



FINANCE COMMITTEE

TOWN HALL BUILDING
8 PARK STREET

Tuesday, April 20, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER: On the above date the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee held a meeting on the first-floor gymnasium of Adams Memorial School. The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Board of Selectmen Chair Hoyt and Finance Committee Chair Burdick. Present from the Board of Selectmen were Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Blanchard, Members Duval and Nowak. Present from the Finance Committee were Chairman Burdick, Vice Chairman Cowie, Members Butler, Cushenette, Foster, Johnson, Kupiec, Melito, Meczywor, Mucci, and Tomkowicz. Also present were Town Administrator Green, Finance Director Wojcik, DPW Director Tober, and Administrative Assistant Dunlap. *Finance Committee Members Duval, Kline and Nocher were absent.*

FY2022 BUDGET REVIEW

Community Development: The funding to plan for the new Community Development Director is in the budget to cover salary and benefits in the salary range of \$70,000 to \$89,000. It was explained what line item the Community Development Special Projects Coordinator Cesan is being paid from to cover her costs. It was pointed out that this budget supports 50% of the pay for the Administrative Assistant, which is also funded by Inspectional Services in the other 50%. Staffing was reviewed and the grant covered positions were outlined. It was detailed that there is a vacant Community Development position because of a shift in staffing to be the Town Accountant, and there is no Senior Planner. Town Accountant Wojcik is working with MCLA to get an intern to be in that position. It was explained that the Senior Planner was paid for out of the Economic Development fund, which is paid for by the local meals tax. It was noted that when Covid-19 hit it was clear that fund would not cover that position. The Community Development Director search status was outlined and was described as being an active recruitment, and the target date for being filled is July 1, 2021. It was noted that the Operating Expenses were level funded from last year as there is consistent use from year to year. *Finance Committee Vice Chairman Cowie* noted that last year Town Accountant Beverly provided the Committee with up to date and the amounts on expenses. He noted the actual that was expended was \$244,000 when the available budget was \$72,000 he and asked for an explanation on the different amounts and what happened to it. It was explained that funds that can be encumbered show up there and it balances out by the end of the year. Salary reimbursements by the Community Development Block Grant are paid out first and reimbursed after. The grant amount is not put in the budget because it would throw off the tax numbers. It was pointed out that the budget does not show an overspent red-lined deficit that is taken from Free Cash. He inquired about funds from the Department of Housing and Community Development as a result of 40R. It was explained that the state pays the municipality for adopting 40R on the total number of residential units built.

It was further explained that when a project is built, there is an amount of money paid to the Town for every 40R unit that goes into the project. \$600,000 was for the total possible number of units. It was clarified that the Town did not know that the state would not pay for Town-owned properties and it was not ratified by the Department of Housing and Community Development for months. Funds have not been received yet. *Board of Selectmen Member Duval* reviewed that the plan for the East Street project was to sell the property and noted that investors looking at the Adams Memorial School are looking at 40R. He noted that an Adams Community Center is something he would support and if an investor wants to own the building the Town still plans on working with the investor to own the building and share it with the Town, so the Town may get money anyway. It was pointed out that if developers come in and use 40R the Town keeps the \$350,000 for adopting 40R. An update was given on the Greylock Glen project and the complexity of working with investors, developers, and the state legislators to release funds. It was noted that the Greylock Glen Project is still strong and the Outdoor Center cost to construct the building is now estimated to around \$8 Million. Project development costs and what is available in the bond need to be watched, and the Water District can supply water but the amount of infrastructure that has to be installed at the Greylock Glen requires a water tower. To get water there with MassDEP approval the cost will increase by \$3 Million or more. It was noted that since the Outdoor Center estimation was done the cost of lumber has increased by 40%. *Vice Chairman Cowie* gave some history of the Greylock Glen project over the years.

Conservation Commission: Postage costs were reviewed. *Board of Selectmen Member Nowak* inquired if \$835 for Management and Consultant costs will be enough as it won't go that far for wetlands or an Environmental Consultant. It was pointed out that any additional funds needed could come from Community Development or the Town Administrator Engineering or Management/Consultant line items.

Planning Board, Zoning Board, the Historical Commission and Agricultural Commission were reviewed and there were no questions on these line items.

Public Buildings / Property Maintenance: It was noted that the Police Station will be discussed under the Police Department budget and the Library Building under the Library Budget. It was noted that the *Registry of Deeds* and the *Town Hall* have been level funded. *Finance Committee Chairman Burdick* inquired about whether the Town Hall front steps will be addressed for repair. It was explained that a coat of paint is needed and both the front and back steps need work. *DPW Director Tober* reported that he tried to get a quote but there were not available funds. He noted that the project could potentially be done in-house and would be fairly easy but it just needs time, assistance and support. *Town Administrator Green* advised some building projects can be put in the Capital Plan but the funds go fast and the project will probably have to be engineered. It was noted the Town Hall boiler is gas and leaks water, so it will require repair or to be replaced. There is also a second forced hot air system as well. More concern was expressed about the Library boiler because of its age. It was estimated at \$250,000 as it needs to be converted.

Community Center: It was explained that the building is being used for storage from the School District, and an alarm system is installed there for monitoring by the Police Department.

Public Buildings and Property Maintenance: Custodial costs were reviewed as wages for one full custodial position and 60% of another that is funded the other 40% by the Transfer Station. Clothing and overtime allowances were reviewed for snow removal and other various needs. *Operating expenses* were reviewed and it was noted that electricity was lumped under this budget line. It was explained that this budget line had been \$140,000 and last year was surgically cut and brought down to \$130,000. An inquiry was made about additional cuts to the budget line. It was explained that the number is low due to credits from the solar array but the number could go up depending on the sun and from a risk standpoint it would be uncomfortable to cut it further. It was clarified that it is not certain what the electricity will cost and if the solar credits don't come in as expected this budget could be in the red. A brief review was done of the total and expended numbers from the last few years, and the monthly amount currently is zero, but it can change at any time with the way the panels function so the Town has to be fiscally responsible to budget the funds. Brief discussion took place on the responsibility of cleaning off the solar panels in the winter and there was concern of a risk of damage. Capital items for this budget were outlined as only small equipment for \$15,000.

Adams Memorial Building: It was explained that the natural gas line item budgeted in previous years was only for heating with an exterior heating unit. The new unit heats with natural gas and has increased the number with anticipation of the building being used. It was noted as challenging and difficult to predict for cost and a conservative guess of \$40,000 was budgeted but operating experience will determine actual cost. The HVAC system is a zoned system, and a brief review was done of what areas the zones cover. The zones are computerized and can be set to change at different times but all zones are set at 60 degrees. The age of the windows and their lack of efficiency were noted. The possibility of getting a developer to come do something with the building was noted and it was pointed out that research is being done on a variety of different funding sources for work in the building as it is not a cheap project. Windows may be able to be done with the help of the Green Communities Fund. The summer air conditioning system will have an electricity load as well.

Adams Visitors Center: This budget is level funded, but it will need significant funds because the geothermal heating and cooling system practicality and maintenance are challenging. It was noted it may not be cost effective to change it to a regular system and geothermal challenges were outlined.

Department of Public Works:

Tree Warden: It was noted this budget is level funded. Emerald Ash Borers were noted in Bellevue Cemetery and causing the trees trouble. It was noted that the Town needs to consider replanting trees when taking some down, and some are going back in on the Route 8 Commercial Street Project.

DPW Administration: A 75% reduction was noted, and it was explained that the budget supports the Administrative Assistant but not the DPW Director. It was pointed out that it was a difficult decision made to meet budgetary goals. It was noted that last year there were reductions made to manage costs. It was noted that Wastewater Treatment Plant costs and enterprise funds were designed to avoid the levy ceiling and an attempt was made to forestall it but this decision had to be made. *DPW Director Tober* noted the savings accomplished and funds brought in from the Transfer Station and FEMA results in only a \$25,000 savings and 32% of the salary could be attained through a business enterprise. He reviewed his credentials and what was critically needed to run the Munis software.

It was outlined that the duties would be assumed by Community Development, the Building Commissioner supervising building maintenance and the Town Administrator. It was noted that the Town ran for three years without a DPW Director and the day to day operations would be managed by the Operations Supervisor and Wastewater Treatment Plant Superintendent. *Finance Committee Chairman Burdick* noted that it was never desired to have to come to a decision like this but incumbent upon the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator and Finance Committee to look at how to maintain costs. It was noted that it was complex to forecast out the budget and fixed costs, and the Town dodged bullets with insurance costs but it is not clear what next year will look like. It was noted as an unfortunate decision to make but in the best interest for the community and the budget. There were no questions on the Administrative Office budget line. *Personnel Services*: It was explained that the DPW Highway section is an expensive department and increased by 3%. It was noted that they are all union employees. Staffing numbers were reviewed, as well as the Cemetery, Parks and Grounds staffing. The Wastewater Treatment Plant is mandated by MassDEP and the EPA to have seven staff, and there are two vacancies right now. It was pointed out that every position requires certification and is graded. Recruitment was noted as complex as one person tried six times to pass the tests and candidates must understand the work environment and the books. It was explained that other communities have the same issues with recruiting. Staffing challenges and retention issues were briefly reviewed. Personnel costs include the Seasonal Laborers, DPW overtime and the clothing allowance. Seasonal Laborers provided a tremendous amount of cemetery and flood control work. *Operating expenses* were briefly reviewed. The asphalt line item was explained and it was noted that some of the streets need far deeper repair than the hot box can provide. Howland Avenue was noted as being more than \$1 Million and the line item is a stop-gap measure while the Town pursues third party funding. It was noted that the Infrastructure Bill will hopefully have competitive programs to cover the cost of the work. It was pointed out that not everything is overlay or mill and fill and there are other products out there. If the roadway is in good shape there are ways to protect the finish. The Town is looking at cost-effective ways to maintain the surface. It was noted that the Commercial Street project will hopefully address the brick and trolley tracks showing where the asphalt doesn't stay in place. It was explained that though done around nine years ago Park Street is in tough shape already because of the tractor trailer trucks doing damage to the roads. The quality of the asphalt was discussed and it was noted that on projects the Town needs an engineering firm to look at it to maintain sustainability. Cost was noted as a challenge, and with Chapter 90 funds used for engineering the expenses for the municipality keep going up but the funding does not. Last year a request was made to increase Chapter 90 but it did not go through so the Town has to be strategic when spending it.

Snow and Ice Control is level funded at \$246,000. A brief review was done of the snow and ice and overtime numbers and both are currently within the budget. *Member Nowak* expressed concern about the overuse of salt on the roads and recommended electronic spreaders to regulate use because of the damaging effect on bridges, cars and the environment. It was clarified that if money is left over it would be transferred internally in the budget or go into Free Cash.

Flood Control was explained as \$600 for Seasonal Laborers providing vegetation control. The department bought a DR-Trimmed that has assisted in getting more done. If funding comes in from the Infrastructure Bill, funds could be used to assist with this to get in there to get the vegetation out.

The Jordan Street Culvert was discussed as an issue and money has been put in to keep it going but at some point, it needs to be replaced. Concern was expressed about heavy rain or a clog in the culvert, and it was noted that grant money is awaited to cover over \$1 Million project, which will pay for design, engineering and construction. VHB has been monitoring it for safety purposes and guiding the DPW on what to do with it. It was noted as being in the works and because it is a wetlands area it has a higher level of review.

DPW Garage Equipment Maintenance: The fleet report was briefly reviewed, and it was noted that the Town has not retired vehicles this year but is stretching them out. The maintenance cycle was noted as being excellent but vehicles still have wear and tear. An inquiry was made about whether the Town has its own fuel and it was noted only diesel. Gas cards are used to track fuel consumption at Cumberland Farms. *Capital items* for Fiscal Year 2022 were reviewed as a repair of the John Deere Backhoe, and body work for the Bucket Loader requiring sheet metal to repair rust. It was noted that the Trackless Machine that was repaired last year is running well, and available to be looked at by anyone interested.

Transfer Station: this budget was noted as being funded by two different sources and permit fees go into a revolving account. Solid Waste tax also goes into a revolving account. It was pointed out that the Transfer Station Attendant is paid from the Transfer Station budget. Operating expenses for transfer station were reviewed. Northern Berkshire Solid Waste Management District fees are the same amount to join the District. It was explained that there is a line item to cover expenses if the revolving account is depleted by bills from the waste hauler, and the Transfer Station is still subsidized off of the tax rate. An inquiry was made about work done last year to clear out brush and it was explained that it took place on the uncapped side, and was done during the summer of 2019. The second project costing \$46,700 for drainage and swales to be repaired will take place on the capped side of landfill and the Town was unable to get it done last year. A presentation about permit fees for the Board of Selectmen will take place as well but there is more analysis to do and the attempt is to keep costs from going up for residents.

Wastewater Treatment Plant: It was explained that operating expenses have been level-funded, and the sludge contract expires in 2022. The Town is not putting any funds into the Wastewater Treatment Plant this year from Free Cash but will definitely invest in it using a portion of the \$2.3 Million with other funding sources that can be put forward toward the plant. It was explained that the Wastewater debt service will be completed in 2025. The Town is looking at what needs to be done and it is not clear if it will be possible to take the debt off. It was explained that operating costs are level funded. It was pointed out that properties hooked into Hardman Park wastewater system and Walmart provide \$46,000 in funds through the City of North Adams. It was pointed out that the discharge from marijuana cultivation facility will come into the system in the future. The Wastewater Treatment Plant is currently processing 2.5 million gallons per day. Agreements will be negotiated with the new Cumberland Farms when they build it.

Cemetery, Parks and Grounds: Operating expenses were reviewed. The fleet schedule for the cemetery was reviewed and it was clarified that there is a separate backhoe for burials. The other one is for digging up roadway, and is the one needing replacement. It was explained that Russell Field project is mostly done but there is an outstanding property issue at far north end of property.

Additionally, there are a couple outstanding things to complete. There was no work done on the field house and the Town is looking for another funding source. It was noted that the Town Common is mostly complete. Small equipment is needed and \$5,000 set aside in the Capital Budget for Cemeteries, Parks and Grounds.

Seasonal Decorations: It was explained that this budget is for flags, flowers and decorations around town. Veterans banners are self-funded. There were no further questions.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

April 15, 2021 Minutes, Board of Selectmen: Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to table to minutes for April 15, 2021, second by Member Duval. Vote: Unanimous. Motion passed.

April 15, 2021 Minutes, Finance Committee: Due to audio issues the motion and second to table the minutes for the Finance Committee were unintelligible. Vote: unanimous. Motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Workshop, second by Member Duval. Vote: unanimous. Motion passed. The Board of Selectmen Meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Motion made by Finance Committee Vice Chairman Cowie to adjourn from the Finance Committee Workshop, second by Member Johnson. Vote: unanimous. The Finance Committee Meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Burdick", is written over a horizontal line.

Timothy Burdick, Chair