

**TOWN OF ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**ADAMS TOWN HALL BUILDING, 1<sup>st</sup> FLOOR, ADAMS, MA 01220**

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES MARCH 27, 2019**

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order by Chairman Duval at 6:00 p.m. Present were Vice Chairman Nowak, Members Blanchard, Hoyt, and Bush. Also present were Town Administrator Green, Town Accountant Beverly, Council on Aging Director Girgenti, Wastewater Treatment Plant Rumbolt, and DPW Operations Supervisor Cota.

**FY2020 Budget Review:** *Town Accountant Beverly* advised that she reduced the budget from what it was originally. She gave reviewed the number of elected, appointed, non-union and union personnel. She gave an overview of the operating expenses and noted an increase due to various reasons. She said she asked departments to level fund their budgets but some areas were unable to do so. She explained the budgeted capital outlay, that the Reserve Fund was \$175,000, and that technology upgrades were needed to fund new servers at \$63,000. She noted that this will be funded partly through the technology fund and partly from the capital outlay. Extra interest for outstanding bonds on the debt service was reviewed and the Town will do some Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrades for VFDs. She reviewed proposed expenses listed on a pie chart. The funding of budget sources was reviewed. \$250,000 will be utilized to offset the tax rate. Budget balances with expenditures and the levy limit were reviewed. The Tax rate was noted as being a \$21.93 residential tax rate. Chairman Duval reviewed the budget process and the Interim Town Administrator and Town Accountant met with the Budget Sub-Committee to review it. He explained that a limit was set for the upcoming tax rate and this budget reflects that. He pointed out that some income is expected to be forthcoming from new businesses. With this budget the average house tax bill would go up around \$95. Budget Sub-Committee Members were thanked for going through the budget process.

**Council on Aging:** *Town Accountant Beverly* advised she took out the Program Scheduler position that was put into the budget last year because the Town is not able to afford it. *Director Girgenti* advised that she would have loved to have kept at least part of that position. She gave financial information to offset income and health insurance from a grant for the full-time position. She noted the position was to program usage of the Adams Memorial School and the Council on Aging and it was not yet filled. It was noted that cutting the Program Scheduler position reduced the budget by \$30,000. She explained that it was a part-time position with hope to become full-time. Budget Sub-Committee Members pointed out that the position was not filled and was not put into the budget for next year. The Board of Selectmen has not yet approved the job description. *Director Girgenti* advised she will be coming forward in the near future to the Board of Selectmen to request to increase the rate of pay for a Substitute Van Driver due to employees getting annual step increase and this position not being at the rate of regular employees but has the same requirements.

**Adams Visitors Center:** There is no increase over last year. *Director Girgenti* advised the Town needs to begin thinking about the heating and cooling system, which is an issue. It is not a major issue but needs to be looked at. *Town Accountant Beverly* outlined the staffing at the Visitors Center and noted that the state gives the Town a grant to staff it. The first year it was \$18,000 and this year was reduced to \$9,400. She noted that it will be very difficult to staff and is becoming an increased burden on Council on Aging staff to assist with the Visitors Center.

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She recommended the Town either appropriate funds for it or to close it. Last year the Visitors Center was only staffed from Memorial Day through October, but people are coming in early, so it needs to be staffed May 1<sup>st</sup>. An inquiry was made about interest in this position for the senior tax program, and there are a few. *Director Girgenti* advised not every applicant can fill the programs and it is important to find the right person to make a match. Otherwise an unqualified person needs to be taught by staff, which creates a time impact. *Vice Chairman Nowak* advised as the past Manager of the Visitors Center he did not have a problem getting volunteers. He explained the meal and recognition he provided for volunteers. *Director Girgenti* advised the model has changed many times and in the beginning volunteers staffed it. Some got stipends and others did not, and without a show of appreciation for people that did volunteer they stopped offering to help. She identified this as a great opportunity to utilize college students but it takes a good paid Volunteer Coordinator to make it happen.

**Wastewater Treatment:** *Superintendent Rumbolt* pointed out that the budget was not presented by him and he had a revised proposal with two changes for consideration, which were outlined for the Board. He proposed an increase from \$15,000 to \$18,000 for an increase in labor costs from a company that they work with. The Public Works parts proposed \$25,000 instead of \$20,000 for an increase in the cost of parts. He advised the amount left after the cuts will not be enough to operate. He recommended adding more money into the account to offset the upgrade that is coming just around the corner to decrease the amount needed to be borrowed for the upgrade. A reduction of in-state travel and conference funds was made because this year will not require as much schooling. Upgrades and minor updates were reviewed. It was explained that when the Environmental Protection Agency does a new update the Superintendent has no control over it. Immediate needs at the plant were reviewed for deterioration and it was pointed out there are no violations from the EPA or Mass DEP. It was explained that Wastewater Staff are regularly in motion for maintenance, greasing, and oils and with the budget this is limited. The possibility of an enterprise fund was discussed, which would cost on average \$600 to 900 per household. Other communities are doubling their costs, and if the Town does create an enterprise fund the Wastewater Treatment Plant will be self-sufficient. The balance of taxes and the fees were briefly discussed. *Superintendent Rumbolt* advised of the plant capable and that it is not even operating at an eight of the capacity and pumps and valves need to be changed. He advised that taking in a "hot load" destroys bacteria and is a revenue source. He noted the plant is so robust it can handle taking in more of these loads for income. The current bond for the Wastewater Treatment Plant is up in 2025 and only a small payment is left. A sub-committee meeting will be scheduled to look at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Superintendent Rumbolt and the engineers involved will present information to the board at some point to show what the needs are down the road. It was noted that there are two businesses utilizing the Wastewater Treatment Plant system in North Adams. Discussion took place about eleven companies involved in an agreement based on property rate, valuation and portion of the Wastewater Treatment Plant to factor into the amount charged to them. The Town takes in \$43,000 per year on it. One Board Member suggested increasing the rate.

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*Town Administrator Green* gave a history of the agreement and will reach out to North Adams on this. It was noted that there was a change in dollar amount on VFDs which has been revised to increase the total capital outlay to \$47,000 up from \$45,000. *Superintendent Rumbolt* advised that he currently has use of a masonry flatbed truck, which is not adequate when he has to purchase a new piece of equipment in Springfield or West Springfield. He advised he is not comfortable putting a \$60,000 pump on the back of that truck. He advised since the Wastewater Treatment Plant has been in service they have only had one new vehicle. He noted he is currently driving a 2005 Crown Victoria and the truck is going back to the DPW. He explained there is a need to plow during the day and it would be overtime for the DPW to plow all four pumping stations, including the inherited Gould Road pumping station. He asked for consideration for \$34,000 for a new truck, which would be an investment for the Town for ten years. He advised the Town currently has the money this year because the Police Department is not appropriating a cruiser. *Town Accountant Beverly* advised the money was used for short term bonds for the storm in September and \$42,000 was used. Budget Sub-Committee Members advised this was presented at the Budget Sub-Committee and the Town is cutting positions. It was thought that the DPW would be cycling out another truck that is in better condition than the masonry truck and there was discussion about borrowing one of the DPW vehicles for a longer trip or when it is needed. The upgrades go to labor and plant upgrades. Superintendent Rumbolt expressed that he shouldn't have to go to other departments for what he needs, and as a department head he should have one good vehicle to work with.

**Department of Public Works**

**Tree Warden:** *Operations Supervisor Cota* explained the Tree Warden responsibilities were explained. The budget funds are used if a tree is deemed a safety hazard and needs to come down. The Town doesn't have a bucket truck and has to hire out a vendor. For pest control, not much has been done for trees, however this past year it was noted that the ash borer and pine borer were making an appearance and may have to be addressed. On upper East Hoosac Street boxes were put up. The responsibility of absentee property owners was briefly discussed and it was pointed out that low hanging limbs are the property owner's responsibility. A suggestion was made to bill the property owner if the Town trims trees for an absentee owner. A suggestion was made to get trees from the DCR Urban Trees Program, or other state and federal programs. It was noted that when trees are taken down at the Maple Street Cemetery most times they are not replaced. Town Administrator Green advised that Mass DOT recommends a certain type of tree to withstand certain environments. The Town has tried cabling the trees together in Maple Street Cemetery but if the Town takes them down they will consider putting something back for shade but something less root-invasive.

**DPW Administration:** *Town Accountant Beverly* advised that Interim Town Administrator Cesan suggested putting off hiring the DPW Director for a half year to save money and this is reflected in personal services. Chairman Duval advised the Board is committed to hiring a DPW Director in January, as per Town Charter.

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**Highways:** *Town Accountant Beverly* advised this budget is going up due to the new contract with the DPW Union which shifted wages up and included a 3% COLA. This covers all salaries for the DPW, Wastewater Treatment Plant, Cemeteries, Parks, Grounds, Seasonal Laborers, and their clothing allowance. She noted these all were combined into one account to give accounting flexibility.

**Snow & Ice Control:** *Town Accountant Beverly* advised this is one account which has been level funded. It was noted that there is some salt left and ordering has been avoided due to the big hole in the roof created by the wind storm. She advised the DPW is over in overtime. Vice Chairman Nowak expressed in-depth concern over the amount of salt used during storms and the salting then plowing technique that he said removes the salt from the road. He explained that in Canada salt is a toxin and discourages viable plant growth. He noted that the computerized salt distributors are not broadcasting well and expressed a desire to work together to keep roads clear and also to minimize the use of salt. It was explained that other alternatives have been tried to minimize the salt use and it was found they cost more and did not work. Public demands are being responded to, and people are expecting clearer surfaces, more quickly. The weather systems have been challenging especially with precipitation types and temperatures changing dramatically during a storm requiring the DPW no other choice but to put down material. It was explained that in recent classes Mass DEP urged against using sand because it goes into catch basins and swamps, and instead strongly recommend using salt and liquid treatments. *Vice Chairman Nowak* advised he wanted to see the report, but it was explained this was taught in recent classes. Town Administrator Green advised that once a DPW Director is on board, they will be charged to research other alternatives. A heated discussion took place regarding the use of overtime. It was explained that the total overtime budget also included Wastewater Treatment Plant. Police call-ins for slippery roads were noted as accounting for some of it, as well as wind drifts recovering areas of certain roads that are vulnerable to wind patterns. The need to have safe roads was explained as vital. Vice Chairman Nowak was invited to ride along on a plow route. Other Board Members advised that the timing of the storms has impacted the overtime line as storms do not wait for regular work hours, and it also includes sewer calls.

**Flood Control:** There was no change in Flood Control funding. *Town Accountant Beverly* advised that funds have been appropriated and if more money is needed she will transfer funds in.

**DPW Garage/Equipment Maintenance:** The increase for this budget was noted as being minimal. The cost of diesel and unleaded gas was observed as going up steadily so this is an estimate. The requests were for a one-ton dump truck fitted with a plow, the Vactor Truck repair and sandblasting and painting two old dump trucks to extend longevity. As getting trucks is not an easy task sandblasting and painting them extends them. Undercoating was briefly discussed. *Town Administrator Green* advised the life of a truck depends on how heavily it is used. He advised he met twice with Operations Supervisor Cota and he observed that the garage looks good and the fleet is kept up well. The Vactor Truck being repaired is the old one.



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It was noted that the newly purchased 2001 truck is a very good investment. While one is out of service for repair or maintenance service will continue with the other truck. The new truck will be very beneficial with the MS4 program. The history of the newly purchased Vactor Truck was questioned and concern was expressed that its use will pit the interior of the tank from debris. The trucks being cycled out were reviewed and the two one-ton pickup trucks that are ending their lifespan and will be used for funerals and ice issues. Discussion took place about whether a cycled out vehicle can be utilized by the Wastewater Treatment Plant. It was noted that when the Wastewater Treatment Plant is picking up equipment the DPW gives them a roadworthy truck ready to handle what they need. *Operations Supervisor Cota* made suggestions on what can be done. *Town Administrator Green* noted that the Town can achieve efficiencies by sharing the fleet and good communication. He advised of ideas suggested by both *Operations Supervisor Cota* and *Superintendent Rumbolt* and they will work together to create solutions. *Vice Chairman Nowak* expressed concern about the change in price of the Ford F350 purchased changed price and that he has observed salt in the back of the pickups. It was clarified that the truck beds are treated before salt is put in and the crew is constantly washing them out. It was pointed out that some of the vehicles being discussed were purchased some time ago, long before these precautions were taken. *Vice Chairman Nowak* advised that when snow is not forecasted he would like the DPW to take the plows off the vehicles because the weight is not good for the front end of the truck.

**Transfer Station:** *Chairman Duval* advised that the Board of Selectmen requested that the transfer station be open later one night a week. *Town Accountant Beverly* advised she appropriated the amount to cover this. The Highway Department pitches in to keep this going. Concern was expressed that there is still assessment of whether this will work out or not and once started it cannot be taken away. It was noted that the Town is offering something but it is not clear that costs are covered to run it. The cost is stripping any profit because recyclables are very costly. It was noted that people are very pleased with the Thursday night openings. *Town Accountant Beverly* reviewed expenses, the revolving fund and the roll-off for trash. She recommended the Board look at the information again before setting the fees. An inquiry was made about putting in security cameras as items are being stolen from the metal bins and the Town is losing credits from the Solid Waste Commission. It was explained that people were going into the metal bin, but been told not to and it has stopped.

**Wastewater Collection:** The flat funded budget is for concrete, stone, pipe, and sand.

**Cemeteries, Parks & Grounds:** There is an increase of \$606 and a request for a mower and the replacement of a grave defroster. *Foreman Skrocki* advised that sometimes there is a need for two grave defrosters before they can be dug. The Polish Cemetery sometimes lends one to the Town but if it is not available it is a problem. There is a request for matching funds for a very large grant for landscaping and replacement of the gazebo in the Town Common. Part of the funds will be coming from economic development fund. *Renfrew Field* needs fertilizer and products. An inquiry was made regarding where the vaults are located. It was clarified that the Town of Adams digs all year.

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**Recreation:** *Town Accountant Beverly* advised the Youth Center gave all of their receipts and payroll. They spent \$23,700 on the summer program and they would not be able to have this without this fund.

**Celebrations – Seasonal:** There is no increase. A request was made to put up holiday decorations on Hoosac Street and on the light posts. It was explained this can be done but will cost money. It was noted that the community looks great at Christmas time.

**Skilled Laborer:** Discussion took place regarding the Skilled Laborer position that had been in the budget, candidates were interviewed and it was being eliminated from the budget.

*Operations Supervisor Cota* advised he brought forth this position, and it is a necessity. He advised of the need for this position for plowing, and is required to have a hoisting license for the sidewalk machine to clear Town sidewalks. He explained the current staffing shortage impacting areas not being covered in winter time and the need for the position in the summer time. He outlined the responsibilities and staffing and how the duties are currently covered. He explained how staff has to be rerouted from jobs to handle urgent issues and emergencies which would be aided with this position. He noted that there are more responsibilities on the crew with the inclusion of the Greylock Glen and the new section of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail that is now the Town's responsibility for maintenance. Board Members noted the DPW has more duties, and with the recent projects, more landscaping, trees and plantings. It was recognized that the flood chutes take up summer help and it was suggested to work something out with the Army Corps of Engineers to get plantings that won't need as much maintenance. Town Accountant Beverly advised she increased the Seasonal Laborer budget by \$13,000 to have additional help. She advised that the Skilled Laborer position would be \$55,000 and outside of the requested tax rate. Budget Sub-Committee Members advised this is a tough budget and the Town Accountant was given a hard task. Operations Supervisor Cota was asked to find other areas to cut to make this happen. It was recommended he talk with Town Accountant Beverly and the Town Administrator regarding this request. Mechanic Meczywor explained that he is responsible for taking care of the fleet for the Council on Aging and the Police Department and has to be out doing other duties and is not able to be doing mechanic work when many times two people are needed. Maintenance Technician III Pizani advised when he was the Union Steward when Town Administrator Butler was here the DPW was guaranteed thirteen people by contract because that was what was needed after research had been done. It was clarified that all but one person on the DPW have a CDL License. The final one is waiting to take his driving test. All but one has a hoisting license.

**Public Buildings/Property Maintenance**

**Registry of Deeds:** This budget was level funded. The building still has the court room in the back and the Town needs to look at upgrading it in the future.

**Town Hall:** Town Hall Roof will be replaced in this fiscal year. The upcoming Green Communities grant application hopefully will include a new boiler.

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**Public Buildings:** It was explained that this is for wages for the Custodian who manages five buildings, and his costs. Electricity costs were reviewed, and the solar consolidation now gets about \$.16 per kWh produced. The company that put in the solar is up about 4.6 cents. Wastewater Treatment Plant and Town Hall get the funds.


**Community Center:** This is for the inspection of fire extinguishers.

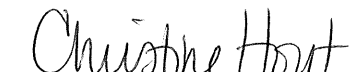
**Adams Memorial:** Town Accountant advised this is up because the Town is spending so much money on fuel. With people using the building they are keeping the heat on. There is a revolving fund but since nobody has been charged a fee to use the building nothing is in the fund. Chairman Duval will have a workshop on this. Town Accountant Beverly advised this item will be on the next grant for the heating system. Concern was expressed that the building should not be used to the extent it is currently being used. Town Administrator Green advised that he will put controls in place to get through until a new infrastructure is in place.

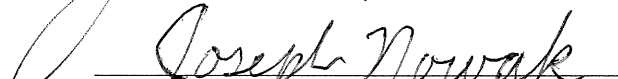
**ADJOURNMENT:** *Motion made by Member Bush to adjourn the meeting, second by Vice Chairman Nowak. Vote: Unanimous.*

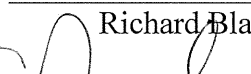
**Meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.**


Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,  
Recording Secretary

  
James Bush, Member

  
Christine Hoyt, Member

  
Joseph Nowak, Vice Chairman

  
Richard Blanchard, Member

  
John Duval, Chairman