



FINANCE COMMITTEE

TOWN HALL BUILDING

8 PARK STREET

Monday, April 26, 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 6:03 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, Duval, Foster, Johnson, Kline, Kupiec, Melito, Meczywor, Mucci, Nocher and Tomkowicz. Also present were Town Administrator Green, Finance Director Wojcik, Council on Aging Director Girgenti, Library Director Jayko, Building Commissioner Garner, Police Chief Kelley, Forest Warden and Emergency Management Director Kleiner, Veterans Agent Roy and Administrative Assistant Dunlap.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*April 20, 2021 Minutes, Board of Selectmen: Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to table the minutes for April 20, 2021, second by Member Duval. Vote: unanimous. Motion passed.*

*April 20, 2021 Minutes, Finance Committee: Motion made by Vice Chairman Cowie to table the approval of minutes for April 20, 2021 for the Finance Committee, second by Member Tomkowicz. Abstention by Member Kline. Voted in favor were Chairman Burdick, Vice Chairman Cowie, Members Butler, Cushenette, Duval, Foster, Johnson, Kupiec, Melito, Meczywor, Mucci, Nocher and Tomkowicz. Motion passed.*

**FY2022 BUDGET REVIEW**

**Council on Aging:** Council on Aging Director Girgenti advised that there is a decrease in the transportation budget, reflecting the department restructure. She advised that she created more per diem hours for transportation with different drivers as she had been having less success with part time employment and the new model has been pretty successful over the past year. An inquiry was made about unemployment, and it was explained that it varies by department. The decrease in number of Van Drivers by three was explained. It was pointed out that instead, the Council on Aging is using three individuals per diem instead. It was noted that despite the decrease in staffing, the Per Diem Van Drivers are currently able to cover all the needs of the people but ridership is still down. It was explained that some people were able to find use of other transportation through grants from other agencies due to the pandemic but there is a steady ridership and not many people are turned away. The extended medical transportation program will require some new drivers to be hired for the program as it has become taxing on the same drivers. It was explained that the Administrative Assistant salary doubled because the position went from part-time to a full-time position when the funding shifted from having a full time Van Driver to support the administrative end of the department. It was pointed out that having this support was a huge success with vaccine assistance

and in the first four months of the year the Council on Aging exceeded the number of individuals served in the entire year last year. *Member Foster* inquired about the Council on Aging Director base pay being the same, and it will be looked into. The gas line item was reviewed and it was noted that a van is due for replacement through Berkshire Regional Transit Authority, so there will be a new van this summer. The tent is planned to be put up again this year and grant funding will be used to increase security at the Memorial School for gym use for programming. *Member Kline* inquired about the Council on Aging moving over to Adams Memorial School and it was explained that it cannot happen overnight or rapidly as upgrades are needed on ceiling, lighting, windows and bathrooms. Estimates are being gotten and then the Town will look at how to pay for it. It was pointed out that the goal is to move the Council on Aging over, but timing is important as work will need to be done and it may need to wait until that is completed. An inquiry was made about the use of cooking and cafeteria services for the Council on Aging and it was explained that there is a cost and accessibility factor to be taken into consideration. The elevator shaft is in the classroom wing, which would be sealed off by a private developer unless they don't want that portion of the building. It was pointed out that it is difficult for the Council on Aging to operate on two different floors, especially with some participants only coming to the meal program. The growth of the Adams Council on Aging was discussed, and it was explained that a regional senior center is being looked to share this service with neighboring communities. It was pointed out that the demographics show the county is aging and unable to fill demand. In the next few weeks there will hopefully be a shared services agreement with a neighboring town as a test program. If successful, adding other communities in a regional program could unlock grant funding. The number of people currently being served from outside Adams was estimated to be approximately 25% of those served and Adams could either ask the other towns to pay for services or come up with a shared service agreement. The amount of work done with three full-time staff serving other communities as well as Adams was noted. Council on Aging Director Girgenti and her staff were thanked for all of their work in the vaccination clinics. Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen Members were invited to contact the Council on Aging with any questions they may have.

***Veterans Services:*** Veterans Services Agent Roy introduced himself and briefly went over what services his office provides. It was explained that it is a shared services model which could expand eventually beyond the nine communities currently served. Finance Committee Vice Chairman Cowie inquired about numbers decreasing with the passing of World War II, Vietnam and Korean War Veterans, but it was noted that surviving spouses receive services still. Available health care services for eligible parties were briefly discussed. There were no questions on the budget line.

***Memorial Day Remembrances*** were noted as being the same as last year with no changes. There were no questions on this line item.

***Library:*** Library Director Jayko gave Board and Committee Members some background on the Library structure and services. Staffing was reviewed and the role of the Friends of the Library was explained. It was reviewed that the Adams Free Library has 34,000 items catalogued currently, 2,400 borrowers and is now seeing patrons by appointment. It was reviewed that last June the Library Takeout service began using the lower annex meeting room with a fully accessible entrance for contactless services. A decrease of approximately 500 patrons per month lower than normal was noted but the Library is slowly increasing back to normal hours in a couple weeks. The Library budget showed an increase in the Personal Services budget due to cost of living and step increases, and the Operating Expenses budget is level funded. Capital expenses for the upcoming fiscal year are a decrease from the prior year and the Library used \$13,000 for much needed repairs on a broken

water heater. It was noted that the pipe for the boiler has multiple patches and needs repair before it breaks at an estimated cost of \$4,500. It was explained that all of the money allocated from last year will be spent by June 30<sup>th</sup>. A couple of the projects could only be done in warm weather and some had to be pushed off because the water heater was more important. The front door thresholds are not done but the Memorial Room ceiling was completed. Staffing was briefly discussed and it was noted that there was only one new hire this year, but two new staff members. When bringing all of the employees back, one chose to retire. The Library will be open full hours every week, and to maintain that it requires three part-time Library Aides staggered throughout the hours. It was explained that the criteria to get funding from the state has been met but the Town had to request a waiver, which was approved. One requirement was not met, but the Library received \$18,000 in state aid, which provides library programming that has never been part of Town budget. It was noted that half of state aid goes to programming to bring in more patrons. The Library provides approximately one or two programs a month and collaborates with libraries across the state via [www.adamslibraryma.org](http://www.adamslibraryma.org) to provide sharing resources. Programs are available for all ages, and anyone with inquiries are invited to call the Library at 743-8345.

*Board of Selectmen Chairman Hoyt recused herself from the Inspection Services budget and sat in the audience at 6:52 p.m.*

**Inspection Services:** Town Administrator Green reviewed the Personal Services budget and explained that the Administrative Assistant is funded 50% from Inspection Services and 50% from Community Development. Operating expenses were noted as being level funded. The Board of Health budget was reviewed as being level funded. Step increases were explained by request and outlined as taking place at the anniversary date of the hiring of the employee annually. The effect of a performance issue on increases was briefly outlined. The appointed position to Weights and Measures was explained, and measure various things such as gasoline, grocery store pricing, scales and more. The process and inspection timing were briefly discussed and it the Town contracts out for it.

### **Public Safety:**

**Emergency Management:** There were no significant changes noted in this budget. It was explained that Emergency Management Director Kleiner attempted to retire but has stayed on so there was no change in the middle of the pandemic. The benefits of having a shared services model for this during pandemic were noted as making everyone's jobs easier. It was explained that if the Emergency Operations Center was not available Adams would have had to get their own resources. All three vaccination clinics were done in a regional collaborative model, and the Berkshires did the best in the Commonwealth using this model. It was noted that the Personal Services budget is level funded, and has a stipend for the Director. Operating Expenses were also level funded. The vehicles used for Emergency Management are also under the Forest Wardens department and sometimes used for emergency management and the funds are for fuel, generators and associated equipment. It was reviewed that the last vehicle purchased in 2019 replaced a 1975 Ford with a 1986 GMC, and the Town paid \$10,000 for it. From an operational standpoint, when there is a structure fire the Forest Wardens assist as backup for water supply. In the early days of the vaccination clinic they were there and they also frequently handle traffic control.

**Forest Wardens:** Personal Services include a stipend, and the Operating Expenses were also reviewed. The Building and Maintenance budget went up. It was explained that there are two gas heaters suspended from the ceiling, and one has not worked since August 2020 nor been cleaned since the late 1990's. The other unit also needs to be cleaned. As they hang 32 feet off the floor, it

will require access by a lift vehicle instead of a ladder and the estimate is \$1,000 to do the work. It was confirmed that the Forest Warden building is owned by the Town.

**Police Department:** The Personal Services budget showed a slight increase of 1.72% in fixed costs, and the budget covers salaries and benefits for the Chief, Administrative Assistant and 13 patrolmen. It was noted that this includes shift differential and overtime, as well as the clothing budget and wages for the Reserve Officers and Special Police Officers. It was explained that the Department has one position open currently, which is advertised now and will be filled with a qualified person. The Chief salary was reviewed. A vehicle on the fleet listed in poor condition was explained as having been in a collision and required to be repaired by the insurance company. It was noted that the type of damage to the vehicle typically causes more repairs later on, so there is capital in the budget to look for a different vehicle. The retired former Chief's vehicle had a rotted frame and was disposed of. An Explorer on the fleet was cleaned it up by the DPW, had some lights installed and made into the new Chief's vehicle. The Town will be purchasing a new vehicle to add to the fleet as a marked unit. *Member Tomkowicz* asked if the Police Department is listening to what is happening in the country and it was explained that the Department is ahead of the game with training. It was outlined that the Department is in pace with training in diversity, use of force and other areas and the Chief advised he is very pleased with what he has seen in this Department and also in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Upon full staffing, there will be 17 staff in the Department. Concern was expressed about overtime and alleviating excessive overtime use. It was noted that work is being done to address the issue and it requires a plan which could involve a couple different directions. It was noted that it will take time to fix what has been going on for years. The issue driving overtime was outlined as being the dispatch center going to the county level and nothing put in place to effectively handle the front desk and monitor the jail. Qualified police officers are managing the desk where they could be on the street, which causes overtime. *Member Foster* expressed concern about the phone tree answering at the station and the lines not being answered by a person. The number of hours an officer spends in court was noted as varying depending on whether it is a case in traffic court or a criminal case which can take time require officers to work during time off, generating overtime. The scheduling of court was noted as causing overtime if a position has to be filled for an officer to appear at court. Vacation controls were explained and there is a Sergeant assigned to the role of controlling vacations where seniority prevails. It was noted that there is a provision in the bargaining agreement that says there must be a minimum of two fully-trained non-reserve officers on duty at the same time, requiring a Sergeant and two officers on shift. The high number of overtime costs were explained as being from structural reasons. An assessment is being done to man the desk to cover the needs in a less expensive way. 12-hour shifts can allow for basic coverage in cruiser and additional police work for community policing or school police work, but would impact collective bargaining. It was noted that a labor attorney is looking at this and there are solutions being worked on to fix it that are not easy but with the intent to maintain high quality policing. An inquiry was made whether overtime pay figures into retiree pay and it was believed that it is based on the top three quarters of the base salary. *Operating Expenses* were noted as level funded. It was explained that accreditation is coming out now and there are expected certifications and training coming down the road which the new legislation will require. Tasers and ammunition come out of this budget both for service and training. An officer has been appointed as the Training Administrator to work with the Chief to assess and manage the costs of training. The required training will impact the Reserve Officers, requiring them to take 300 hours more of training just to be able to work in Massachusetts. An inquiry about whether there is a requirement for body cameras at this time was posed and it was noted that Massachusetts has not required it yet but the Town will be moving forward with it. Discussion took place about

walking the beat and bicycle patrol on the Rail Trail. It was noted that the Department is not ready to put the Bike Patrol out there yet but there are officers walking the streets now and also through the schools. A move is being made toward having a community policing department, and carefully assessing whether putting officers on bicycles would be able to be juggled if there is a response needed at the other end of town. An inquiry was made about the Mass Forfeiture Statute regarding a recent crime incident that took place and it will be looked into to see if it can be utilized to clean up the town. It was clarified that the cruiser price includes the technology and is completely outfitted and ready to hit the street. *Board of Selectmen Member Duval* acknowledged that training, certifications and parking issues were important and the Public Safety Sub-Committee has been identifying items and issues to be discussed there before the regular Board of Selectmen meetings. He noted that the Police Department Policy Handbook has not been discussed yet and there is only one copy at the Police Department which needs to be updated, as it is at least 20 years old. He noted he was aware that policy updates are needed and some need to be completely redone. He pointed out that when this is brought forward there may be a need for outside support to overhaul it. He noted that there had been a discussion about the Police Department Certification and/or Accreditation as a whole, which is starting to happen throughout the country. It was explained that two other departments in the county are certified and Adams needs to look at whether to go through that process. Work will be done with the Public Safety Sub-Committee, the Town Administrator and the Chief.

***Animal Control:*** It was explained that this is split funding for the Animal- Parking Control Officer which is shared with the Parking Control budget 50/50 and is level funded for Animal Control. *Finance Committee Member Kline* noted that the Animal Control Officer budget doesn't match the expended amount, and it was pointed out that there are still three more months of salary to go. Additionally, it was noted that a Munis posting issue was off by two payrolls, causing an impact in the numbers.

***Parking Management:*** *Board of Selectmen Member Nowak* inquired about revenues and it was noted that Covid-19 had hit hard. It was explained that the Animal-Parking Control Officer is writing tickets and identifying meters that are not working. The line item for the parking fund was outlined. It was explained that there is money for the Visitors Center and there is an issue with the CHP building. It was noted that some people are happy to have metered parking control and others are not as pleased. Hesitation was expressed about enforcing parking at the Visitors Center with the Council on Aging there. *Board of Selectmen Member Nowak* asked for Animal and Parking Control reports in a narrative. Chief Kelley advised that he will have it come through the proper chain of command and he will be getting a monthly report. He noted that the Animal-Parking Control Officer has done a great job being visible, writing tickets and addressing issues at the Greylock Glen and the Rail Trail. *Board of Selectmen Chairman Hoyt* pointed out that the Parking Meter Fund is \$10,000 under Revenue Sources.

***Police Station Building:*** It was explained that the building roof leaks, and there have been elevator repairs. The budget is level funded this year.

General discussion took place regarding when health insurance will change and it was explained that they are the same rates this year and there is a slight increase for dental insurance. It was explained that the Town gets and reviews the insurance rates and builds the budget off of the fixed costs. It was noted that OPEB is a \$12 Million liability and is an unfunded state mandate that will have to be faced at some point. It was pointed out that the Postal Service is required to fund every dollar on retirement and that is why they are in their financial predicament. *Chairman Hoyt* reminded everyone that Monday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> is Election Day and polls open 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the DPW garage. She

announced that the Town Meeting date has been set for Monday, June 21<sup>st</sup> at Bowe Field, but the time is yet to be determined. She reported that the Board of Selectmen opened the Warrant to the public for Citizen Petitions until Thursday, May 6<sup>th</sup>. She advised that the Board of Selectmen will meet tomorrow at 5:30 p.m. and the Finance Committee will meet tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. to approve the budget. She noted these are public meetings and people are free to attend.

**ADJOURNMENT:** *Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Workshop, second by Member Duval. Vote: unanimous. Motion passed. Board of Selectmen Meeting Adjourned at 7:59 p.m.*

*Motion made by Vice Chairman Cowie to adjourn the Finance Committee Workshop, second by Member Tomkowicz. Vote: unanimous. Motion passed. Finance Committee Meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,  
Recording Secretary

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Timothy Burdick", is written over a horizontal line.

Timothy Burdick, Chair