

Advisory Budget Committee

Minutes

November 9, 2021

This meeting was at the Barrington Town Hall with remote participation available.

Members Present: Steve Saunders, Michael Houst, John Morris, Scott Shephard and Peter Royce

Alternates Present: Dannen Manschreck

Others Present: Amy Doherty and Conner MacIver (arrived late)

Steve Saunders called the meeting to order at 4:33 pm.

Steve Saunders moves to approve the meeting minutes from the November 2nd meeting. The group agrees.

The group discussed the Select Board meeting from the night prior and the budget recommendations from the Select Board. The Select Board did not come to a resolution on the highway grader.

The group discussed the Tax Collector and Town Clerk budgets. There will be three elections in this coming year and that is what is causing the budget to increase.

The Tax Collector has \$3,500 budgeted and labeled as Town Hall equipment. The group does not like to “hide” Town Hall project expenses in the budget. Why is tax adding town hall expenses when no other department is? Does the \$3,500 include items that would need to be replaced even if the town hall wasn’t built?

Answer from Conner MacIver: The Town Hall project approved by voters covers engineering and construction. The furniture in the current Town Offices are not owned by the Town. In the 2021 budget, departments including the Town Clerk and Building budgeted and purchased furniture that will be necessary for the new Town Hall. The Tax Collector is budgeting to purchase the furniture which will be necessary.

The group would like to discuss the final numbers and warrant article requests. The group would like to gather a list of questions to ask Conner MacIver to prepare for that meeting in two weeks.

Questions for Conner MacIver:

- We know that two employees will be going on their assignments in March. This is potentially 10 months of salary that will be underspent. What is the total cost of the salary and benefits? The group is looking to use the excess that can help meet the 12.5% fund balance percentage.
 - Police: \$59,210
 - Fire/EMS: \$68,513
 - Total: \$127,723
- The group would like an updated revenue estimate. Are there any items in the warrant articles that could be advanced into this year’s budget?

- 2021 Revenue is \$3,857,836.
- I can ask the Select Board if they want to spend budget surplus in 2021, but that will reduce what will be added to unassigned fund balance, thus negating the intent of removing it from a warrant article.
- What are the revenue projections for next year? Does that include the new developments? If those buildings open in June, what potential revenue will that generate?
 - 2022 revenue projection will be developed in December.
 - Property tax assessments is 'as-of' April 1st. The new developments will likely not add much value by April 1, 2022 given the current construction progress. Regardless, I estimate about \$9,000,000 in added tax base each year (new construction, renovations, additions, etc.). This represents 0.6% of the tax base and represents about \$175,500 in property tax revenue.

The group discussed the current fee structure at the Transfer Station. The Transfer Station could increase their fee structure to help offset expenses. The group would like to suggest that Erin come up with a new fee structure to present. The group discussed the metal revenue and the potential increase in the change of vendors and process. The group discussed that it's also hard to estimate because the price of metal is so fluid. The group discussed the increase in bag fees. Peter Royce explained that the Town hasn't increased prices since 1997/1998.

The group discussed the veteran's tax credit and how that would affect the tax rate.

The group discussed the paving projects. A lot of the 2022 budget will be funding a top coat to roads that were done last year. The group is uncomfortable not funding a warrant article for paving and they would like to add one.

The highway equipment list does not include a sidewalk bobcat. The group would like to discuss how that can be added to the list.

The flow of the Transfer Station was discussed and how to re-configure it. If a reconfiguration takes place, it might reduce the number of attendants.

There is \$682,000 on the warrant article docket. How much fund balance would be available to get us to the target of 12.5%? The group would like that information so they can prioritize the warrant articles.

Conner MacIver arrived at 5:15pm.

Conner MacIver discussed the tax rate setting and the impact it has on the unassigned fund balance percentage. The fund balance percentage went from 12.4% to 13.3%.

The group would like to discuss combining the ambulance and fire budget and put more money in that fund, with hopes of offsetting more of the cost of the ambulance. The fire expenditures are allowed to be paid out of the ambulance.

The ABC recommends that the additional hours in the per diem wages line for Fire be the responsibility of the revolving fund instead of the operating budget.

The ABC recommends putting a warrant article together to add Fire to the ambulance revolving fund.

Conner MacIver explained that the Meals and Rooms tax increased by 79% which will bring in more revenue to the Town.

The group also discussed recommending that the Select Board prioritize the warrant articles by importance on the ballot.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Amy Doherty.

DRAFT