



Town of Groveland MASSACHUSETTS

Board/Committee Name: Finance Board
Date: January 18, 2023
Time: 5:00 p.m.
Location: Town Hall – Main Meeting Room
183 Main Street, Groveland, MA 01834

Present:

Board Members: Ruth Rivard, Sarah McGrath, Melissa Baker, Alexander Woods, Bill O’Neil
(arrived at 5:05 p.m.)

Absent Members: Jim Scanlon

Other Attendees: Rebecca Oldham, Town Administrator, Elizabeth Cunniff, Town Clerk, Jeffrey Gillen, Chief of Police, Annie Schindler, Town Planner/Environmental Program Coordinator, Julie Yebba, Assessing Manager

Opening:

The regular meeting of the Finance Board was called to order at 5:02 p.m. on January 18, 2023 by Ruth.

Department Budget Reviews – Town Clerk:

Beth joined the meeting to present her budget request, which included a 5% increase for her salary as well as an increase in hours and pay rate for the assistant and pay rate for poll workers. She noted that the requests for pay increases were due to the comparison to other communities, including some noted in the Collins Center report. Beth also noted that public records requests have increased, that the ethics requirements are changing and that her department will be responsible for overseeing those changes, and that postage is now required to be broken out by department. Beth indicated that she like to increase various fees but reduce fees for seniors and eliminate penalties for dog license fees. Sarah noted that the Finance Board did not vote as a board to instruct departments to use a 2% increase for salaries or an 8% increase for expenses as noted by Beth. A discussion ensued regarding the budget request. When there were no further questions, Beth excused herself from the meeting.

Department Budget Reviews – Police Department, Emergency Management:

Chief Gillen joined the meeting to present his budget request noting that a significant driver of his budget are contractual obligations such as four step increases that total over \$30,000 excluding education related fees and additional paid time off based on years of service. He also noted that

he is looking to send an officer through the full-time academy at a cost of \$3,200 and that there is still one more reserve officer that needs to attend the bridge academy, which is why training expenses are increasing.

A discussion ensued regarding the reserve officers and the required phase out to which Chief Gillen noted that there are several part-time officers, who have other careers, who help balance the staffing needs. Sarah asked him if there has ever been a discussion regarding a requirement for officers to pay back training related expenses if they leave the department within a certain period of time similar to how other organizations pay for education expenses. He noted that there was not at the present time, but it was something that could be looked at and considered.

Chief Gillen also noted there is a request to add some additional equipment because there is one piece that is being transferred between vehicles, which is resulting in unnecessary wear and tear. A discussion then ensued regarding the police vehicles, which are being replaced after five years as a result of the high running hours rather than mileage. It was questioned whether electric vehicles had been considered to which Chief Gillen noted those vehicles are not 'police rated' so wear and tear is a concern; however, hybrid vehicles are being used with much success.

Chief Gillen also reviewed various programming and services that the department offers, including a jail diversion program, D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), being able to assist as an unofficial School Resource Officer and shadowing school buses for traffic safety. Chief Gillen also noted that the department is seeking accreditation, which will show the department is maintaining policies and procedures that are in line with standards. When there were no further questions, Chief Gillen excused himself from the meeting.

Department Budget Reviews – Planning & Zoning:

Annie joined the meeting to present her budget request. She noted that there are no significant changes and that the salary increases are for a 2% raise and that there is a 2.5% increase for the Merrimac Valley Planning Commission assessment, which is the maximum increase. Annie noted that the Conversation Commission budget will be presented by Mike Dempsey at a future meeting, but the stipends for Planning & Zoning members were incorrectly labeled as a Conservation Commission line item and that will need to be corrected. She reviewed the expenses that have been incurred, which included certifications, equipment used to mark safe hunting areas based on distance, trash grabbers for litter, signage and maps for trails, certified return receipt mailings and postings in the newspapers. When there were no further questions, Annie excused herself from the meeting.

Department Budget Reviews – Board of Assessors:

Julie joined the meeting to present her budget request noting that everything has been level funded with the exception of the 2% salary increase. She noted that several contracts with third-party

vendors have been renewed. One contract incurred a slight increase, but she felt that other expenses have decreased to offset the increase and allow for the level funding. Julie also noted that there is \$7,500 request for industrial appraisals, but the Department of Revenue ('DOR') has indicated that it will not be required until FY2025 unless in a certification year, which the Town of Groveland is not. She is asking for this amount in case the DOR reverses its decision and requires it; however she agreed that if the monies are not needed that it can revert back to the general fund for other expenses. Melissa asked Julie to ensure that the contract that Julie indicated was increasing in cost was being accurately reflected given the expenses are being level funded and it would be expected that they would increase. When there were no further questions, Julie excused herself from the meeting.

Pentucket Regional School District ('PRSD') Meeting 01/24/23:

The Finance Board was invited to a second meeting with the PRSD on January 24, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. to attend a meeting to discuss the education budget and expectations. Rebecca noted that they asked for a headcount and Ruth noted that she would post a meeting because it appeared a quorum of members was planning on attending.

MMA Webinar - First Amendment Audit:

Sarah noted that the 'audit,' which Ruth noted is performed by private citizens, seeks to ensure that members of the public have access to everything that they should have access to such as the ability to attend meetings and access public spaces. The webinar, put on by KP Law, is very informative and is something that all members of boards and committees is encouraged to watch.

Meeting Minutes:

Ruth noted that she distributed the meeting minutes from the November 16, 2022 meeting. Due to not having been able to review the minutes, Bill motioned to table the minutes, which Sarah seconded. The motion was approved 3-0-2 with Alex and Melissa abstaining due to not attending that meeting.

Town Administrator Informational Updates:

Rebecca noted that she should be receiving the wage classification analysis from the Collins Center next week and that while people are eager to get the results, she noted that as previously discussed, the purpose of the study was not to guarantee salary changes but rather to identify where the priorities should be.

Rebecca noted that the overall snapshot was missing from the budget materials presented to the Finance Board because the numbers do not look good. She noted that revenue projections for FY24 are low due to lack of growth in the current year and lower than expected excise receipts. Additionally, there are expenses that are increasing such as insurance (i.e. property, motor vehicle, medical), trash (contractual as well as tonnage) and the proposed full-time firefighter salaries

(previously fully covered by a grant). Currently there is a deficit excluding any increase above the 3% increase generally allocated to the PRSD. Rebecca noted that there is an expectation for PRSD to seek an override for its operating budget and it's a discussion that is necessary at this time for the town's operating budget because the cost of doing business is increasing. A discussion ensued regarding the budget.

Plan Next Meeting and Agenda:

The next regular meeting will be held on February 1, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.

Other Items Not Reasonably Anticipated at Time of Posting:

Sarah noted that Susan Yaskell had indicated that she would consider returning to the Finance Board as an alternate, if needed. Sarah will reach out to her.

Bill noted the public meeting on January 30, 2023 regarding mail in voting.

Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Sarah, seconded by Bill, and approved unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 7:09 p.m. by Ruth.

Minutes prepared by: *Melissa Baker*

Minutes approved on: March 1, 2023

Meeting Materials:

1. Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Materials