

Canton Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
Monday, January 22, 2018

Minutes Voted on: 2/26/18
Vote: 5-0-0

Members Present:

Rob Barker, Nichola Gallagher, Dianne Gustafson, Cynthia Holcombe, Tim McKenna, Barbara Saint André and Cindy Thomas.

Members Absent:

All members were present.

Guests Present:

Chief Charlie Doody, Fire Department
George Comeau, Canton Community Preservation Committee (CCPC)
Lisa Lopez, Chair, Canton Community Preservation Committee (CCPC)
Kristen Phelps, Administrator, Canton Community Preservation Committee (CCPC)
Ellen Jones, Finance Committee Secretary

Opening: A meeting of the Canton Finance Committee was called to order by Chair Barker at 7:04 pm. on Monday, January 22, 2018 in the Salah Meeting Room of Town Hall.

A. Approval of Agenda

Chair Barker reviewed the items on the agenda which included a Reserve Fund Transfer Request from Fire Chief Doody, a discussion of the Fire Department FY18 budget and FY19 budget request, a discussion with the CCPC regarding their recommendations to ATM 2018 and a discussion of the FY19 budget requests for the Finance Committee and the Reserve Fund.

B. Announcements

There were no announcements made at the meeting.

C. New Business

Reserve Fund Transfer Request - \$200,000 – Fire Department- Chief Doody provided a summary of why FY18 thus far has been a difficult year for the Fire Department budget. Numerous IOD (in the line of duty) injuries, long term illnesses, an unexpected retirement and an unexpected transfer has caused at any given time 4-6 firefighters unavailable to work necessitating the need to call back firefighters to work overtime for shift coverage. At this point halfway through fiscal year 2018 100% of the overtime budget has been spent. The Chief has been challenged with trying to maintain staffing levels to keep two ambulances in service with the only solution being to either reduce the staffing by taking one ambulance off-line or to request a \$200,000 transfer from the Reserve Fund.

Chief Doody further explained that he has been working closely with Mr. Murgia who updates him periodically on the budget. They were in agreement that the best solution for now was to request a Reserve Fund transfer. The \$200,000 would allow the Fire Chief to cover expenses up to Town Meeting. If the deficit continued Mr. Murgia suggested that a transfer of approximately \$150,000 from the Ambulance Fund at Town Meeting would help to cover any remaining deficit through the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Murgia is estimating that there could be a \$478,000 deficit at fiscal year-end.

The Fire Chief reported that he recently had one firefighter return from IOD and one firefighter graduate from the fire academy. This could reduce the deficit to \$350,000 by the end of the fiscal year. Additionally, the Fire Chief is anticipating that 2-3 firefighters may return by the end of the fiscal year reducing the deficit even further. To control expenses Chief Doody has reduced the manning by having one ambulance out of service between 6 p.m. to 8 a.m.

FY19 – Fire Department Budget Request – 4 Additional (FTEs) Firefighters - Chief Doody and the Finance Committee discussed the merits of either adding additional firefighters or adding to the overtime budget. Chief Doody has been the Fire Chief for nine years and is in support of adding four additional firefighters. The Chief advocated that the cost of four additional firefighters would be below the projected overtime cost of \$1.2 million for fiscal 2018.

Ms. Gustafson stated that additional fixed costs such as benefits would have to be factored in for the four additional firefighters. Chief Doody stated that even with the addition of four FTEs there would still be the need for overtime. He is of the opinion that the four FTEs would cover what is contractually obligated. He also indicated that after at least a full year of four FTEs there might be the opportunity to reallocate some of the overtime budget towards salaries.

Ms. Gustafson stated that it is common that employees are used to earning overtime and that it has created an environment whereby overtime will most likely never go away because employees have grown accustomed to their income at a certain level and that it could be very difficult to remove. While the Chief was in agreement to this sentiment, he stated that he did not think vacation or sick time was being abused within his department. He further stated that there may never be enough overtime to cover the many categories of time that employees are eligible and entitled to such as vacation, sick time, bereavement, union business and training.

Chief Doody stated that he had met with Mr. Aspinwall and Mr. Murgia to discuss a revenue source for a transfer. The Ambulance Fund generates approximately \$1.2 million per year. Supplies, equipment and ambulances are usually purchased with funds from the Ambulance Fund. The Town is also paying for the emergency purchase of a ladder truck that was purchased a few years ago.

Chief Doody also stated that the \$200,000 reserve fund request is not only for financial reasons but for operational readiness and health and wellness reasons as well.

Ms. Gustafson made an inquiry if there would be a necessity for contract language to limit the amount of overtime an employee could work. Chief Doody stated that he would have to consult with labor counsel as to what the Town would be allowed to limit for overtime. The goal is to have 11 firefighters per shift per day and that goal is met through either voluntary overtime or forced overtime. Management currently has the right to decide for minimum staffing levels as to when and how to staff but contractually minimum manning has to be maintained with nine firefighters.

A motion made by Mr. McKenna to approve the request to transfer \$200,000 from the Reserve Fund to the Fire Department Overtime budget for FY18 was seconded by Ms. Holcombe. Vote: 7-0-0. The remaining balance for FY18 in the Reserve Fund is \$200,000. Of the original \$500,000 at the start of the fiscal year \$100,000 was approved for the School Department for a feasibility study.

FY19 Fire Department Budget Requests - The dispatch budget request for FY19 remained unchanged as there was no change in the fee amount for regional dispatch which was implemented July 1, 2017 after a one-month trial period in June. Chief Doody stated that the regional dispatch has been successful. Some of the significant benefits are that a firefighter no longer has to be dedicated to working the dispatch desk, the service to residents has been better and the regional dispatchers are trained in

emergency medical dispatch who are trained to give pre-hospital instructions over the phone. Chief Doody commended Louis Jutras, Manager of Information Systems who provided his expertise with regard to the communication, radio and computer systems in place.

For the Fire Department budget the Chief is requesting an increase to his salaries of \$212,893 for four firefighters. Benefit costs would be approximately 30-40% of salary costs or \$65,000. Contractually, two firefighters could be off on vacation per shift. The Chief estimates that 90% of the time he has two firefighters on vacation on a daily basis. Chief Doody further explained that if one firefighter were added per shift, you might eliminate a cost of \$365,000 per year by wiping out the cost of overtime to cover that vacation day. If four firefighters are added to the manning creating a total of 13 firefighters per shift, Ms. Gustafson inquired if the Chief would be monitoring the staffing to have only 11 firefighters scheduled per shift. The Chief is comfortable that there will be overtime costs regardless of how manning is scheduled. Ms. Gustafson is doubtful that adding four additional firefighters will solve the overtime problem unless management practices are implemented to address the manning. She further stated that many of these concerns would have to be discussed with counsel. If the additional firefighters are added, would this mean the Town would have to contractually increase minimum manning.

Ms. Saint Andre questioned the Chief on his FY19 budget request with additional funds being requested for the overtime budget. Chief Doody estimates that there have been less than 10 days this fiscal year whereby shift coverage was at 12 firefighters. Chief Doody stated that every shift, every day, incurs overtime.

The Chief spoke in support of hiring local firefighters to avoid the possibility of the employee transferring out of the town to another fire department. The Chief prefers hiring paramedics. Hiring a local employee who is only an EMT adds to the Fire Department's cost of training them to be paramedics. The alternative is to hire from the civil service list.

With regard to the \$40,000 permit fees that are collected on an annual basis, the Town is statutorily restricted on how much they can charge for fire alarm inspection/permit fees. The cost of a Fire Prevention Lieutenant to conduct the inspection far exceeds the \$50 permit fee collected.

The Finance Committee indicated to the Chief that they would like him to attend a future meeting to continue the discussion regarding the Fire Department budget.

ATM 2018 Recommendations of the Canton Community Preservation Committee (CCPC) – Ms. Lopez gave a brief overview of the 26 projects approved by the CCPC so far and that the seven acres of open space land at the former Plymouth Rubber site that was approved by Town Meeting 2015 for a purchase price of \$1.7 million would be bonded over a 10-year period. Ms. Lopez further stated that there was approximately \$680,000 of funds uncommitted from prior years with another \$600,000 available for total available funds of \$1.3 million. The CCPC is recommending six motions for Annual Town Meeting as follows:

Paul Revere Heritage Site – Additional Bonding requested for Purchase of Open Space Land - \$325,500

Ms. Lopez stated that the Board of Selectmen and Paul Revere Heritage Commission applied to the CCPC to increase the bonding for the 10-year bond from \$1.74 million to \$2,065,500 for an increase of \$325,500 to account for an increase in the value of the parcel to be purchased because improvements/betterments had been made to the land (irrigation system and conduit for lighting). She further stated that the developer has indicated that all of the environmental clean-up has been done to the site.

A Finance Committee member inquired as to the approval process as to how the increase to the bonding request came about. Ms. Lopez stated that the Open Space Sub-Committee of the Paul Revere Heritage Commission presented to the Board of Selectmen who presented this request to the Town Planner who then presented the application to the CCPC. BOS did vote to approve this application moving forward. Ms. Lopez stated that if ATM 2018 does not approve the CCPC's recommendation to increase the bonding to \$2,065,500 that the developer would be responsible for these improvement costs.

A Finance Committee member indicated that she had concerns with the language in the CCPC's meeting documentation which stated, "With the passage of time as well as improvements to the land, including an irrigation system to keep the new "Town Green" green, the land has appreciated in value."

Ponkapoag Playground Restoration - \$63,500 – The Recreation Commission submitted this application to CCPC to restore the playground for safety issues. In response to a Finance Committee member's inquiry if the playground would be ADA compliant and allow access to all residents, Ms. Lopez stated that the CCPC had the rough specs for the project and assumes that it would be ADA compliant.

Bolivar Pool Resurfacing & Deck Replacement - \$300,000 – This project does not include the pool house. Ms. Lopez stated that the CCPC voted in support of this application but that it would be dependent upon the results of a comprehensive pool study that is expected to be completed prior to ATM 2018. She also stated that the Recreation Commission would consider the results of this study in determining if they would move forward with this project.

Kennedy School Field Bathroom & Storage Facility - \$173,500 – Ms. Lopez stated that Town Meeting 2017 approved \$173,500 for this project, which represented 50% of the eligible project costs or \$347,000. Total cost of proposed project is \$463,400. The Canton Little League (CLL) has been attempting to raise \$113,000 for the concession stand portion of this project. To date CLL has raised \$60,000. CLL with the support of the School Committee applied to the CCPC for the balance of the funds. The Buildings Renovation Committee (BRC) would oversee project administration. CLL committed to pay for monitoring and maintenance of the facility.

Walsh Field Lights - \$150,000 – Canton Public Schools applied to the CCPC for this lighting project at Walsh Field, one of three fields available for softball. In response to a Finance Committee member's questions with regard to neighborhood support or opposition, Ms. Lopez stated that there were no issues with neighbors regarding these lights. A Finance Committee member asked if this project would need ZBA approval.

Canton Housing Authority - \$80,000 – This \$80,000 request is the final phase of a three-year project for the installation of exhaust fans at Rubin Court Senior Housing Complex.

Tilden House – New Motion for ATM 2018 - \$0.00 Funds – Ms. Lopez stated that the BRC voted to close out its responsibility for the Tilden House project because of the vote passed at ATM 2017 that gave complete authority to the BOS for this project. A new motion will be included as part of the CCPC warrant article that would authorize a third party (under a 30-year lease) to spend the CPA funds that were approved in 2015. The Town would have to declare the property as surplus property and the responsible third party would have to go out to bid on this project. The process for invoice payment would be the same as for other Town building projects. A clerk of the works or OPM (owner's project manager) would have to oversee this project. A Finance Committee member commented that oversight of this project will be crucial for the Town

D. Other Business/Open Issues

Discuss and Vote the Reserve Fund Budget for FY19

A motion made by Ms. Saint André to recommend a Reserve Fund budget of \$500,000 for FY19 was seconded by Ms. Gustafson. Vote: 7-0-0.

Discuss and Vote the Finance Committee Budget for FY19

A motion made by Ms. Saint André to recommend a Finance Committee budget of \$11,500 for FY19 was seconded by Mr. McKenna. Vote: 7-0-0.

E. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for October 10, 2017 were being reviewed by the Committee and would be voted at a future date.

F. **Next Meeting Date:** The next meeting date will be Monday, January 29, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. in the Salah Meeting Room of Town Hall.

Chair Barker asked the members to inform the Finance Committee secretary if there is a meeting that they will be unable to attend so that we can assure a quorum is met for the meetings.

Chair Barker stated that he would write a letter to the Editor of the Canton Citizen seeking residents to join the Finance Committee.

Adjournment: A motion made by Ms. Saint André to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. was seconded by Mr. McKenna. Vote: 7-0-0.

Minutes reviewed by: Rob Barker

Respectfully submitted,



Rob Barker
Chair, Canton Finance Committee

**Canton Finance Committee Meeting
Monday, January 22, 2018
Meeting Documents**

Please note: These meeting documents may also be found on the Town's website under the Posted Minutes section (Laser Fiche).

Agenda (1 page).

Reserve Fund Transfer Request Form - \$200,000 – Fire Department, dated 12/11/17 (1 page).

Estimate of Fire Department's Fiscal 2018 Operating Expenses, dated 1/18/18 (1 page).

Fire Department's Budgeted Overtime, dated 1/18/18 (1 page).

Fire Department Overtime, FY13 Actuals through FY18 Estimates, dated 1/18/18 (1 page).

Ambulance Fund #170, FY14 through FY19 Estimate, dated 1/18/18 (1 page).

Email from Fire Chief Charlie Doody to Jim Murgia dated 12/12/17 regarding Reserve Fund Transfer Request information (3 pages).

FY2018 Fire Department Budget Status Report prepared by Chief Charles Doody (12 pages).

FY2019 Fire Department Budget prepared by Chief Charles doody (10 pages).

Information from Canton Community Preservation Committee regarding their Recommendations to ATM2018 (3 pages).