

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes
Zoom Meeting #879 0533 2856

2024 JAN 30 AM 7:57
MILBURY, MASS.
Time: 6:30 p.m.

Date: December 4, 2023

Present: Kuphal, Wells, Pratt, Cooper, O'Connell, O'Connor

Absent: Cooney

Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Motioned by Cooper, seconded by Wells to accept the minutes of November 14, 2023 as written. Cooper, yes; Wells, yes; Kuphal, yes; O'Connor, yes; Pratt, yes; O'Connell, yes

Jennifer Barrett, Finance Director and Karyn Clark, Acting Town Manager were present at the meeting.

Jen O'Connell: I wanted to get together to look at the calendar for the FY25 budget. I would like to get BVT in early this year. There was a meeting between Town Managers, School Committees and BVT's town representatives. I was supposed to go, but was unable to. BVT wants to start their own Reserve Fund to pay for projects without going back to the Towns and asking for more money. I am not in favor of this because each Town would put so much money into the account and they would be able to spend it as they wish. How far along with the budget process are we at?

Jennifer Barrett: We have budget meetings tomorrow and throughout the next couple of weeks.

Jennifer Barrett shared her calendar with the Committee.

Jen O'Connell: We will be getting the budget on December 27, 2023?

Jennifer Barrett: That is the plan. You have always done a Saturday meeting with the department heads. We were thinking that instead of a Saturday, you could meet with 1-2 departments on the evenings that you meet. You can get more of your questions answered this way.

Jen O'Connell: We could maybe meet with the Fire Department at one of their meetings. My concern right now is that we are also in the process of hiring a new Town Manager. I feel that we shouldn't start our hearings until January 22nd, which is after the process by the Town Manager Screening Committee is complete. I wouldn't want the

Acting Town Manager to have too much exposure to the budget process, and give her the advantage, if she is planning on applying for the position. We can start meeting on January 22, 2024 and have our Public Hearing on March 4, 2024.

Jennifer Barrett: The Warrant will close on March 12, 2024. It goes to the printer on April 3, 2024.

Jen O'Connell: Why is it going to the printer so early? I can remember working on the recommendations during April vacation.

Jennifer Barrett: We mail the budget out to all of the residents. This is why it goes to the printer so early.

Jen O'Connell: How many copies are printed out?

Jennifer Barrett: They print out 6000 copies. They are put in every mailbox in Millbury.

Jen O'Connell: What does it cost to send them out?

Jennifer Barrett: The cost to mail them out is between \$1,200 and \$1,400.

Jen O'Connell: What was the reason for mailing them out?

Jennifer Barrett: We were hoping to get people more involved.

Judy O'Connor: At the conference, this subject was brought up and the feeling of the people was that they shouldn't be mailed out. A postcard with the website would suffice. I do not feel that we should be sending them out.

Jen O'Connell: I think it is a waste of money.

Charles Cooper: I think, with technology, we would be able to email people with this.

Russell Wells: I think we should still mail them out.

Kevin Kuphal: I think people can get something out of it. We have to keep trying to get the info out to the people.

Russell Wells: I would like to be able to say that we tried.

Russell Wells: What is the target date to have a Town Manager in place?

Charles Cooper: The Screening Committee has to give the Board of Selectmen 3-5 candidates by January 24, 2024, then they have 30 days to decide.

Jen O'Connell: If they do not decide in the 30 days or they do not want any of those candidates, then the Screening Committee starts the process all over.

Jen O'Connell: Are we missing any department heads this year?

Jennifer Barrett: We are currently fully staffed. We have no salary agreements from the 3 that are in collective bargaining right now.

Jen O'Connell: Which unions are you in negotiations with?

Jennifer Barrett: The Clerks, Dispatchers and the DPW. The School Department is already settled, as well as the Police Department.

Jen O'Connell: When do you anticipate them being completed?

Jennifer Barrett: Hopefully by June 30th.

Jen O'Connell: Do we have any departments that we can align with other towns?

Karyn Clark: We regionalize our Public Health Nurse and our Animal Control Officer.

Jennifer Barrett: We also regionalize our Veterans Services.

Jen O'Connell: Do we try to quantify the amount of traffic into the Town Hall?

Karyn Clark: I questioned Sean about this when I first came. There is some data, but not for every department.

Jen O'Connell: Do we see more people using Tuesday evenings to do their business in Town Hall?

Karyn Clark: I would have to do some research, but I don't know if there is additional movement on Tuesday nights.

Jennifer Barrett: We have always been open on Tuesday nights with certain departments. The only change is that all departments are open at that time now. If there is a meeting on Tuesday night, people will come earlier if they have business that needs to be done at Town Hall.

Jen O'Connell: I have always felt that we have too much staff. We have asked for as many metrics as we can get. We were not in favor of an extra person at the DPW. We wanted to see the metrics first. We are looking for metrics from the Treasurer/Collector and Town Clerk, to start. This is going to be a belt-tightening year. We should dedicate one of our meetings discussing revenues in each department.

Jennifer Barrett: The department heads have been working on their revenues.

Jen O'Connell: We aren't using any more ARPA money?

Jennifer Barrett: This has all been earmarked.

Jen O'Connell: The School Department has some big numbers that they have no control over. Special Ed and Out of District placement continue to skyrocket. Kate Ryan does a great job making sure that our students get what they need. She treats the "checkbook" as if it were her own.

Charles Cooper: Kate is no longer there.

Jen O'Connell: I think we can still have a Saturday meeting to meet with the DPW and Sewer Departments which is a large portion of the budget. Why don't we plan on March 16th to meet with them.

Jennifer Barrett: If you want me to start getting department heads in to meet, I can do that.

Jen O'Connell: I will email Chet Hanratty to see when he can get in for a meeting.

Jen O'Connell: The other reason we are meeting tonight is to talk about the Finance Committee Conference that some of you went to.

Judy O'Connor: I was very happy to go. I learned that members of the Finance Committee should ask more questions and that it is important to visit some of the departments.

William Pratt: I thought the framework was good and think we could apply this in what we do and have it spill over to the Capital Planning. We should have an understanding

on what capital inventory we have and when they are scheduled to be replaced. I think that any department should be able to identify the transactional duties and how long each transaction takes.

Charles: They also talked about a distinguished budget award. The budget can be submitted and they give you feedback on it. I would also like to see a capital inventory. They spoke about fleet electrification. It would be great if Millbury had a plan.

Russell Wells: What happened to the Capital Committee? Sean had mentioned doing this in the next fiscal year.

Jennifer Barrett: There is a Capital Committee, of which I am on. We have not met.

Russell Wells: In other towns, they have been the ones that the departments go to with their requests.

Jennifer Barrett: We were going to do that this past fall, but we ended up shorthanded. We are still planning on doing this. I still have all the information from the departments. I will check with Jayne to see who else is on the Committee.

Russell Wells: Who was the guest speaker at the Conference?

Charles Cooper: I do not recall the name, but he was a past Town Manager in another town.

Motioned by Cooper, seconded by Wells to adjourn at 7:45 p.m. Wells, yes; Kuphal, yes; Cooper, yes; Pratt, yes; O'Connor, yes; O'Connell, yes

Jeff Donald
Guest Cap. D.

Russell Wells
Judith O'Connor
Mark M.