kennel - HVAC and plumbing.

The Finance Committee voted to approve both transfers (Motion made by Mr. Kennedy; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) roll call vote: Mr. Kennedy, Yes; Mr. Coleman, Yes; Mr. Marshall, Yes; Ms. Cavanaugh, Yes - passed 4 to 0.

Mr. Marshall asked Darlene Coyle if she expected additional costs for vaccinations.

Ms. Coyle replied that the accounts should be all right for the rest of the fiscal year.

Mr. Kennedy asked why there were funds left in the Vaccinations Account. She said that the account pays for staff vaccinations because of animal control work.

Emergency Management Director Eric Otterson was then participating to discuss the budget for the Emergency Management Department for FY2022. He gave an overview of the budget requests. Mr. Otterson explained that the increase in the Generator Maintenance Account was in case generators were needed during emergency disasters.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Director for an overview of the role of the Emergency Management Department.

Director Otterson explained that he works closely with the Deputy Director and department heads and MEMA. He said that most recently they were very active during COVID as liaison with MEMA in getting infrastructure that they need in place in terms of PPE and safety equipment coordinating through the National Guard and delivery of that. In addition, the department operates the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of a total budget appropriation of \$17,500.00 for #01291 Emergency Management, as recommended by the Town Manager for FY2022 (Motion made by Mr. Kennedy; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) roll call vote: Mr. Kennedy, Yes; Mr. Coleman, Yes; Mr. Marshall, Yes; Ms. Cavanaugh, Yes - passed 4 to 0.

Fire Chief Stephen Coleman presented the FY2022 Budget requested for the Fire/Rescue Department.

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His presentation discussed:

- Budget Breakdown
- Force Deployment
- Line Item Review
- CIP

Chief Coleman stated that the recommended budget, \$3,668,045.00, was made up of \$1,075,000.00 or 23% from the ambulance appropriations account as a direct offset to the budget and the balance of \$2,593,045.00 came from the tax levy.

Chief Coleman reviewed the history of ambulance revenues from FY18 to FY21 to date. The Chief said that he anticipates a reduction in receipts due to Covid-19. He said that there were less ambulance calls. He said that not only could people not leave the house and there was nowhere to go, they were also afraid to go to the emergency room. Also there were less motor vehicle accidents because of the lockdowns in March, April and May. He estimates a reduction in about \$200,000.00 to \$300,000.00 in FY21 receipts.

The Fire/Rescue Department consists of 41 full time members, including the (1) Fire Chief, (1) Deputy Fire Chief, (1) Administrative Assistant, (2) Fire Prevention Officers and (36) Full Time Firefighter/Paramedics and EMT's.

Chief Coleman discussed minimum shift staffing levels that this fiscal year have increased from 6 to 7. He said that he was continuing to advocate for a further change from 7 to 8.

The Fire Chief reviewed and discussed force deployment numbers for the four working groups of nine members operating from the two fire stations.

Chief Coleman discussed the impact of the Blaker Street 40B housing project on the Fire/Rescue Department. He said that when Blaker Street is at full occupancy he will need to request an additional 4 firefighters to address the additional call volume and to consistently staff the West Street engines.

Fire Chief Coleman advised that his FY22 budget was essentially a level services budget with 5.8% on the tax levy and 5.1 or 5.2% of that was for contractual obligations.

Chief Coleman discussed the new position of Community Paramedic/EMS Education. He said that this was a critical new position to be ultimately funded through the state's Certified Public Expenditure Program (CPE) for Medicare patient transports. This year the position would be funded through ambulance receipts. The Chief advised that Medicare recognizes the deficits created because Medicare pays a flat fee of \$400.00 per transport no matter how many medical supplies or equipment is involved in the patient's care. Chief Coleman said that the application process would open in October, the Town would file the application, with approved funds being available in June in time to apply to fund the position next fiscal year. So the funds would go from ambulance receipts to the CPE Program. The estimated return next year would be \$90,000.00.

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Fire Chief Coleman explained the role of the position to provide continuing education training for 40 members of the department for the required 40 hours for EMT's bi-annually and 84 hours for Paramedics bi-annually, which training hours have to be proved. He said that by comparison, nurses training requirement is 15 hours of continuing education every 2 years and those training hours don't have to be proved to a recognized body. The position would assume duties of the Town's Public Health Nurse and provide for better cooperation internally with the Public Health Division and Fire/Rescue Department and brings the public health nurse services available to the town on a full time basis, also providing home visit follow-up for seniors upon referral

Mr. Kennedy asked about the percentage of ambulance receipt collections. Chief Steve Coleman said that they had tracked ambulance patients with insurance and without insurance and historically the percentages were: 93-96% (average 94%) collections with insurance and 81-86% (average 83-84%) without insurance for FY18, FY19 and FY20.

Mr. Kennedy asked if the 4 positions to be requested because of the Blaker Street development would be requested in one fiscal year or spread out.

Chief Coleman replied that he would be requesting the 4 positions all in one fiscal year. When the building is fully occupied he expects an additional 100 calls to the Fire Department. He repeated his advocacy for an increase in the minimum shift staffing

levels from 7 to 8 and he said that he didn't want to wait the same ten years for that to happen. Also the Fire Chief said that he didn't feel that it would be a financial hardship because, at full occupancy, there would be an estimated 1.2 to 1.3 million dollar infusion into the tax levy that would provide an offset to the \$250,000.00 - \$300,000.00 for the four new positions.

Mr. Kennedy asked about money for inspections for the project and when they could be expected. Fire Chief Coleman replied that the project is about to break ground this year and he said that 40B projects were usually fully occupied in about 3 years. He said that the department will not see revenue funds from fire inspections because they are required by the state and the Fire Department can't charge again for something required by state law on an annual basis and so they wouldn't invoice them. The Fire Chief said that there might be inspections through the Department of Development and Inspectional Services for building permits, etc. that would generate some funds.

Mr. Kennedy asked about the CPE funded position and in what line item it would be. Chief Coleman responded that it was unknown at this point and that he was going to advertise the position internally first and if someone internally applied then it would stay within the bargaining unit as a Firefighter position in that line item. If hired from outside the position would be non-union and most likely not a firefighter and would be a Community Paramedic/EMS Education position. For this fiscal year the salary was included in the Firefighter line item.

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The Chief said that he would expect less calls than at Blaker Street; he estimated an added 30 calls per project or 60 calls total. He said that surveys of like buildings comparable to Auburn and otherwise throughout the state have confirmed those numbers.

Mr. Marshall asked if additional staff would be needed. The Chief responded that he did not expect in staff numbers at this point, but that takes into consideration going to the increased minimum staffing level of 8 per shift in the next 2 to 3 years.

Mr. Marshall asked about the costs associated with Mutual Aid Agreements. Chief Coleman answered that each member town pays for their own department. It usually evens out relative to the number of calls responded to in support of member communities.

Mr. Coleman had no questions, but he thanked the Chief for his comprehensive presentation.

Ms. Cavanaugh asked about the status of Engine 1. Chief Coleman said that Engine 3, which is the primary engine out of West Street Station, went to Florida for repairs and

Engine 1, usually the second vehicle out, and now the 1st vehicle sent out. Engine 3 should be back in June.

Chair Anne Cavanaugh asked if we were still participating in the Safer Grant Program.

Deputy Fire Chief Glenn Johnson said that we are in year 1 of the grant program now and going into year 2.

Anne Cavanaugh asked about the number of ambulance vehicles. Deputy Chief Johnson advised that we own 3 ambulances with one new one ordered and coming soon. There were 2 ambulances on the road at all times at the Paramedic level. The department will be holding onto 4 vehicles pending receipt of the new ambulance that they are hoping to get in June, so there will be two vehicles in spare status.

CFO Ed Kazanovicz informed the Finance Committee that there was a solid balance in Ambulance Receipts Account of 3.6 million and, even though revenue is down, we are purchasing the new ambulance outright and not entering into a lease situation.

Mr. Kennedy asked about mutual aid and staffing outside of Worcester and how many member towns had full time Firefighters.

Chief Coleman answered that Oxford was a combination of 4 full time firefighters and call officers, Millbury was on-call and Leicester has 1 full time ambulance staffed at the paramedic level every day, but all otherwise are on call firefighters.

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Mr. Marshall asked about the expectation for extra maintenance or the need to replace vehicles at the West Street Station because of the additional calls for the Blaker Street housing development.

Chief Coleman replied negatively and he explained that, because the department has better ongoing maintenance plans and a good rotation of vehicles by replacement of vehicles annually through the capital improvement program, there will be no need for the quick addition of vehicles.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of a total budget appropriation of \$3,668,045.00 for #01220 Fire/Rescue Department for FY2022, as presented in the recommendation of the Town Manager (Motion made by Mr. Kennedy; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) roll call vote: Mr. Kennedy, Yes; Mr. Coleman, Yes; Mr. Marshall, Yes; Ms. Cavanaugh, Yes - passed 4 to 0.

The Finance Committee reviewed the Fire/Rescue CIP and the Chief advised that the only new CIP item in FY2022 was \$55,000.00 for the department to replace Base Radio infrastructure at repeater sites. The item will be a 5 year lease at \$55,000.00 for a total of \$275,000.00.

The Chair thanked Chief Coleman and Deputy Chief Johnson for their meeting and budget presentation.

Director of Public Works Bill Coyle and Asst. DPW Director/Sewer Superintendent Joanna Paquin were then participating to present the DPW FY2022 Budget. Highway, Parks/Recreation and Cemetery Superintendent Kenneth Fairbanks was also participating.

Director Bill Coyle highlighted the following divisions. He said that throughout the DPW Budget there were provisions for salary adjustments per contractual agreements. The total percentage of increase for the Department of Public Works was 1.62% for FY2022.

Engineering Division - Town Manager recommended appropriation \$596,901.00. The Roadway Reconstruction Account was reduced at last year's fall town meeting to \$435,000.00 due to COVID. Mr. Coyle said that he hopes to get some of the funding back into the account.

Stormwater Unit - Town Manager recommended appropriation \$382,459.00. Mr. Coyle discussed the engineering staff additions for stormwater. He said that the unit had been short-staffed after the retirement last year of the Asst. DPW Director/Sewer Superintendent Jeffrey Mitchell and Civil Engineer Joanna Paquin's subsequent promotion to that position.

Highway Division - Town Manager recommended appropriation \$1,416,695.00. Mr. Coyle gave a status report of the snow and ice accounts. If there are no more storms this season than the division will finish in the black for snow and ice.

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Facility Management Unit - Town Manager recommended appropriation \$84,365.00. There were no significant changes. The Part Time Custodian salary account was increased by \$4,500.00 to be commensurate with custodian salaries at the School Department and other towns.

Fleet Maintenance Unit - Town Manager recommended appropriation \$204,971.00. This has been increased because of the greater number of motor vehicle repairs.

Parks Division Town Manager recommended appropriation \$287,931.00. Mr. Coyle advised that the Parks Division was essentially level-funded except for contractual obligations.

Pakachoag Golf Course - Town Manager recommended appropriation \$369,424.00. The DPW Director stated that the golf course had a very busy year primarily because of COVID and the fact that many things were not open and the course offered an outside activity. He said that the golf course took in \$450,000.00 last season. The final payment has been made on all the maintenance equipment that was bought at the start of the municipal golf course operations. Mr. Coyle said that they are looking to replace all the golf carts with new ones. Many of them are old and are beginning to break down.

Recreation - Town Manager recommended appropriation \$51,392.00.

Mr. Coyle advised that Recreation was essentially level-funded except for the salary of the Recreation Director.

Cemetery - Town Manager recommended appropriation \$192,153.00.
This is a level services budget.

Sewer Division - Town Manager recommended appropriation \$2,286,120.00.
The DPW Director advised that the Highway, Parks/Recreation and Cemetery Superintendent Ken Fairbanks will serve as the Operations Manager as reflected in the new line item in the Sewer Division budget. Mr. Coyle said that Mr. Fairbanks would be handling the day to day operations of the division and that this will make the day to day management of the Sewer Division consistent with the other DPW divisions.

Mr. Coyle advised that the Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District (UBWPAD) was able to come in with a minimal increase of less than 1%, (.09%) He said that there was no increase this year in sewer rates.

Mr. Kennedy asked if Fleet Maintenance charged the town departments for their vehicle repairs. Mr. Kazanovicz replied that the departments are not charged, but the administration tracks costs incurred by department. He discussed the savings to the town for all departmental vehicles to be serviced by one unit in terms of tracking costs and coordination of purchases in bulk. Bill Coyle advised that Fleet Maintenance works mostly on DPW vehicles and then Fire/Rescue vehicles.

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Mr. Kennedy discussed the decisions that are made internally regarding the life expectancy of vehicles with respect to retention or removal. Ed Kazanovicz advised that for capital planning purposes the administration puts a life expectancy on town vehicles and he explained the vehicle needs assessment process.

Mr. Kennedy asked about the possibility of events this year for Memorial Day and Independence Day celebrations. Mr. Kazanovicz replied that it was not likely, but when the budgets were being prepared in January, the administration was hopeful that we could have some of these events.

Ms. Cavanaugh asked about Chapter 90 funds in 2021 those expected in 2022.

Mr. Coyle advised that Chapter 90 funding has been holding steady at about \$610,000.00 per year in the last few years.

Anne Cavanaugh asked if Roadway Improvement in the CIP was used the same way as Roadway Reconstruction in the operating budget. Mr. Coyle answered that some Road Improvement money was used by the DPW mainly for road patches and berms and minor repairs and maintenance. The CIP line item was for major roadway work and large projects,

Ms. Cavanaugh asked about the annual list of roadway work.

Mr. Coyle replied that the annual list has not been completed; he is still working on it.

Mr. Coyle discussed the status of the Brotherton Way reconstruction project that is being done with bike and pedestrian accommodation and a median with turning lane. The work is being done because of \$80,000.00 grant funding from a State Shared Streets Grant Program and funds would be expended by the end of May.

Mr. Coyle then gave an update on the Auburn Street reconstruction project.

Ms. Cavanaugh asked about the work to install the Pinrock Road redundant line. Mr. Coyle gave an update and he said that there were some land takings involved, which were necessary because some of the abutters were not willing to grant easements and so they had to go the route of eminent domain. The Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District Board of Directors had the ability to authorize the land takings. He described the process to bid the project to place the redundant line because of the aging current line. The work will be started in late spring/early summer and continue into the fall.

There were no other questions with respect to the CIP budget.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of a total budget appropriation of \$5,872,411.00 for the Department of Public Works, as presented in the recommendation of the Town Manager for FY2022 (Motion made by Mr. Kennedy; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) roll call vote: Mr. Kennedy, Yes; Mr. Coleman, Yes; Mr. Marshall, Yes; Ms. Cavanaugh, Yes - passed 4 to 0.

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The Finance Committee considered the following transfer requests.

Department of Public Works #01427 Fleet Maintenance:

\$10,000.00 from Acct. #014211-511103 Wages Fulltime to Acct. #014272-5241 Fleet Maintenance Motor Vehicle Repairs.

Mr. Coyle explained that, due to numerous repairs, the Fleet Maintenance repair account required additional funds.

The Finance Committee voted to approve the transfer (Motion made by Mr. Kennedy; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) roll call vote: Mr. Kennedy, Yes; Mr. Coleman, Yes; Mr. Marshall, Yes; Ms. Cavanaugh, Yes - passed 4 to 0.

Department of Public Works #601 Sewer Division:

\$1,368.38 from Acct. #601-5782 Contingency to Acct. #601-5650 UBWPAD. The original budgeted amount did not include charges for Auburn connections to the Worcester sewer system. The Finance Committee voted to approve the transfer (Motion made by Mr. Kennedy; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) roll call vote: Mr. Kennedy, Yes; Mr. Coleman, Yes; Mr. Marshall, Yes; Ms. Cavanaugh, Yes - passed 4 to 0.

\$1,500.00 from Acct. #601-5782 Contingency to Acct. #601-5213 Heating Fuel, to cover Eversource bills through 6/30/21, which have been higher than expected. The Finance Committee voted to approve the transfer (Motion made by Mr. Kennedy; motion

seconded by Mr. Coleman) roll call vote: Mr. Kennedy, Yes; Mr. Coleman, Yes; Mr. Marshall, Yes; Ms. Cavanaugh, Yes - passed 4 to 0.

The Chair thanked Director Bill Coyle, Asst. Director Joanna Paquin and Superintendent Kenneth Fairbanks for presenting the FY2022 Budget for the Department of Public Works.

The Finance Committee voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 P.M. (Motion made by Mr. Kennedy; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) roll call vote: Mr. Kennedy, Yes; Mr. Coleman, Yes; Mr. Marshall, Yes; Ms. Cavanaugh, Yes - passed 4 to 0.

Submitted: Sharon A. Kwiatkowski
Adm. Assistant to the Town Manager

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The following documents were part of the Finance Committee's Meeting of March 24, 2021 and are retained in the Executive Office of the Town Manager:

- March 24, 2021 Agenda
- FY2022 Department Budget Requests (Including Capital Improvements) - Emergency Management, Fire/Rescue Department, Department of Public Works (Engineering and Stormwater, Highway Division and Facility Management and Fleet Maintenance Units, Parks, Recreation, Pakachoag Golf Course, Cemetery and Sewer Division)
- Transfer Requests - Department of Development and Inspectional Services Animal Control, Department of Public Works Fleet Maintenance Unit and Sewer Division