



TOWN OF TRURO

BUDGET TASK FORCE

Meeting Minutes

February 4, 2022 – 1:00 pm

REMOTE BUDGET TASK FORCE MEETING

Via GoToMeeting Platform

Select Board Present: Robert Weinstein (Chair); Susan Areson (Clerk); John Dundas; Kristen Reed (Vice Chair);

Select Board Absent: Stephanie Rein

Finance Committee Present: Robert Panessiti (Chair); Richard Wood (Vice Chair)

Other Participants: Darrin Tangeman (Town Manager); Alex Lessin (Finance Director); Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Barbara Carboni; Fire Chief Timothy Collins; Trudy Brazil (Town Accountant); Tricia Ford (Library Director); Stephanie Costigan (Superintendent of Truro Central School); Heather Harper (Administrator of Business and Finance at Truro Central School); Kolby Blehm (School Committee Chair)

Chair Weinstein called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm to discuss/review the FY23 Budget for the following departments:

Library

Library Director Ford presented the budget to the Members and stated that the library is approximately 2% of the Town's annual budget. In addition to normal operational duties to support the community, the library staff has assisted visitors with trusted information on COVID-19, assisted individuals with digital access to medical and financial institutions, answered questions about 3G cellular service and has been a sanctuary for those without power or those who live alone and want human contact during the day. Monthly visits by Truro Central School students have now resumed and students leave with over 150 books per visit. The staff is working with the Board of Trustees on a new Strategic Plan. The library staff is excited to resume regular hours to create community connection and intellectual development. The library was open 42.5 hours per week (preCOVID-19) and is currently open at 34 hours per week. This is aligned to neighboring communities' libraries.

In this budget, Library Director Ford has 3 staffing increases: a request of a position increase for the 25 hours per week "Coordinator" staff position to a 40-hour position, to handle program inquiries, reporters, and press releases; increase a 35-hour employee to a 40-hour employee as a "Staff Librarian" to ensure the staff could assist visitors efficiently; and finally, the third request is to hire a "Summer Assistant" to help during the summer season.

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Library Director Ford is asking for a \$3,500 increase from \$65,000 in the materials budget which is for a total of \$68,500 to also maintain certification levels.

Library Director Ford is requesting a \$500 increase in printing from \$1,500 to \$2,000. Ms. Areson asked Library Director Ford when the library suspended fines and Library Director Ford said that the profession is moving to being "fine free". Library Director Ford added that the suspension of fines occurred in March 2020 and has not affected the fiscal well-being of the library, yet fines brought in between \$2,000 - \$3,000 of revenue.

Select Board Member Dundas asked if a book is checked out, and not returned or lost, is there a tracking mechanism so the Town can track the loss. Library Director Ford replied that the individual is charged for the replacement cost of the book.

Finance Committee (FinCom) Chair Panessiti asked about usage data for the library such as for programs and number of visitors and Library Director Ford replied that she can provide some of the information as COVID-19 adversely affected the data, but she could provide data on circulation programs, electronic books, and programs for children. FinCom Chair Panessiti commented that this information could be very useful for the purpose of economic development.

Library Director Ford asked for an increase request of \$20,000 for a Space Planner to explore items for the future as carpet replacement for the children's room and new signage. Ms. Reed inquired of Library Director Ford whether this included acoustic shelving and the reconfiguration of her office for greater privacy. Library Director Ford replied that she had withdrawn those requests as they were not fixes for the problems and she was uncomfortable spending the funds for those projects. Mr. Wood noted that future project needs have not diminished over time. Mr. Wood asked Library Director Ford how many books are checked out (including frequency) from the basement and Library Director Ford replied that the basement is for non-fiction books, but it is commonly used by teenagers who watch television or play video games there. Library Director Ford also suggested that the basement could be used for meeting rooms since the Town frequently needs meeting space.

Town Manager Tangeman asked Library Director Ford to include the circulation statistics in the narrative of her budget request. Additionally, Town Manager Tangeman asked Library Director Ford about details around the Provincetown library's open hours of 51 hours per week yet had less circulation than Truro. Library Director Ford replied the issue was parking and added that during the summer there are a lot of visitors to the Truro library from Provincetown as there is plenty of parking.

Town Manager Tangeman asked if there were any other questions and there were none. Library Director Ford thanked the Budget Task Force members and Chair Weinstein did a brief recap of the library's budget request.

Chair Weinstein commented that the in the budget request that the total operational budget, except for the previously stated \$20,000+ and whatever is included in the capital improvement portion, is \$459,371 which is \$10,662 more than the previous year year-to-year. Chair Weinstein noted that this is an increase of 2.38% which is admirable when looking at level-funding.

On the topic of staffing, Chair Weinstein noted that the "Community Outreach Specialist" would require an additional 15 hours per week, the "Staff Librarian" would be an additional 5 hours per week, and the

"Summer Clerk" position were all reasonable requests. Chair Weinstein thanked Library Director Ford for her care in the preparation of her budget requests.

Chair Weinstein said that libraries in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts operate under the control of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC). Chair Weinstein added that when it comes to library budgets, the MBLC specifies, that based upon circulation statistics, what monies must be spent on books, periodicals, electronic information, and Cape Libraries Automated Materials Sharing (CLAMS). Chair Weinstein asked Library Director Ford to provide a brief overview of these organizations. Library Director Ford said that CLAMS includes every Cape library except for Sandwich and CLAMS has a staff of four who work virtually. The annual fee for Truro is less than \$20,000. CLAMS is a non-profit, cooperative association of libraries that shares resources through a computer network with terminals located in each member library. Library Director Ford said that the Outer Cape libraries see the world a bit different than other Cape areas such as the necessity of volunteers who work at the circulation desk. Library Director Ford stated that MBLC has rules and established standards such as the requirements for a library to have a certified librarian on staff and be open a minimum number of hours per week based upon a town's population.

Chair Weinstein asked if there were any other questions and there were none. Chair Weinstein thanked Library Director Ford for her presentation, and she departed the meeting.

Public Education

Chair Weinstein introduced the Truro School District Superintendent Stephanie Costigan who introduced herself. As of October 1, 2021, Superintendent Costigan stated that Truro had 111 students enrolled in pre-school through the 6th grade. Of those students, 22 are "school choice" students from Provincetown, Wellfleet, Eastham, Brewster, and Yarmouth. Superintendent Costigan noted that at the middle school and high school level, 91 students were enrolled at Nauset, 18 were enrolled at Provincetown schools, and 10 were enrolled at Cape Cod Tech. The total number of Truro enrolled students is 280 and 22 "school choice" students. Superintendent Costigan thanked Library Director Ford for welcoming back the students to the Truro Library and it is great to resume that activity for the children.

Superintendent Costigan broke down the budget overview into two parts:

Elementary Budget includes pre-school through grade 6. The proposed budget is increased by 7.14% which reflects several factors to include contractual changes because of three Collective Bargaining Units and the change in administrative structure. Superintendent Costigan also addressed the following budget topics:

- There is now a fulltime Superintendent/Director of Student Services who is Superintendent Costigan after the School Committee recommended that the two positions were blended into one. A new school principal, Patrick Riley, has also been hired.
- Due to the addition of a second pre-school room and the retirement of a special education teacher, the budget request reflects the hiring of a replacement special education teacher along with two educational assistants due to higher enrollment of special needs students.
- The School Committee recommended increases in the substitute daily rates for teachers, educational assistants, and the nurse.

Superintendent Costigan paused to answer any questions and there were none. Superintendent Costigan noted that Heather Harper (Administrator of Business and Finance) and Kolby Blehm (School Committee Chair) have joined the meeting.

Secondary Budget has decreased 8.17% due to lower number of enrollments at Nauset, less transportation costs, and fewer special education students enrolled.

The total school requested budget is \$5,985,545 which is an increase of 1.31% over last year's budget. Superintendent Costigan thanked the Task Force members and ready to answer any questions.

Chair Weinstein thanked Superintendent Costigan for her presentation and provided Superintendent the opportunity to respond to the following topics:

- Chair Weinstein noted that the school was rated as “mediocre” by Jack Peak, host of Lower Cape Television’s “Peak Time”, when he compared the school to other adjacent community schools.
- The concerns of some community residents regarding high expenditures for students enrolled outside of Truro.
 - Superintendent Costigan replied that as a new superintendent she is developing an Entry Plan with input from constituents and stakeholders to determine strengths and weaknesses of the school. From this information, Superintendent Costigan will then develop a Strategic Plan that will cover the educational strategies for the next 3-5 years to address concerns. Superintendent Costigan also noted that Truro only has a Tuition Agreement with Nauset. The Tuition Agreement with Nauset and the cost per pupil is approximately \$23,000 per pupil. Superintendent Costigan also addressed student achievement and that classes under 10 do not get reported which can skew Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) data lower. Superintendent Costigan added that the school has other metrics through which the school assesses student achievement and growth. She noted that she was encouraged by the significant improvement of MCAS test scores during the pandemic when compared to other schools in the state as well as Truro’s results last year. She attributed this to the establishment of cohorts, instead of classrooms, during COVID-19 that reduced the number of students per teacher ratio. For example, one grade of sixteen pupils had a teacher, an educational assistant, a specialist teacher, and often an academic support teacher which was a ratio of 4:1. She was proud of the individual attention that each child receives from the school.
- Select Board Member Dundas expressed concern about the transition from the elementary school to middle school but thanked Superintendent Costigan for her efforts to make this transition smoother. Select Board Member Dundas asked Superintendent Costigan as to the size of next year’s sixth grade at the school.
 - Superintendent Costigan responded first to Select Board Member Dundas’ concern and noted that she already has a scheduled sit-down meeting next week with Nauset middle school teachers who receive Truro students. The purpose will be to obtain their information and feedback so she can facilitate improvement for all students in the transition. Superintendent Costigan said that this year there were only two 6th grade students so there was a proposed mixed 5th/6th grade. Superintendent Costigan said that a survey was recently sent out to predict next year’s 6th grade enrollment at Truro Central School and the initial feedback was mixed with the challenge being the class size.

- Finance Committee (FinCom) Chair Panessiti commented that it was very challenging to forecast an accurate school budget when so many variables are at play to include population shift between April and November. (FinCom) Chair Panessiti asked Superintendent Costigan what the Town can do to provide a quality education yet mitigating cost to meet that obligation.
 - Superintendent Costigan noted that her budget forecast started last October and that there are variables to consider including the need for special education.
- Town Accountant Brazil asked Superintendent Costigan to clarify about tuition costs as well as the new construction project of the new Nauset High School.
 - Superintendent Costigan explained that since Truro is not part of the Nauset Region, so Truro is not responsible for capital costs to include the building of the new Nauset High School which is a significant savings. The Tuition Agreement is negotiated every three years and will be renegotiated in 2024. Superintendent Costigan concluded that there are many advantages to being an independent and not all of them are financial.
- Chair Weinstein noted the challenge of developing a budget along with the population shift as well as special situations which may arise. Chair Weinstein mentioned a situation where it was required by Massachusetts law for the Town to provide transportation and other resources to one student which increased the budget by nearly \$500,000. Chair Weinstein asked Superintendent Costigan to provide an overview of the relationship between Truro and Cape Cod Regional Technical High School in Harwich.
 - Superintendent Costigan said that Cape Cod Regional Technical High School tuition is covered by the Town and not her budget. She added that she would serve as a liaison in a case where a Truro special education student attended the school.
- Chair Weinstein thanked Superintendent Costigan and said that her reply was what he expected. Chair Weinstein commented that he wanted the public and parents to have a better understanding of the Truro school's budget and those items over which Superintendent Costigan had no control.
- Town Manager Tangeman highlighted several things which he and Superintendent Costigan had discussed prior to today's budget meeting:
 - New Childcare Voucher Program for 2-year-old children
 - Reflected in the budget
 - Created a need for a new pre-school teacher
 - An increase of 9 students in pre-school this year
 - Discussion about a proposal to amend the Childcare Voucher Program for 2-year-old students due to the success and demand of the pilot program.
 - Superintendent Costigan noted that the addition of the second program was opened to all 3 and 4-year-old children of Truro residents and Truro employees who wanted 5 days of school. Typically, the class had 14-16 students. The priority was for 4-year-old children who were preparing to enter kindergarten. Due to the lack of childcare in Truro, the decision was made to implement the program. There are currently 25 children, including 6 children of Truro employees, who are enrolled.
- There were no other questions for Superintendent Costigan and Chair Weinstein thanked her for her presentation and efforts on behalf of the children. Superintendent Costigan thanked everyone and left the meeting. Chair Weinstein then turned over the meeting to Town Manager Tangeman.

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Accounting

Town Manager Tangeman asked Town Accountant Brazil to present. Town Accountant Brazil provided the following budget highlights:

- The proposed budget increase in salary/wages for FY23 over FY22 is just over \$5,000 or 2.9%.
- The purchase of services budget includes a request of \$2,500 in support outside of the audit that is paid for by the Select Board's budget.
- The supplies budget is slightly reduced by \$65.
- There is a slight decrease of \$40 in conferences as one member of the Truro accounting team will not attend the annual Auditor and Accountant Association School this March.
- Overall, the proposed budget is an increase of \$7,490.75 or 4.12% increase.

Chair Weinstein noted that there were no questions, so he thanked Town Accountant Brazil for her presentation. Town Accountant Brazil thanked Chair Weinstein for the opportunity.

Finance Director

Town Manager Tangeman asked Finance Director Lessin to present, and Finance Director Lessin thanked the Finance Department staff for its hard work. Headlines of the budget include:

- Financial transition of the Clerk's office to the Finance and Collections' office
- Reduction of the professional and technical budget by \$5,000
- Announcement of a new way for taxpayers to pay property taxes and vehicle excise tax

Select Board Member Dundas asked about benchmark for online payments or other examples of success. Finance Director cited Provincetown and Somerville as having successful online payment methods. There was a discussion of digitizing older records which date back several decades and Finance Director Lessin said that the priority would be due work with current records first and then work backwards.

Select Board Member Areson asked if taxpayers would be charged a fee for using the online payment method and Finance Director Lessin said that if taxpayers paid with a credit card, they would pay a fee but not for payments paid by electronic checks.

Chair Weinstein asked that Town Manager Tangeman and Finance Director Lessin to explain the creation of the new position of Finance Director to the taxpayers. Town Manager Tangeman noted that the position was created and budgeted by the previous town manager but not filled. Town Manager Tangeman explained that when he arrived, he had 16 direct reports which was cumbersome, so he made the recommendation to the Select Board to change that. Town Manager Tangeman looked at the Town of Bourne as an example to reorganize the Finance Department and to make it more efficient in terms of management, oversight, resourcing, and technology.

There were no other questions, so Chair Weinstein thanked Finance Director Lessin for his presentation and Finance Director Lessin thanked Chair Weinstein.

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Planning Department

Chair Weinstein asked Town Accountant Brazil to explain to the public the background that resulted in the creation of the position, Town Planner/Land Use Counsel, and the hiring of Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Carboni. Town Accountant Brazil stated that in prior years there was a minimal Planning Board budget which was structured around minute taking and advertising. Ms. Carboni was brought on last April and this will be the second year that the Planning Department budget is being presented after the first time (for Fiscal 2022). After Town Planner/Land Counsel Carboni introduced herself, Chair Weinstein asked Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Carboni to present.

Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Carboni noted that she has served in the position since April 2021. The Planning Department has three buckets:

- Permitting that supports the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals
- Long-term Planning that includes the Local Comprehensive Plan Committee, the Walsh Property Committee, and the Economic Development Committee
- Other that includes other Planning Department activities

Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Carboni provided an overview of the budget:

- Majority of the budget is Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Carboni's salary
- Request for \$7,800 for digitization to reduce old paper records and file cabinets

Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Carboni also highlighted other budget related items:

- A Westlaw subscription for \$2,400 to assist her in legal searches required for her role
- Request for funding to pursue additional certifications and credentials for her role
- Request for an increase in fees for certain permit applications as current fees don't cover the cost of advertising for public hearings

Select Board Member Areson asked Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Carboni about the reduction in hourly costs for public hearing minute taking and Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Carboni said that those costs now fall under the Town Clerk.

Chair Weinstein asked Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Carboni if her requested salary in the FY23 budget was \$134,401.77 which is about a \$5,000 increase from the previous year. Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Carboni said that it was and that it was due to a step increase of 1.45% over the previous year. Town Accountant Brazil confirmed that Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Carboni's figures were correct.

Chair Weinstein noted that the request for \$7,800 for digitization and the Westlaw subscription for \$2,400 seem necessary.

Chair Weinstein asked Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Carboni to clarify the request for \$3,500 for line item #57030.10 for planning and procurement. Town Planner and Land Use Counsel Carboni replied that this is the cost associated for her to take training, fees and obtain certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).

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Chair Weinstein thanked Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Carboni for her presentation and Town Planner/Land Use Counsel Carboni thanked Chair Weinstein.

Proposed Override for Fire/Rescue Staffing

Chair Weinstein invited Town Manager Tangeman to provide an introduction of Fire Chief Collins and his presentation on the proposed override for Fire/Rescue staffing.

Town Manager Tangeman noted that Fire Chief Collins had presented a SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) grant request at the last Select Board meeting. The Select Board approved the application for the SAFER grant that would pay for 4 firefighters/paramedics. The grant, if approved, would pay for the salaries and benefits of these 4 firefighters/paramedics. As a result of four firefighters/paramedics' resignations last summer, Truro faced a staffing crisis that resulted in a serious disruption in calls for service. Town Manager Tangeman invited Fire Chief Collins for the proposed override for Fire/Rescue staffing.

Fire Chief Collins noted that the application for the SAFER grant was submitted this morning, and hopefully, it will be approved. Fire Chief Collins then presented a PowerPoint presentation dated 1/25/2022 to discuss the proposed override for fire/rescue staffing.

Fire Chief Collins highlighted the following:

- The department currently staffs 2 firefighters on duty 24 hour per day
 - Required state minimum to operate an ambulance
 - Current staffing level leaves no margin for error
 - Operational challenges have no ability to absorb open shifts
 - Minimal staffing levels can increase firefighter fatigue
- A 3-person crew accomplishes 22 fireground tasks faster than a 2-person crew
- Increased staffing does:
 - Increase deployment capability
 - Reduces response times
- Reviewed the grand total cost for 4 firefighters/paramedics override = \$327,946.32
- Increased staffing could result in lower homeowner insurance

Fire Chief Collins summarized the following:

- Current staff model is at a bare minimum with no ability to account for absences
- Suitable staffing levels increases life safety and increases property conservation
- Suitable staffing levels reduce the impact of staffing shortages
- Suitable staffing levels are a force multiplier
- Suitable staffing levels has the potential to reduce overtime costs

Chair Weinstein thanked Fire Chief Collins for his presentation and noted that Truro would be in competition for the same talent, yet at the salaries offered, would likely be prohibitive for a single firefighter, or one with a family, to live in Truro due to increasing real estate prices.

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Chair Weinstein asked Fire Chief Collins what challenges existed for hiring talent especially when other Barnstable County departments offered significantly higher salaries. Fire Chief Collins said that Truro could never afford to pay a fireman to live in Truro and that people leave departments for a variety of reasons such as personal factors. Fire Chief Collins said that the compensation analysis that is currently being conducted will reveal how Truro compares to other Cape Cod communities. Fire Chief Collins noted that the three biggest challenges are: recruitment, retention, and training.

Chair Weinstein thanked Fire Chief Collins for his comments and insight.

Select Board Member Areson and Town Manager Tangeman discussed how the SAFER grant, if approved, provides salaries and benefits for 4 firefighters/paramedics for three years which is a great savings for Truro. Town Manager Tangeman said that he has had an initial conversation with Town Counsel on this topic. If Truro is approved for the SAFER grant, and the override is approved, the language could be flexible to allow funds to be used for the potential purchase of capital equipment and/or apparatus for the fire department. Fire Chief Collins clarified that SAFER grant monies can not be used to purchase for apparatus. Select Board Member Areson then confirmed with Town Manager Tangeman that override monies would be used only for fire service apparatus.

FinCom Chair Panessiti noted that this is good budgeting to reinforce the fire chief's concerns and reconfirm the comments by Select Board Member Areson. Town Accountant Brazil stated that the cost of outfitting for turnout gear and training are not covered by the SAFER grant. Fire Chief Collins emphasized that the process for the SAFER grant is first an electronic review where the application is scored. If the application receives an acceptable score, it then is subject to a peer review which is conducted at the National Fire Academy in Maryland. This is a highly competitive and national process.

Select Board Member Areson wanted to ensure that the voters know exactly what they are voting for in the stated purpose of the override. Select Board Member Areson asked Fire Chief Collins if an approved SAFER grant could be for 2 firefighters/paramedics and Fire Chief Collins said it would not. The SAFER grant is a \$1M grant and not less.

FinCom Chair Panessiti assured everyone that government finance must raise and appropriate funds unlike personal finance.

Select Board Member Dundas asked Fire Chief Collins when the electronic review of the SAFER application will occur, and Fire Chief Collins said that there was no date specified but he will check if an anticipated "turn down letter" will be sent prior to the Town meeting.

Chair Weinstein asked Fire Chief Collins if there were any penalties associated with not using all the SAFER grant monies within a specified period. Fire Chief Collins said that the \$1M grant monies are not issued at one time and that there is a "period of performance" to meet the goal of the grant.

Chair Weinstein thanked Fire Chief Collins for his presentation and comments. Fire Chief Collins thanked everyone.

Chair Weinstein asked Town Manager Tangeman if there was any other business and Town Manager Tangeman replied that there was not. Chair Weinstein thanked everyone for their participation and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

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Select Board Member Dundas made a motion to adjourn at 3:51 pm.
Select Board Member Reed seconded the motion.
So voted, by majority voice vote with no objections, motion carries.

Respectfully submitted,



Alexander O. Powers
Board/Committee/Commission Support Staff



Darrin K. Tangeman, Town Manager
Under the Authority of the Truro Select Board

