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FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes
Zoom Meeting 840 3896 9229

Date: January 17, 2023

Time: 6:30 p.m.

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

Absent: Cooney

Meeting called to order at 6:37 p.m.

Judy O'Connor attended the meeting.

Jennifer Barrett, Finance Director, was present at the meeting.

Motioned by Kuphal, seconded by Wells to accept the minutes of December 5, 2022 as written.

Cooper, yes; Wells, yes; Pratt, yes; Kuphal, yes; O'Connell, yes

Motioned by Wells, seconded by Pratt to accept the minutes of January 14, 2023 as written.

Cooper, yes; Wells, yes; Pratt, yes; Kuphal, yes; O'Connell, yes

Laurie Keefe, Director of the Senior Center, was in to discuss her budget at 6:38 p.m.

Jen O'Connell: How long have you been in this position?

Laurie Keefe: I have been here since mid July.

Jen O'Connell: What did you do before this?

Laurie Keefe: I was in Blackstone for 9 years as the Senior Center Director. I then worked for the Public Health Collaborative because of COVID, but I wanted to get back to the Senior Center.

Jen O'Connell: How many people do you have working there?

Laurie Keefe: Myself and another full timer and 3 part time people.

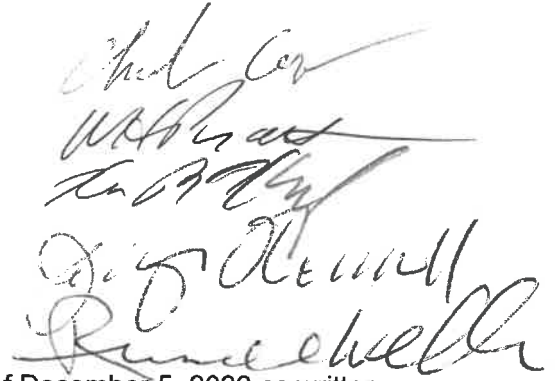
Jen O'Connell: Do you have enough staff?

Laurie Keefe: Right now I think we are good. I would, of course, like a full time outreach person. Right now that person is working part time. The job is getting done, but I feel we could reach out to more people with a full time person.

Jen O'Connell: We have learned that it is good to have a succession plan in place in case something happens and someone cannot be there to do the job. This has not happened in the past and I just feel that it is important to implement this. We will continue to advocate for this. What about the building? Are you seeing any issues?

Laurie Keefe: The Program Administrator is working on a maintenance schedule to make sure everything is in working order, the way it should be. We recently discovered a leak in the roof. We started to have issues. It is patched at this time. It is on the part of the roof that is flat.

Jennifer Barrett: This has been on the list of improvements that we have put together.



Laurie Keefe: The tables and chairs that we have are very old and heavy. The carpeting needs to be replaced.

Russell Wells: What about the vehicles?

Laurie Keefe: Those are through the "Friends".

Russell Wells: What about the parking lot?

Laurie Keefe: It is okay right now.

Jennifer Barrett: When we start with our Capital Plan, we will get Laurie's list and put it together with the other departments.

Russell Wells: Is there a minimum for capital projects?

Jennifer Barrett: The minimum is \$10,000.

Jen O'Connell: The Program Administrator was increased to Market Rate. Is that person at that right now?

Jennifer Barrett: Yes. We made the change within the budget at that time. The increase in this budget looks larger than it really is because of this.

Jen O'Connell: How many hours does the custodian work?

Laurie Keefe: I am not sure on the total hours. He does come in around noon and leaves around 3. He is not on my payroll.

Jennifer Barrett: Most raises in the 2024 budget are at 2-2 ½ %. Some people we have bumped up to Market Rate.

Jen O'Connell: We have been rectifying a lot of the salaries to reflect the Market Rate. A lot of our salaried employees were way below Market Rate.

Jennifer Barrett: Current rates have been put in, more or less, at Market Rate. As of July 1, 2023, we have put in 2%.

Sean Hendricks joined the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Russell Wells: Can you explain the "Utility" line?

Jennifer Barrett: This is part of our agreement with Mass Solar. This reduces the National Grid bill. We have 12 accounts that have solar. The Senior Center has so many credits that I may transfer some of the credits to another account.

Jen O'Connell: I see that the trash went down?

Jennifer Barrett: I think it is just a decrease overall in that line, not just the trash.

Jen O'Connell: Are the "Friends" still handling the gas on the vans?

Jennifer Barrett: Yes, they are.

William Pratt: What is "Programming" under professional development?

Laurie Keefe: Those are specialty programs like concerts, holiday events etc for the Seniors.

Russell: What is Commercial Cleaning?

Jennifer Barrett: The rugs needed to be professionally cleaned. The building was power washed. Painting needs to be done. The floors need to be fixed. We are starting with the health room.

Russell Wells: How many seniors do you service?

Laurie Keefe: We had a new Database (My Senior Center) installed in July. Everyone has a key card. Every time someone comes to an event, they are supposed to swipe their key card. Not everyone does this. My data collected between October 1 through today shows 3,308 duplicates

and 353 un-duplicate swipes. Most of the people that come to the Sr Center are repeats. I hope to have solid numbers for you next year, when I can have a full year under me.

Jen O'Connell: Do you do the food bank?

Laurie Keefe: Yes. We just partnered with the Mill Church. We will start on the 1st of February.

Jen O'Connell: How many meals do you prepare?

Laurie Keefe: We deliver 85 meals daily.

Jen O'Connell: What is your most popular meal?

Laurie Keefe: Hot dogs and beans with cole slaw.

Russell Wells: What is "Transportation Supplement"?

Jennifer Barrett: This is through the "Friends".

Jen O'Connell: Do you have any grant writing experience?

Laurie Keefe: Yes, I do.

Laurie Keefe concluded her meeting with the Committee at 7:20 p.m.

Jennifer Barrett went through some of the Town budgets

Assessors

Jennifer Barrett: The only change is in the salary. Our Principal Assessor left us to work for another municipality. The search is open. We have taken resumes. Lee was at Market Rate. We could be looking at an amount close to \$94,000 to fill this position.

Russell Wells: Do you have a contract with this position?

Jennifer Barrett: Sean does not have contracts with employees that are "at will". He prefers to keep everyone on a level playing ground.

Russell Wells: Do you have a company come in every three years to help with the valuations?

Jennifer Barrett: It is every 5 years. You have to inspect every property every 10 years.

Jen O'Connell: What happens if a homeowner does not let you in the house?

Jennifer Barrett: They do their best to value it from the outside. It is in the best interest of the homeowner to let them in. Re-valuation is coming up in 2 years.

Jen O'Connell: Who is doing the assessing now?

Jennifer Barrett: The Board of Assessors is helping with this.

Treasurer/Collector

Jennifer Barrett: There has been some rearranging in this department. There have been some retirements and some transfers from other departments.

Jen O'Connell: I found out last year that even when someone pays on line, we still have to have someone to input those payments. I have asked before how many people pay on- line. I do not feel that the department has been any more efficient as it was 10 years ago. I would like to see some statistics on what they are doing. We haven't seen any reduction in staff, with all of the technology. Denise has always had the data that we have asked for.

Jennifer Barrett: The staff is more efficient. They have had a lot of training to help with other jobs in the office, so that they are ready to cover if someone is out. We have been able to shift some

of the workload to the correct offices. The change in professional services is due to the increase in bills and increase in postage and parcels.

Jen O'Connell: We will come back to this budget. I would like some more data.

Jennifer Barrett: Just give me a list of what you need.

Legal Services

Jennifer Barrett: We were able to decrease this budget. We are now paying by the hour. We are no longer paying a \$5,000 a month retainer. We are very conservative with this dollar amount.

Russell Wells: Do we have many lawsuits pending?

Jennifer Barrett: We have a few small ones, but nothing financial.

HR Department

Jen O'Connell: What is "Wellness Committee Expenses"?

Jennifer Barrett: We have been working on employee wellness. We might have speakers come in to address certain stress issues. Today was working on strategies to combat stress. We are working on different events to help with employee wellness.

Jen O'Connell: I am surprised that health insurance doesn't pay for this.

Jennifer Barrett: Some things they do pay for.

Technology

Charles Cooper: The challenge with technology is that the cost continues to increase.

Jennifer Barrett: Under utilities, the phone bill is for all Town facilities. WIFI is for all Town facilities.

Russell Wells: Who do we use for WIFI?

Jennifer Barrett: We use Verizon and Charter. Under Supplies we are paying for broken laptops, printer replacement, cable replacements etc.

Jen O'Connell: This seems like a large dollar amount.

Charles Cooper: It really isn't a large amount.

Jen O'Connell: Why do we not use PC's?

Jennifer Barrett: It is for connectivity reasons.

William Pratt: Are the employees allowed to take the laptops home?

Jennifer Barrett: Yes, we are. I take my laptop home every night. You never know what might come up that would prevent us from coming in the next day.

Jen O'Connell: What is the inclement weather policy in Town?

Jennifer Barrett: The hourly employees are not paid if they do not come in. Some of us have the capability of doing a full day's work from home.

Charles Cooper: How come the cell phones are not on the group plan?

Jennifer Barrett: They are all on the government rate. They could be all together. They are separated by group right now. Our contracted professional services is through Worldban. The software contracts are for all of the departments. I did pull out \$4,200 out of it and put it in the Planning Department, because it wasn't for IT.

Jen O'Connell: We will stop here for tonight. We have Ann coming from the Library tomorrow and we can work on some of the other budgets.

Charles Cooper: I have a prior commitment at 7:15 p.m.

Jen O'Connell: Then, we will just meet with the Library and end our meeting early.

Jennifer Barrett: I would like to ask if you can shift your meeting next week from Monday to Wednesday. Sean will not be available on Monday and Monday will be Keith's first day back.

Jen O'Connell: As long as no one has a problem moving the meeting from Monday to Wednesday.

Kevin Kuphal: I am away next week. I may be able to zoom in.

Jen O'Connell: We will move next week's meeting to Wednesday. Tomorrow night we will be completely on zoom, since the meeting will only be for 45 minutes.

Motioned by Wells, seconded by Pratt to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. Cooper, yes; Kuphal, yes; Wells, yes; Pratt, yes; O'Connell, yes