

Budget Task Force Meeting
Monday, February 8, 2021 at 5:00pm
Via GoToMeeting Platform

Select Board Members Present: Chair-Robert Weinstein, Vice Chair-Kristen Reed, Clerk-Susan Areson, Janet Worthington, Stephanie Rein

Finance Committee Members Present: Chair-Robert Panessiti, Vice Chair-Richard Wood, Steven Roderick

Finance Committee Members Absent: Lori Meads, Raphael Richter

Others Present: Town Manager-Darrin Tangeman, Assistant Town Manager-Kelly Clark, Town Accountant-Trudi Brazil, Interim Treasurer-Mary Mclsaac.

Chair Weinstein called the meeting to order at 5:00pm and read off instructions for citizens to join the meeting.

Finance Chair Panessiti called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:01pm.

Discuss/Review FY2022 Budget for the following Departments:

Overall Budget

Outstanding and unresolved items

Other Departments as Necessary

Town Manager Tangeman opened with Mary Mclsaac from the Clerk/Treasurer/Tax Collector Office. She walked the group through the Clerk/Treasurer/Collector budget.

Finance Chair Panessiti asked how old the aged receivables are on the taxes Interim Treasurer Mclsaac is attempting to collect on. Interim Treasurer Mclsaac stated a lot of the taxes go back into the 1990's. Some have stayed on the books for a reason they call "owners unknown" which is a very specific process for billing that requires a condition of the DOR. When you bill an owner unknown, they generally don't get the bill and it doesn't get paid. The office has approximately 248 of those bill types that go back for decades. She then explained the process to resolve the bill, via a land of low value auction. While there may be 248 bills, there are only about 20 involved parcels.

Interim Treasurer Mclsaac discussed the benefits section of the budget. Finance Chair Panessiti asked about the increase in the Barnstable County Retirement Assessment section, which Interim Treasurer Mclsaac explained. Town Accountant Brazil then went over workers compensation, unemployment insurance, group life insurance, and the municipal liability insurances. Chair Weinstein asked Town Accountant Brazil to speak to the year-over-year amount in Group Health Insurance (Town Share) and the 13.85% increase. Interim Treasurer Mclsaac stated that staff projected adding enrollments to the Town's share for health insurance to include people who may be hired to vacancies that may need family plans. Tied to this question, Finance Member Wood said that in doing the math, it looks like the Town is expecting to hire approximately 6-8 people. He asked Town Manager Tangeman to discuss. Town Manager Tangeman stated that this would be for positions that have not yet been filled and are still vacant. Those positions would include the Treasurer/Collector position, the Clerk position, and the Town Planner position. Town Accountant Brazil added that this was not solely based on unfilled positions. There is also a cost increase to the existing staff

plans. Assistant Town Manager Clark added that this increase also includes a contingency for new membership due to qualifying life events. Member Areson believes it would be helpful to identify that there are some new positions and then there are positions that already exist that we'll be filling. She'd like to know how many are new positions. Town Manager Tangeman said this is one of the lines they can pull out of the budget for the 16th and have more detail for the Budget Task Force.

Town Manager Tangeman then went over the budget for vacation, sick leave, and employee buy-outs. This covers both collective bargaining agreements and other negotiations. He then reviewed the COLA budget. Hearing no questions he moved along to the Cable TV Advisory budget and then over to the Planning Department budget. Member Reed asked if there was a current open search for a Town Planner. Town Manager Tangeman has something he'd like to bring before the Select Board to discuss as an option for hiring. Member Reed then asked if he expected Ms. Sturdy's work in assisting the Planning Department to continue or if the new Planner would be able to take on more of her duties and her work would be allocated to other tasks. Town Manager Tangeman believes she'll be maintaining most of the current tasks of her position. Town Manager Tangeman noted that the ZBA budget has minimal changes. He then noted the increase in Town Hall Operations budget in the leases line item due to a new wide format scanner. Member Areson thought that the Planning Board was looking at reducing the number of paper copies that had to be submitted with various applications. Member Worthington wanted to say that there will be an article coming to Town Meeting, from the Planning Board, regarding reducing the number of steps and plans needed. Town Manager Tangeman added that at their next meeting there will be a discussion about credit card fees. Member Reed asked if the group could have a total for Town absorbed in credit card fees for last year. Town Manager Tangeman said that data would be prepared.

The Annual Town Report and Annual Town Meeting Warrant budget was a level budget with no changes.

Town Manager Tangeman continued his review with no changes to the Energy budget.

The Allocated Communications Fund has a \$504 reduction.

The Unallocated Energy Fund has two small increases which result in a 2.5% increase.

The Municipal Postage budget has increased due to the cost of postage rising. A postage machine lease is due to expire and will need to be replaced.

The Human Services budget has a small increase and is close to being level funded.

The Water Resources Oversight Committee budget has some reductions. This Committee is part of a discussion the Select Board will be having in March regarding consolidation of some boards/committees.

Finance Member Wood asked what the \$14,000 amount in the 2021 original budget was targeted for. Town Accountant Brazil stated that the request came in for an amount (for water testing, engineering, and surveying) but she does not know what happened to any of those functions, as they were not pursued.

Even though the Veteran's Services budget increased, the assessment for Truro went down. Town Accountant Brazil wished to remind everyone that the State reimburses the Town 75% for the benefits that we do afford to Town-resident Veterans. Chair Weinstein asked how the Bureau Fees were allocated and what they're allocated for. Town Manager Tangeman will send out the update for them to review.

The Commission on Disabilities budget is level funded.

The Bike and Walkways Committee is also level funded.

The Historical Commission is level funded as well.

A few things stood out to Chair Weinstein:

- Open positions and whether positions are actively being advertised.
- He'd like more granular detail on what will happen in the Clerk/Treasurer/Tax Collector's Office.

- A future discussion is needed regarding the Planning Department and the Planner. He'd like some indication of what the expenditures have been.

Town Manager Tangeman would like to discuss his proposal with the Select Board regarding the Planning Department. As for the Clerk/Treasurer/Tax Collector's Office, the intent is to break out the Treasurer/Tax Collector and Clerk positions into two. He has a reorganization plan that he'd like to present to the Select Board.

Member Areson pointed out that there are a number of new positions requested in the various budgets, or the filling of positions that had existed and people have left. She's hoping that the Town Manager will be covering all of those during the discussion, including the Health and Conservation Department, the Council on Aging, and the Recreation Department.

Town Manager Tangeman said that there are a number of positions which he has not mentioned. He added that the intent for the meeting of the 16th is to also bring to the Select Board any new positions so they can see the justification behind those requests. His concern with adding new positions or eliminating old positions is the current period of Covid which may skew the data. There are increases in certain activities, such as permitting, and a drop-off in other activities. That doesn't mean that those activities are going away.

Member Worthington asked if they were going to review the Lower Cape Ambulance budget. Town Manager Tangeman believes the allocation was discussed at an earlier meeting. Finance Member Roderick, speaking on behalf of Lower Cape Ambulance, gave the group a brief overview.

Finance Member Roderick then spoke on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, of which he is also a member. He explained that years ago, the Chamber worked with the Town Manager to come up with a plan where they would ask for a consistent 10% of the rooms tax. There was a large spike this year because of the new short-term rental tax. From the Chamber's budgeting standpoint, they need to go back and discuss their budgeting strategy now that short-term rental tax dollars are included in the rooms tax assessment. The Chamber tries to deliver as many services as it possibly can but with the small number of paying business members it is difficult. He feels the \$20,000 increased ask, in a year where the Town has seen significant increases in areas, is a lot of money. He asked if it would be appropriate to ask for a 2% increase over what they had received this year. Member Areson would not be in favor of an overall percentage of the rooms tax, simply because of the ups and downs. The question would be, what is a fair contribution from the Town. Town Accountant Brazil specified that the Town is not allowed to simply make a donation. The project that was supported by the agreement with the Chamber was to offset the cost of producing the booklet. There was a concerted effort, by the Chamber, to expand their hours, to upgrade their booth, and she thinks it's expanded beyond that. She agrees that it would be good to come up with a format that everyone is comfortable with. She thinks that simply determining that 10% of the rooms tax can go to the Chamber seems counterintuitive to what the Town is trying to do in terms of reducing the budget and increasing revenues. Finance Member Wood said to consider the Chamber as if it is a Department. Further discussion was held.

Town Manager Tangeman wanted to touch upon a question Chair Weinstein had asked earlier about the assessment for the Veterans. It is based on equalized valuations tied to the proposed budget of Veterans' Services. He shared an FY2022 Member Assessments document from the District Department of Veterans' Services which better explains the assessment for Truro.

Town Manager Tangeman went over what the next budget meeting topics would be. It was agreed to hold the next budget meeting on February 16, 2021 at 10:00am.

Member Areson made a motion to adjourn at 6:37pm.

Member Reed seconded.

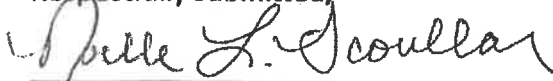
So voted; 5-0-0, motion carries.

Finance Chair Panessiti made a motion to adjourn at 6:37pm.

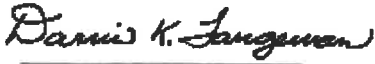
Member Wood seconded.

So voted; 3-0-0, motion carries.

Respectfully submitted,



Noelle L. Scoullar



Town Manager, Darrin Tangeman

Under the Authority of the Truro Select Board

