

Budget Task Force  
Selectmen Meeting Minutes  
February 22, 2016 – 8:00am  
Truro Town Hall

**Selectmen Present:** Chair- Paul Wisotzky, Robert Weinstein, Clerk-Maureen Burgess, Jay Coburn

**Finance Committee Present:** Robert Panessiti, Richard Wood, Lori Meads

**Staff/Others:** Town Administrator-Rae Ann Palmer, Town Accountant-Trudi Brazil

The meeting was called to order by Selectmen Chair Paul Wisotzky at 8:05am. A quorum was had by both the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee.

Town Administrator Palmer started with a printout showing the original 2016 appropriation from Annual Town Meeting and the revised budget which includes any of the Capital Exclusions.

The Board of Selectmen salary was upped to \$5,000 per Selectperson. Chair Wisotzky has had second thoughts about this. He would rather increase the Board of Selectmen budget to enable holding a summer meeting for part-time residents. The money could be used for mailings. Selectman Coburn objected to the mailings because a mailing is not done for year-round residents as well. He pointed out that the duties of the Chair of the Board of Selectmen are more time consuming, than the rest of the Board, and he would be in favor of upping the stipend for the Chair of the Board of Selectmen to \$5,000.

*Chair Wisotzky recused himself from this conversation.*

Mr. Panessiti stated that the salary of the Board of Selectmen is a Finance Committee motion. Mr. Weinstein feels that this is a reasonable request. It was suggested to lower the increase to \$1000. Another suggestion was to see what the other 15 Towns pay their Selectmen. Town Accountant Brazil stated that they could leave the amount in the budget and amend down. Chair Wisotzky then asked if some money needed to be placed in the budget to hold a summer meeting for part-time residents. It was agreed that no extra money was needed.

The Town Administrator Budget reflects splitting the Assistant Town Administrator/Town Planner position into two separate positions. It also reflects putting a 25 hour per week position in for the Town Planner. Town Administrator Palmer has some misgivings about decreasing the hours for that position, but she does not feel there would be a lot of support to have two full-time positions where there was once one. The Assistant Town Administrator will do the HR functions, and provide consistent support to the administration side, instead of focusing all their attention on planning. The Charter states that Town Administrator Palmer can reorganize the operations any way she wants but she cannot fill a position until it's funded. Both Ms. Meads and Mr. Coburn encouraged advertising for the Planner position to be done soon. Chair Wisotzky asked how much it would cost to make the Planner position full time. Both Town Accountant Brazil and Town Administrator Palmer stated that figure would be around \$30,000. There was discussion regarding whether the position had enough work to warrant being full time. Mr. Coburn then asked about moving Zoning staffing into the Planning position. Town Administrator Palmer plans on doing just that.

The Finance Committee has no increase.

The Town Accountant has a small increase (for wage increases that were either part of the contract negotiations with LIUNA, or with the Town Accountant and the Town Administrator).

The Assessors Department has an increase to five days, instead of three, for the part-time clerk. This is already a benefited position. The employee does not take the town insurance. Mr. Coburn asked if there has been a decrease in outside cost now that the full time employee is out in the field on a daily basis. Town Accountant Brazil stated that the Paul Kapinos portion has not changed because they are paid for the revaluation and evaluation work, but no data collectors have been needed to be brought in, nor data entry people. She believes there was a \$7,000-\$8,000 expenditure the last year of Linda's tenure, \$2,000-\$3,000 when Belinda came on and no outside support since Ms. Fryxell has been hired. The increase in the Assessing Department also includes the Paul Kapinos increase. The increase is not exclusively a wage/personnel increase. To increase the office assistant hours to full time would cost approximately

\$15,000. The Kapinos contract is going from \$18,000 to \$30,000. Deputy Assessor Fryxell is decreasing other parts of her budget to absorb as much of the increase as possible.

The Town Clerk/Treasurer/Collector budget has an increase in salaries from the negotiation with LIUNA.

The regular Town Counsel budget is lower because all of the contracts have been negotiated for three years. Some money has been left in because there seem to be some labor issues. There is a \$50,000 increase to start a review of the zoning bylaws. Kopelman and Paige have stated that it is a very large project and Town Administrator Palmer believes it should be done in chunks.

The vacation/sick leave contingency, pending salary and wage adjustments, is slightly down. Right now, that figure includes funding for the Board of Selectmen to negotiate with the Town Administrator for her contract, and funding to continue the review of positions (independent of the salary and wage study which was done). There is \$27,200 in there for potential reclassifications.

COLA is just for non-union. Everyone else's is built into their budgets.

The Information Technology Department's increase is for the email system. More email addresses were added to cover the Health Board, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. The new switches for the new phone system are also in this budget.

The registrar line is for the Presidential Election.

Money was added in to the Conservation Commission budget to enable them to do an educational piece. There are concerns that people do not understand what it means to live in a protected area, and the Conservation Commission would like to do an educational piece which would be mailed out.

The Town Hall Operating account has a line item for "unexpected repair" which is trending upward by \$3,000 each year. Town Administrator Palmer has placed that amount of money in that line item.

The Police Department has an increase related to wage adjustments. The amount in the budget is an estimate because the person who finishes the payroll from the union negotiations has been out.

The Fire Department has minimal increases.

The Animal Control Officer is requesting money in case she needs to impound an animal, and supplies for that animal.

Right now, the assessment for the Cape Cod Regional Technical High School is an unknown. Town Administrator Palmer thinks it will be significantly higher than what is estimated. The school has not responded to repeated requests for that dollar amount however they would like to come before the Board of Selectmen to present. They are scheduled on the March 22<sup>nd</sup> agenda.

Town Administrator Palmer would like to look at the Department of Public Works as a suite of departments. The decrease is because money was added in to fix the HVAC at Special Town Meeting and to do a Needs Assessment. Town Administrator Palmer has not kicked off the Needs Assessment yet because she is talking with the State about taking over (or sharing) the DOT garage. That will inform how detailed a Needs Assessment needs to be done. The big change in the DPW suite of budgets is the Transfer Station. There was a resignation from the Transfer Station. Rather than fill that open position, this budget reflects hiring two part-time, seasonal workers to fill in from May 1<sup>st</sup> through the end of October. The full time position will not be filled. They are also recommending closing the Transfer Station on the off-season holidays, and closing two days per week. What is being talked about is taking a portion of that

full time position and creating a part-time janitor to fill in at the Community Center, and at Town Hall, on weekends for meetings and special events.

Town Administrator Palmer is recommending starting to look at Public Works as one department instead of five. She has asked the Town Accountant to do it as one department when presenting at Town Meeting. The group was fine with that suggestion. Another item being recommended is to go to single-stream recycling. The Board of Selectmen needs to meet with the Board of Health to talk about changing fees.

The Board of Health budget has wage increases and the Assistant Health/Conservation Agent's salary in it.

The Council on Aging budget has wage increases.

The Public Library budget has wage and materials increases. The increase which is mandated to keep their certification is projected at \$65,000. CLAMS and electricity have both gone up. They have put in an additional \$1500 to create a new website, and another \$1500 for mailings.

The Recreation Commission has an increase in funding for a part-time administrative person who would work more hours in the summer and less hours the rest of the year. Town Administrator Palmer recommends this new position as she sees the Recreation Director accruing lots of comp time, and the Assistant Recreation Director is getting paid some overtime. Mr. Wood suggested a balance by restructuring the fee structure. Town Administrator Palmer stated that she and Recreation Director Clark have discussed a three-tier fee system. Recreation Director Clark is also compiling data regarding how many resident vs. non-resident children attend the programs. Chair Wisotzky is gathering from the discussion that if the new position could be funded by an increase of fees, that would be okay. Town Administrator Palmer stated that it would be a lot of money, and she's not sure that's attainable.

The Pamet Harbor Operations Budget has a contingency fund related to the ADA.

The budget is just shy of \$100,000 in increases in County Retirement, Workers Comp and Health Insurance. Health Insurance premiums, based upon which plan is chosen, will go up by either 9% or 11%.

Town Administrator Palmer is recommending a \$120,000 Capital Exclusion to fix the end of the pipe at East Harbor. She continued by going over a list of recommended items (lawn mower, pick-up truck, software, Public Safety Facility improvements, two police vehicles, chairs and tables for the meeting room in the Public Safety Facility, recreation/sticker software, and a space analysis for the library).

Town Administrator Palmer brought up cutting the Building Commissioner's hours. Right now that is a full time position. Cutting those hours would be a reduction of \$16,000 to that wage line. Her recommendation is to take that position down to four days to start. If everyone is comfortable with that, they will add that in to the budget.

Mr. Wood asked how the purchase of the police radios would be handled. Town Administrator Palmer is suggesting establishing a separate stabilization fund for Capital purchases. Since it is known that the purchase will not happen this year, they would transfer free cash, or other available funding over to the Capital stabilization fund. When the Town is ready to make the purchase, it would be brought to Town Meeting (special or annual) and transfer from that fund. Mr. Wood asked if they had to go to Town Meeting this year to establish the fund. Town Accountant Brazil confirmed, yes. Town Administrator Palmer also stated that she is not recommending any free cash transfers at Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Panessiti asked about the encumbrance of the reserve fund. Town Administrator Palmer has a conference call with the Army Corp of Engineers to talk about the scope and cost of the Pamet project.

Chair Wisotzky reviewed the request for job positions and asked Town Administrator Palmer to prioritize them. Town Administrator Palmer placed them in order of; Town Planner, increase to Assessor Clerk hours, and then the Administrative Assistant in Recreation.

Mr. Panessiti asked what they have been trying to accomplish over the last few years. They are trying to assess employment, how they are spending money, and where the burden is going to go, philosophically, on the expenses of the Town as it grows. If the positions are going to help the town run more efficiently, if it is a net-net reduction in expenses, that's great. If the message is that they are looking at staffing and creating a more efficient, cost-effective system, then that's the message. Chair Wisotzky added that they are also not skimping on service. Town Administrator Palmer added that they are aligning the operations with the values, goals, and objectives of the community.

There was a discussion about benefiting the Fire Department. Concerns were aired. Town Administrator Palmer is going to speak with Fire Chief Collins. She is concerned that the Town is not treating these employees fairly. These employees are working 40 hours for zero benefits. Selectman Coburn has the same concern. Mr. Panessiti stated that this is where Chief Collins can advise. Is it more cost effective to benefit these people vs per diem with no benefits? Town Administrator Palmer believes she needs to get labor counsel's opinion.

Selectman Coburn would like to know where they stand on the request in to the CPC for housing. Town Administrator Palmer stated that it's going to be recommended. Selectman Coburn believes that housing is a significant priority for the Board of Selectmen. He suggested that instead of having a "housing specialist" that perhaps having a Planner/Housing Specialist. He is worried that the Town will get in a position where they have difficulty funding a position on a year-to-year basis. Town Administrator Palmer asked if CPC funding could be used toward paying a person on the town side. Town Accountant Brazil explained that there are percentage requirements. Chair Wisotzky is worried about having a 25 per hour/per week Planner, the CPC article fails, and then the town is left with nobody to pick up some of the stuff, housing-wise. There was general agreement regarding hiring a full time Planner. Town Accountant Brazil asked if Town Administrator Palmer had a reasonable hourly figure for the Planner position. Town Administrator Palmer stated that she would need to do some research.

Mr. Panessiti alerted the group to possible push-back from citizens due to shifting the burden of cost more to the non-resident taxpayers. They should be prepared for people to voice their complaints that the increase in fees, etc., is not fair and they should be ready to hear those complaints and then explain that they feel that it is fair.

Mr. Wood brought up the differential tax rate. He wants to know what the goal is. The Town has residents in need of some type of relief, and then there are residents that are not in need. Town Administrator Palmer stated that they need to look at what MA General Law would allow them to do. Selectman Coburn explained that the Town does not have the flexibility to solve the problem. The residential exemption does not have a lot of flexibility. They are asking for the analysis for if the Town does this, how does it play out. Selectman Burgess asked if there were a way to do an indexing of sorts. There is an assumption that all non-resident taxpayers live in very expensive homes. Many inherited their homes from their parents, and they are quite modest. Selectman Coburn explained that modest homes would not have such a large increase. Town Administrator Palmer stated that it's based on an average house rate. Chair Wisotzky informed the group that the average assessed rate for fy2016 is \$738,306. Nobody over that amount will qualify for a reduction in their tax rate, anyone under that amount would. Selectman Coburn then posed the question; could you then look across the board, and exempt the first \$200,000, \$300,000, \$400,000. Town Administrator Palmer pointed out that doing that would change the tax rate for everyone. Selectman Coburn has had numerous conversations with part-time residents who are amazed at how low their taxes are, compared to what they are paying on their full time home. Town Accountant Brazil wants to bring in to the conversation, property investors. Lots of properties are purchased by investors.

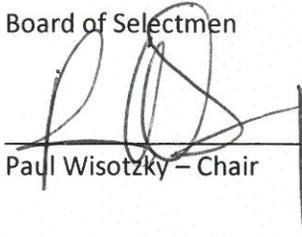
Selectman Coburn made a motion to adjourn at 9:50AM.

Selectman Burgess seconded.

All participants voted in the affirmative.

Respectively submitted, Noelle Scoullar, Executive Assistant

Board of Selectmen



---

Paul Wisotzky – Chair

Absent

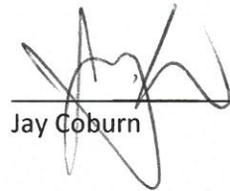
---

Jan Worthington – Vice Chair



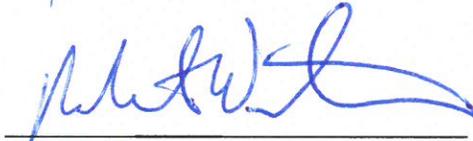
---

Maureen Burgess – Clerk



---

Jay Coburn



---

Robert Weinstein