

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES
Monday, March 26, 2018
Groveland Town Hall
183 Main St, Groveland, MA 01834

Present: Chairman Mike Wood, Selectmen Bill Dunn and Bill O'Neil

Members Absent: Vice-Chair Carpenter and Selectman Ed Watson

Also Present: Finance Director, Denise Dembkoski and three members of the Finance Board, Chair Kathy Kastrinelis, and members Joe D'Amore and Theresa Dunn

Chairman Wood called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

The boards conducted a workshop of the Omnibus going department by department. Ms. Kastrinelis explained that the Finance Board has voted on all but the fire department budget.

Ms. Dembkoski explained why the Accountant's salary was requested lower than the FY18 budget. She explained that the new accountant, who came on board July 1st, 2017 works only 30 hours as opposed to the 37 hour prior accountant.

The town counsel budget was discussed and Ms. Dembkoski said for the current year, we are trending well for town counsel services.

The technology line was increased to account for the added costs to host our financial data in the cloud.

Ms. Kastrinelis explained that the Town Clerk's budget recommendation from the Finance Board is higher than requested because the Town Clerk did not budget for the correct number of elections, there will be four elections, so the poll workers line and election expense line were increased to account for it. Ms. Kastrinelis also explained that several departments were looking for part-time help, the Town Clerk's office being one of them. At this point, the finance board is not comfortable recommending a full-time floater until all the logistics and scheduling could be worked out, so that everyone would be on the same page. As a result, they did not recommend the part-time wages in this budget.

The Town Planner position was discussed. Ms. Dembkoski informed the board that, after speaking with Mike Dempsey, funds from the CPA account could be used towards salaries if they are working on CPA-type projects (Open Space, Affordable Housing, etc.) Therefore, Ms. Dembkoski recommended we fund the Planner with \$45,000 from the general fund and \$20,000 from the CPA account to hire a full-time planner at \$65,000 and add a CPA component to the job description. Although no vote was taken, it was the consensus of all present to support that approach.

Ms. Kastrinelis informed the board that the Finance Board supports and recommends hiring a full-time facilities/custodian. We need someone who can clean and perform basic plumbing and

electrical work to save costs on prevailing wage. Selectman Dunn asked about this person handling other facilities things around town, like the gazebo in Elm Park or at the Pines. Ms. Dembkoski said if time allows, it could cover other areas, but maintenance of the five facilities and grounds will take up most of the week. Ms. Kastrinelis also informed the board that there is a new line item under Municipal Buildings for Public Relations. This would consolidate the fees paid to John Gilfoyle for public relations and expand his services to the rest of the town departments. Ms. Dembkoski informed the board that the Repairs & Maintenance line was recommended to increase even more than originally requested because our current spending on repairs and maintenance to the buildings is very high; there have been a lot of repairs needed.

Ms. Dembkoski explained that the Property & Casualty line that the Finance Board recommends has also been increased to cover the cost of Veasey's insurance, as well as other increases due to claims and risk.

Ms. Kastrinelis informed that board that with the Police station the most notable change was that of the patrolmen's line and sergeant's line. The budget was set last year prior to the union contract being ratified, which promoted a patrolman to an additional sergeant. This budget request/recommendation moves the funds to align with the current staffing.

The Fire Department budget was discussed. Ms. Kastrinelis said the Finance Board has not yet voted on this budget. Ms. Dembkoski said she had been working with Assistant Chief Ruchala on the expense side to more equally represent how much and where the money is being spent. The Annual Testing & Inspecting and Vehicle & Equipment Maintenance lines were specifically discussed to realign them with more realistic needs of the department. With regards to the salary line, when the budget was submitted, two versions were submitted. One to stay within the required parameters and one with a 22% increased budget. Ms. Dembkoski took the Firefighter Call Wages line from the higher budget, as we are going on more and more calls and adding addition funds was necessary. However, at the request of Ms. Kastrinelis', we split out Company Reporting. So the company reporting and call wages equals \$115,983, which was in the fire department request. Regarding the Chief's line, Ms. Dembkoski increased that to \$40k to add in a buffer to add flexibility when the BOS is ready to hire the next chief. Discussion took place and Selectman O'Neil agreed with the increase to allow flexibility, but there was concern by others present that this would guarantee the salary and not be fully transparent. Ms. Dembkoski then recommended to lower the fire chief salary back to the FY18 salary of \$29,333 and add a new line under the Selectmen's budget for "Consulting Services". This will allow the BOS to hire a consultant or bring in an outside interim for the fire department. All present agreed with this approach.

Ms. Dembkoski explained that the Pentucket and Whittier budgets are final numbers, but the wild card will be Essex Tech. We do not know how many students will be enrolled until we get the certified numbers based on October 1, 2018. Therefore, this is an unknown. In the current fiscal year, we are short in this line by \$12,280, as they accepted an additional student.

Ms. Kastrinelis explained the highway recommendation is lower than the requested because Bob Arakelian vacated his request for an additional laborer in support of the full-time facilities

position. She also articulated the recommended increase to the snow & ice budget. After many, many years at \$165k, it is getting harder and harder to cover any deficit, so this will be a good first step to bring it more inline to where it should be.

Ms. Dembkoski explained with the Cemetery budget, the commissioners provided a revised request. They are now requesting a full-time foreman and a part-time clerical position instead of a full-time superintendent. The net effect is only an additional increase of \$535.

With regards to the Board of Health, two employees were requested increased hours, but at this time the Finance Board did not recommend those increases.

Ms. Dembkoski informed the board that the library budget request was to keep in line with the required state spending. Ms. Kastrinelis also pointed out there is a slight increase to the Staff Wages as they were increased after the budget last year to account for the hourly rate increase to add some separation between the minimum wage employees and the library assistants.

Ms. Dembkoski discussed the OPEB line under the unclassified budgets. We were informed the state is actively working on our free cash and if we do not have free cash or enough free cash than this item would need to be removed prior to a town meeting vote.

The Finance Board members brought up the capital requests and Ms. Kastrinelis expressed her concern with the proposal regarding the fire department communication system. The wording and the numbers just do not make sense. Mr. D'Amore said he wants to feel comfortable when presenting to town meeting that, as the finance board, they understand what the projects represent and that the figures are accurate. They want to make sure there is a level of comfort with the finance recommendations. Selectman Dunn said if the funds are approved a fire chief would oversee the spending for that project. Ms. Kastrinelis asked if the board might want to wait on the communication item. Ms. Dembkoski informed the group that the Capital Improvement Committee is reconvening on Thursday to have further discussions on the fire radio piece and to take into consideration the microwave piece. Mr. D'Amore said even though this item has cleared the CIC, it has not passed the "audit" of the finance board; the proposal is not in a format or condition that they are comfortable approving. Finance recommends sending the proposal back to be reworked so they can make sense of it. Ms. Kastrinelis said she has spoken to the president of AllComm who is willing to come out here and speak to the finance board and/or the Board of Selectmen. Selectmen O'Neil and Dunn said if the Finance Board is not comfortable, then they should do what they feel is best. They should not feel pressured to make a decision they are not ready to make.

Selectman O'Neil made a motion to adjourn at 8:45pm; seconded by Selectman Dunn.
Unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted by: Denise M. Dembkoski

** Approved on April 17, 2018 with a vote of 4-0-1 with Selectwoman Carpenter abstaining **