



Town of Groveland MASSACHUSETTS

Board/Committee Name: Finance Board
Date: March 16, 2022
Time: 5:00 p.m.
Location: Town Hall – Main Meeting Room
183 Main Street, Groveland, MA 01834

Present:

Board Members: Ruth Rivard, James Scanlon, Melissa Baker, Theresa Dunn, and Sarah McGrath

Absent Members: Susan Yaskell

Other Attendees: Rebecca Oldham, Town Administrator, Elaine Meuse, Library Trustee, Robert Downey, Library Vice Chair, Leonard Thomas, Library Chair, Darcy Lepore, Library Director, Mary Lou Costello, Library Treasurer (via Zoom), Kathleen Prunier, Library Trustee (via Zoom), Colin Stokes, Water & Sewer Superintendent, Deborah Kadar-Hull, Board of Health Chair, Rosemary Decie, Public Health Agent, Anita Wright, Public Health Nurse, Lori Bentsen, Board of Health Administrative Assistant, James Stepanian, Board of Health Member

Opening:

The regular meeting of the Finance Board was called to order at 5:08 p.m. on March 16, 2022 by Ruth.

Department Budget Reviews – Library:

Elaine Meuse, Robert Downey, Leonard Thomas, Darcy Lepore, Mary Lou Costello, Kathleen joined the meeting to present the Langley-Adams Library budget. Darcy provided an update on the library's operations in which she noted the library has been expanding its offerings, both in-person as well as via Zoom, and has seen an increase in the number of library cards issued. She noted, however, that there has been significant increase in recruiting needs due to turnover. Darcy noted that the turnover is due to the low wages paid to the employees, which is why the budget request includes wage increases. Over time the pay rate differences between Pages, Assistants, Senior Assistants and Librarians have continued to decrease because minimum wage increases and pay raises have not been consistent, which also does not allow for a designation between the positions that are entry level and those that require a higher level of education. Darcy also noted that a survey was distributed to the community and respondents indicated that they would like to see additional hours on Monday and Wednesday mornings, which would also increase the wages.

A discussion ensued regarding their request and when there were no further questions, Elaine, Robert, Leonard, Darcy, Mary Lou, and Kathleen excused themselves from the meeting.

Department Budget Reviews – Water & Sewer:

Colin Stokes joined the meeting to present the Water & Sewer Department budget. Colin noted, like every year, that the Town of Groveland does not have an issue the quantity of water available, but instead the quality of the water, which is brown at times due the elevated levels of naturally occurring minerals. The Water Department has assessed six additional locations looking for a potential site for a new well. Five of the sites have had higher levels of minerals and the sixth site, while it did not have a higher level of minerals at the time of the testing, could not be guaranteed to maintain the quality. He noted that the cost of drilling a new well can run from \$7 million to \$15 million whereas a treatment plant, like the one built in Topsfield, would be approximately \$20 million. A discussion ensued, which touched upon the number of water accounts (approximately 1,950) as well as the impact of the proposed 40b (estimated usage is 35,000 gallons a day).

Colin reported that the largest increase in the Water & Sewer budgets were the result of increasing both the hours as well as the rate of pay for the Administrative Assistant. The increase in hours was to ensure that the new location of the Water & Sewer Department on School Street would always have someone on site during business hours. He also noted an increase in the Bond Debt & Interest due to the bond anticipated for water main replacements. Colin did note that the Equipment line item decreased; however, there was an increase for the Emergency Funds, which is to purchase necessary replacement parts that can be extremely costly (i.e., \$20k for controller). A discussion ensued regarding his request and when there were no further questions, Colin excused himself from the meeting.

Department Budget Reviews – Board of Health:

Deborah Kadar-Hull, Rosemary Decie, Anita Wright, Lori Bentsen, and James Stepanian joined the meeting to present the Board of Health's budget. Deborah noted outside of the standard 2% increase the only request for additional funds pertains to the wages of the Administrative Assistant. The increase in these wages consisted of both an increase in the hours worked as well as an increased pay rate. The position would increase from 27 hours to 30 hours, which is attributable to an increase in the work that needs to be performed. Deborah also noted that the increase included a 5% pay increase because the rate of pay has not kept up with current wages and the existing Administrative Assistant has been with the Town of Groveland for 22 years. A discussion ensued regarding their request and when there were no further questions, Deborah, Rosemary, Anita, Lori, and James excused themselves from the meeting.

Department Budget Review – Finance Director Budgets:

Rebecca presented several budgets for which she was responsible:

1. Moderator: No changes were being made to this budget.

2. Selectmen: Rebecca noted that the Reserve Fund was being decreased and that a new line item, Consulting Services, was being added. A discussion ensued regarding both items. Ruth noted that the Reserve Fund has fluctuated in recent years and that it may be prudent to cut the decrease in half. Rebecca noted that the consulting services related to the other post-employment benefits, or OPEB, valuation and was not actually a new expense, but had previously been lumped in with other items in previous years.
3. Town Administrator: Rebecca noted that there was no request for an Administrative Assistant salary, even though the need for the position exists, to better balance the budget.
4. Technology: Rebecca noted that there was an increase in this budget, primarily due to the intention of signing a managed information technology (IT) services contract. This service was necessary, Rebecca explained, because the last full-time Finance Director was able to address IT related issues that she cannot.

Review 3/2/22 Meeting Minutes:

Ruth noted that she had provided minor comments on the minutes from the March 2, 2022 meeting. Jim noted that he wanted to include something regarding the Fire Department using assigned on-call schedules for Friday nights, Saturdays, and Sundays. No further comments were noted. Theresa made a motion, which Sarah seconded, to approve the revised minutes. The minutes of the meeting held on March 2, 2022 were approved unanimously.

Finance Director Updates – American Rescue Plan (ARPA) and Budget Process, Pentucket Regional School District (PRSD) budget:

Rebecca gave quick high-level updates regarding the ARPA. She also noted that the PRSD budget had been presented to the Board of Selectmen on March 14, 2022 and, as presented, would require an override to be approved by the registered voters.

Plan Next Meeting and Agenda:

The next regular meeting is scheduled for 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 6, 2022.

It was noted that the PRSD budget as well as the town's omnibus budget would be reviewed.

Other Items Not Reasonably Anticipated at Time of Posting:

No items were noted.

Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Theresa, seconded by Sarah, and approved unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m. by Ruth.

Minutes prepared by: *Melissa Baker*

Minutes approved on: April 13, 2022

Meeting Materials:

1. Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Materials