

**Finance Committee Members Present:** Christos Arsondiadis, David Clough, Emilio Mauro, Barbara Saint André, Cindy Thomas and Wai Wong.

**Finance Committee Members Absent:** Rob Barker and Dan Cole.

**Guests Present:**

Charlie Doody, Fire Chief  
Ellen Jones, Finance Committee Secretary  
Randy Scollins, Finance Director  
Mike Trotta, Superintendent, Department of Public Works (DPW)

**Opening:** Mr. McKenna called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. in the Salah Meeting Room of Town Hall.

**Approval of Agenda:** Mr. McKenna reviewed the agenda.

**New Business:**

**Discussion with Mike Trotta regarding DPW FY21 Budget Requests and Water and Sewer Enterprise Funds FY21 Budget Requests**

The Department of Public Works is looking for an approximately 3.5% increase or \$134,000 over its base budget (This increase includes Water Enterprise Fund and Sewer Enterprise Fund). The \$131,000 increase is split out over the following five items:

- **Public Buildings (#192)** – Mr. Trotta is seeking a \$20,000 increase for this budget to be used for roof repairs to Memorial Hall. A buildings study of Town-owned buildings was conducted a few years ago and it was recommended at that time that the slate roof shingles needed to be replaced and it was recommended that they be done a few at a time over a period of years.
- **DPW Administration (#400)** - \$39,000 increase from FY20. Of the additional \$39,000 requested, \$36,000 will be used to produce the annual stormwater report. In the past Canton has been able to produce this report on its own, but because of a new 5-year permit for stormwater, there is a requirement for a very rigorous annual report. Mr. Trotta does not think the Town of Canton can do this report without hiring a consultant. The remaining \$3,000 will be used for software licensing. The Town has an assessment management software entitled CitiWorks. The software is renewed annually. This year, the cost is \$30,000, which will be split among the Public Works Department (\$3,000), Water Enterprise and Sewer Enterprise budgets.
- **Highway Maintenance (#420)** – Mr. Trotta is seeking an \$8,000 increase to cover contract obligations that were negotiated with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) union to cover cell phone costs. The Town agreed to give a stipend to working foreman and operators that are using their own cell phones to communicate with the Highway Supervisor. The \$8,000 is evenly split between the communications budget and the uniform rental budget.
- **Snow & Ice Fixed Costs Budget (#423)** – The goal of the DPW Superintendent, former Finance Director, Jim Murgia, and former Chair of the Finance Committee, Rob Barker, was to gradually increase the Snow and Ice Budget by \$50,000 per year. The snow budget increase would be equally divided for this upcoming fiscal year between the purchase of services and salt, sand, and chemicals.
- **Street Signs (Traffic) Budget (#425)** – The request to increase this budget by \$14,000 is for the purpose of covering electricity for signals (\$6,000 increase) and maintenance for traffic signals and specialty lights in the Town (\$8,000 increase). These two budget line items have been overspent for several years in a row.

- The total increase being requested is approximately \$134,000. Without the Snow & Ice increase, Mr. Trotta is looking for a 2.6% increase over the base budget. If the Snow & Ice increase is included, it amounts to about a 3.5% increase.

Mr. McKenna asked Mr. Trotta for more detail on the following items as well as Annual Town Meeting Articles:

**Town Hall Renovations** – Town Hall requires outside repairs at an approximate cost of \$1,000,000 for not only roof repairs but also brick repointing, sealing of cornices and resealing and/or replacement of windows. Mr. Trotta indicated the building is also in need of inside repairs at a cost of approximately \$1-2 million through borrowing including HVAC upgrades etc. Mr. Mauro asked whether these various projects would be done piecemeal or could be combined into a more formal renovation of the Town Hall to possibly benefit from the cost saving economies of a unified project. Mr. Trotta noted that that ideas is being considered.

**Stormwater** – The asset management program, CitiWorks, has been funded at Annual Town Meeting for several years. The hardware is in place and software is being used. Catch basins are monitored using this software, which ties into the stormwater report for recording the amount of material being taken out of catch basins, manholes being maintained and inspections on outfalls. What used to be a 6-page report prepared by the Town could be a 56-page report for which the Town will need the expertise of an outside consultant. The cost of the software license could be \$45,000 for this year alone.

**Snow & Ice Fixed Costs Budget** – Mr. Trotta stated that adding another \$50,000 to the Snow & Ice Budget will bring the total budget to \$700,000. Any excess/unused funds at the end of the fiscal year will revert back to the general fund.

**Article 27 – Acquire Easement – 145 Sherman Street for drainage and Article 28 - Acquire Easement – 293 York Street – for drainage**- At the 145 Sherman Street location the Town is currently dumping water (stormwater runoff) onto a resident’s property. The resident wants to build a house on the lot and has agreed to give the Town an easement right on this property to formalize the arrangement. At the 293 York Street location there is no drainage problem but water sheet runoff with low areas in which water runoff runs to a brook. Mr. Trotta believes there are no costs to the Town and that these easements will be gifted to the Town.

**Article 29 – Acquire Easement – Drinking Water – Well 9A & Well 16** – There are Zone 1 and Zone 2 areas around wells. Zone 1 is a 400-foot radius around the well and Zone 2 is the drainage area that surrounds the well. Massachusetts drinking water guidelines require the Town to own or control Zone 1. Well 9A and Well 16 are new wells. Well 9A is 150 feet away from Well 9. Because Zone 1 has shifted a bit it is now encroaching upon Brookmeadow Country Club property. In order to control Zone 1, the Town needs to obtain a conservation covenant or restriction and an easement from Brook Meadow to cover the Zone 1. For Well 9A the Town needs about 2,200 square feet of Brookmeadow easement. For Well 16 the Town needs almost an acre of easement from Brookmeadow. The Town is currently negotiating with Brookmeadow on the final language and disposition. Because Brookmeadow essentially does not want to give the easements to the Town, the Town may have to acquire the easements through eminent domain. The Town cannot accept the easements as a gift or cannot buy them until finalized by Town Meeting. Mr. Mauro inquired if there would be a significant cost involved if the Town had to acquire these easements through eminent domain/taking. Mr. Trotta did not know the cost involved.

**Article 40 and Article 41 – Street Acceptances** – Mr. Trotta stated that Mr. Aspinwall is negotiating with the residents on the costs for street improvements to Village Gate Road (\$230,000 to \$250,000) and Historical Way (\$150,000) but the process is not close to being resolved, so these articles may have to be indefinitely postponed.

## Discussion with Chief Charlie Doody, Fire Department regarding FY21 Budget Requests

Chief Doody provided the following information regarding his budget requests:

- Chief Doody is requesting a \$161,663 increase to salaries or a 3% increase. This includes a \$95,840 increase to the overtime salary line item which he believes is underfunded approximately \$100,000 every year.
- Ms. Saint André stated that when the Town decided to join the Holbrook regional dispatch and the Town hired four new Lieutenants, part of the reason from a financial point of view was to hopefully decrease the overtime spending. She also inquired if the Town was saving money on the dispatching and was it helping with overtime costs. Chief Doody stated that he was very clear from the outset of the dispatch program that there would not be savings in overtime. The Town is in the third year for regional dispatch. When the Town joined regional dispatch, they were able to move four firefighters from the dispatch desk to the trucks in the field. The Captains riding on the trucks were moved to vehicles to act as Shift Commanders. The budget request for the regional dispatch is \$258,000 which is a 7% increase from last year. This increase is because they are building a new regional dispatch facility. Included in the dispatch grant funds will be an upgrade to Canton's communications system. This will be an approximately \$90,000 upgrade to Canton's microwaves, cabling and radios as well as the speaker system at Canton Station 2. The dispatch is only for fire and ambulance. The Police Department is doing their own dispatch. If the Fire Department and Police Department were to have a combined dispatch in Canton the cost would be approximately \$500,000. In response to Ms. Saint André's inquiry if the Town was saving any money by having the regional dispatch, Chief Doody responded no. The advantages of being a regional dispatch member are slight savings in capital equipment, upgrades in service and increased safety.
- The **Fighting Fires budget line item** was explained by Chief Doody. Many years ago, the Fire Department relied on off-duty firefighters to come back to help out with fires or large scale events. Firefighters were paid on a monthly basis small increments for the hours that they returned from off-duty to help fight fires. This is an overtime budget ranging from increments of one hour to three hours. The main overtime budget line item is scheduled overtime and is usually a 10 to 14-hour shift.
- The overtime budget can be affected by injuries among any of the 54 firefighters, sick absences, vacations or vacancies due to transfers or retirements.
- The **Paid Holiday's budget line item** has a request for a budget increase due to three additional firefighters. The Chief clarified that he has three vacancies. The Chief stated that once these three vacancies are filled, it should help to reduce overtime costs.
- The Chief stated that he has been having difficulties hiring firefighters because typically they prefer to hire paramedics to allow dual service and there are just not enough to fill the firefighter positions that are currently available in the Commonwealth. He also tries to hire home-town people which adds to the difficulty for hiring.
- Other increases to the budget the Chief is requesting are 3% increases for contractual obligations to line items such as **Fighting Fires Salary and Overtime-LT on Shift**.
- The Chief is requesting a \$31,200 (20 hours per week) increase to the **Overtime-Mechanic budget line item**. The cost of taking care of the equipment and engines that are more computerized than mechanical has been on the rise. The Chief has a firefighter that is also a mechanic and is head of fleet maintenance who has become certified to be an Emergency Vehicle Technician. The Chief is hoping that by increasing this budget line item he will save on maintenance costs by not having to send the vehicles out for service to Greenwood Emergency Vehicles.
- **Vacation Buybacks budget line item** – The Chief stated that a vacation buyback clause was negotiated with the last contract. This was an attempt to get vacation time off of the books so this vacation time would not have to be covered by overtime. The contract allows firefighters to give back from one to eight vacation days for which the Town compensates the firefighter for at the regular rate of pay.

With regard to expenses for the Fire Department budget the Chief offered the following information:

- **Purchase of Services** – This budget line item will fund the 5-year lease for garage space at a cost of \$51,755 for FY21. There is a 2% cost increase per year in the lease agreement.

- **Fire Safety Training** – A \$4,600 increase is being requested for this budget for fire pump and live fire training for 54 firefighters.
- **Heating Fuel** – The Chief is requesting an additional \$3,000 increase for this budget due to annual usage.
- **Cancer Screening Program** – The Chief has reallocated some of the budget from the Physical Fitness Program and Professional Service Medical Exams to the budget line item entitled “Professional Services Cancer Screening”. The Town is contracted with Life Scan Wellness. To date 35 firefighters have taken advantage of these comprehensive physicals, which includes imaging/ultrasound imaging.

**Ambulance Budget** – The only changes to this budget is a 3% increase to the Overtime Ambulance Station 2 salary line item and a 3% increase to the Paramedic Training Overtime salary line item.

**Dispatch Budget** – The FY21 budget increase includes an increase of \$17,000 to the Purchase of Services line item for a total of \$248,113. This represents a 7% increase because of a new facility being built. This will go down next year to the normal 3% per year increase.

**Fire Alarms Budget** – There is no budget increase to the Fire Alarms budget for FY21.

**Unmanned Ambulance Budget** – Canton used to house an ambulance for mutual aid to other towns. This program has been disbanded, so the budget has been reduced to zero because it is no longer needed.

**Emergency Management Budget** – The Chief is requesting a \$2,800 increase to the Purchase of Services line item for the Everbridge/Reverse 911 public information system.

**Canton Alliance Against Substance Abuse (CAASA) Budget** – The Fire Chief is not requesting an increase for the CAASA \$10,000 budget for FY21. The Town will be applying for the Drug-Free Communities federal grant valued at \$625,000 to be paid over five years. If received, this grant will enable the Town to hire a substance abuse coordinator in the second year of the grant. This position will oversee CAASA as well as policy issues, by-law issues etc. The William James College is the provider for interface for mental health, a resource for residents of Canton to help out with connecting residents to a mental health provider. It is not a hotline for residents that may be in distress. The membership for this service was paid through a \$30,000 grant from the State.

**Old Business:**

**Public Comments:** There were no public comments.

**Announcements:** Mr. Mauro stated that the Capital Planning Committee may not be ready to meet with the Finance Committee on March 5 because of a scheduling conflict with one of their meetings prior to March 5.

**Approval of Minutes:**

**A motion made by Ms. Thomas to approve the minutes for March 7, 2019 as written was seconded by Ms. Saint André. Vote: 6-0-1.**

**A motion made by Ms. Thomas to approve the minutes for January 23, 2020 as written was seconded by Ms. Saint André. Vote: 7-0-0.**

**A motion made by Ms. Thomas to approve the minutes for February 10, 2020 as written was seconded by Mr. Mauro. Vote: 7-0-0.**

**A motion made by Ms. Thomas to approve the minutes for February 12, 2020 as written was seconded by Mr. Mauro. Vote: 6-0-1.**

**Next Meeting Date:** The next Finance Committee meeting will take place on March 5, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. in the Salah Meeting Room of Town Hall.

**Adjournment:** A motion made by Ms. Saint André to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 p.m. was seconded by Mr. Wong. **Vote: 7-0-0.**

Minutes reviewed by: Emilio Mauro

Respectfully submitted,

X

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Tim McKenna  
Chair, Canton Finance Committee

**Canton Finance Committee Meeting  
February 26, 2020**

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

**For information regarding department budget requests please follow the link below:**

<https://www.town.canton.ma.us/DocumentCenter/View/5658/FY21-Municipal-Budget---Dept-Requests---Jan-2020>

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