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TOWN OF
CHELMSFORD
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CHELMSFORD FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES

March 5, 2020



MEETING: A meeting was held on Thursday, March 5, 2020 at 7:30 PM at Town Hall Office Building, 50 Billerica Road, Chelmsford

PRESENT: J. Clancy, D. Goselin, E. Chambers, K. Duffett, A. Langford, and V. Parks

ABSENT: A. Tanini

ALSO PRESENT: P. Cohen, J. Sousa, Chief J. Spinney, Chief G. Ryan, and B. Herrmann

HANDOUTS: Finance Department FY21 Budget Request, Chelmsford Fire Department FY2021 Budget Request, Board of Health FY2021 Budget Request, Chelmsford Public Library FY2021 Budget Request

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 PM.

Approval of Minutes:

September 26, 2019:

K. Duffett made a motion to accept the minutes of September 26, 2019 as written. A. Langford seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The motion passed. The minutes were approved as written.

February 6, 2020:

K. Duffett made a motion to accept the minutes of February 6, 2020 as written. A. Langford seconded the motion. J. Clancy, A. Langford, K. Duffett, and D. Goselin voted in favor of the motion. E. Chambers and V. Parks abstained from voting as they were not present at the meeting. The motion passed. The minutes were approved as written.

February 13, 2020:

K. Duffett made a motion to accept the minutes of February 13, 2020 as written. E. Chambers seconded the motion. J. Clancy, E. Chambers, D. Goselin, and V. Parks voted in favor of the motion. A. Langford and K. Duffett abstained from voting as they were not present at the meeting. The motion passed. The minutes were approved as written.

Finance Department FY21 Budget:

J. Sousa reported that he had met with A. Tanini about a week ago to review the Finance Department budget in detail. He stated that budget was a level-services budget with the full-time equivalent number for FY21 remaining that same as FY20 at 14.4.

J. Sousa reported that in Treasurers Department the personnel budget was increasing by 5.2% from \$342,625 to \$360,519. He stated that increases were due to step increases, cost of living increases and one person obtaining longevity. He stated that expenses saw an overall increase of \$3,000 which was seen in the contract services line item. He explained that this was due to a change within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts regarding the fee structure of liens and tax takings. He said that the recording fee had increased by \$30 from \$75 to \$105. He noted that the increase in fees was in part to provide some benefit to community preservation.

J. Sousa reported that Information Technology was increasing by 2.8 percent under personnel services due to step and cost of living increases for the two people in the department. He said that expenses were increasing by 5 percent. He pointed out that the computer maintenance line item was increasing from \$150,000 in FY2020 to \$162,000 for FY2021 and contracted services was increasing by \$1,000. He stated that they planned to use Full Circle, the software for permitting used by the Building Department, for other departments. He noted that the costs of this software would be born in the IT area.

J. Sousa reported that personnel services in the Assessors Office were decreasing by 4.5% from FY2020 to FY2021. He explained that this was due to salary exchanges from a retirement and promotion being replaced by lower entry-level salaries. He stated that expenses were increasing by \$6,400. He stated that FY2021 was a revaluation year and they were working in-house and with contracted staff to do a revaluation on all properties. He reported that the overall Assessor's budget was decreasing by \$7,194.

J. Sousa reported that in the Accounting Department the personnel services budget was increasing by \$10,929 or 3.3%. He said that this was due to steps and a 2% cost of living increase. He stated that the expenses budget was increasing by \$4,350 due to the GASB 45 actuarial update which they were required to do. He explained that in the past the requirement had been to do an update every two years, but now they needed to do an update every year. K. Duffett asked if the overall profile of employees changed with the current employees. J. Sousa replied that they have had some retirements, but overall the trend continued with the retiree pool living longer. He added that the audit firm which they used had held the prices level for this year. J. Clancy asked if the firm was Powers & Sullivan. J. Sousa replied in the affirmative.

Board of Health FY21 Budget:

J. Sousa reported that A. Tanini had asked him to "pinch hit" for S. Rosa in presenting their FY2021 budget. He reported that the Board of Health department assistant retired within the last six months and a new assistant was hired. He added that the public health nurse left her position and they would need to fill that vacancy.

J. Sousa reported that increases under expenses included vehicle maintenance, postage, contract services, mosquito control, and other charges/expenses. He explained that the mosquito contract increased by \$1,000 due to increased spraying costs with the continued threat of EEE and West Nile Virus. He stated that complaints to the Board of Health had increased which resulted in the increase in postage with the need to send certified mail. He said that the other charges/maintenance were increasing from \$1,650 to \$2,200 to reflect what has been needed in the past. He explained that this line item included medical and testing supplies. J. Sousa stated

that with the addition of the second inspector they added a vehicle which resulted in vehicle maintenance increasing by \$300. He stated that the increase in contract services was for the lease of a copier. He explained that they had used the same copier for more than 10 years which they had paid for with a grant which was no longer available. He said that the copier stopped functioning last October. He stated that the cost to lease a copier would be \$3,360 which was in the contract services line item. J. Sousa pointed out that the requirements for the Board of Health had not changed, however the state funding had decreased.

J. Sousa pointed out that the Board of Health was using software to apply and pay for permits online. J. Clancy asked if it was the same software used by the Building Department. J. Sousa replied that yes, it was Full Circle. He added that the Assistant Town Manager, M. McCall, had done the work evaluating software to find one that made the most sense both economically and with the ability to be used by various departments.

J. Sousa reported that the Board of Health budget personnel services was increasing by 2.4% due to step increases and the expenses were increasing by \$5,310 due mainly to the leasing of the copier. He stated that the overall budget increase was 3.5% for the coming year. He added that no new staff was planned, and S. Rosa would be working on filling the nurse vacancy.

D. Goselin asked about the role the Board of Health may play in the coronavirus and if the budget reflected the ability to deal with the virus. J. Sousa replied that S. Rosa did have a plan in place and the money would be available to fund an operation. He said that he was in on one of the meetings and it involved S. Rosa, P. Cohen, Chief Spinney, Chief Ryan and S. Maffetone from the Emergency Management Office. G. Ryan noted that he had talked with S. Rosa and they were increasing cleaning at the fire houses, wiping tables down and disinfecting. J. Clancy added that there was still around \$300,000 in the Finance Committee Reserve Fund for unforeseen, extraordinary circumstances which this would fall under. P. Cohn noted that there may be a response from the state as well. He said that it would be driven by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, but he could see the potential for assistance coming to towns in the form of reimbursement.

Police Department FY21 Budget:

Chief Spinney stated that he had already been involved in a number of operational preparedness meetings regarding the coronavirus. He said that they were passing along important information to the dispatchers and would be making sure first responders had required equipment such as masks. He added that while they were not there yet in terms of equipment, they were preparing.

Chief Spinney reviewed the FY2021 goals and objectives for the Police Department. He stated that this year they had hit every place of worship in town for safety training. He added that they had also done both municipal safety training and training at the request of a number of private companies. He stated that in FY2021 they would also have a full-time traffic unit established. He said that currently this need was filled with officers on assigned overtime. He stated that the full-time traffic unit would work Monday through Friday and focus on the traffic issues of the day. He stated that there was an increased police presence at schools with police visiting at school activities whenever possible. Chief Spinney reported that they had met the goal of having three full-time safety resources in the schools. He said that they now had a safety resource in the high school and both middle schools. He added that they collaborated with J. Lang and the

principals on this project and things were going well. Chief Spinney reported that Chelmsford still worked with four other towns on the opioid crisis and he said that they had hired a second clinician. He said that the collaborative grant allowed them to have two full-time clinicians which they employed with officers on certain calls which streamlined the time at the call.

Chief Spinney reported that the staffing in the Police Department remained unchanged at 70 total employees including the two animal control officers to cover both days and evenings and the traffic unit which was under special services. E. Chambers asked if anyone filled in if the traffic officer was out. Chief Spinney replied that in general nobody filled in, but if there was a special event, he could pivot someone into the role.

Chief Spinney reported that the personnel costs for the Police Department went from \$5,934,788 in FY2020 to \$6,762,156 for FY2021 which was a 13.9% increase. He said that this increase was due to the new collective bargaining agreement for the patrol officers. He explained that the number of steps decreased because it took too long to get to the top and was not in parity with other towns. He stated that other increases included a cost of living adjustment for non-union personnel, step increases for dispatchers and clerical personnel and an increase in the overtime line item. He explained that in the last four to six years the overtime line item budget of \$400,000 has been grossly inadequate. He said that officers were making more money and training had increased, but the overtime funding had remained the same. He reported that typically overtime came in around the \$600,000 range. He stated that in order to operate at the optimal level he needed \$600,000 in overtime. He said that in the past he has used a grant to offset the overtime line item, but he said that he shouldn't depend on the grant and overtime should be funded at the appropriate level. Chief Spinney stated that the additional required training for police officers had increased including crisis intervention training, substance abuse training and officer wellness training. He said that more officers take their own life than are killed in the line of duty. He stated that when an officer was out on training and missed a shift they had to be replaced. D. Goselin asked if all of the training was mandatory. Chief Spinney replied that it was because if it wasn't mandatory by the state, he still made the officers take the training. J. Clancy asked if Chief Spinney had an estimate on the number of hours in training per year. Chief Spinney replied with an example of crisis intervention training which was 40 hours of training, Monday through Friday, eight hours per day, once a year. K. Duffett asked if Chelmsford hosted this training. Chief Spinney replied that they did. He added that they tried to host these events as much as they could.

Chief Spinney reported that the police expense budget was increasing from \$767,000 in FY2020 to \$824,000 for FY2021 which was an increase of \$57,000 or 7.4%. He reported that he budgeted fuel at \$2.40 per gallon, while last year the average cost had been \$2.10 per gallon. He explained that he built in a gap for the unknown. He reported that increases include \$13,500 in recruiting expenditures, \$10,000 in vehicle maintenance, \$5,000 in staff education, \$20,000 in outlay and \$17,500 in new equipment. He stated that he was requesting \$20,000 for recruiting because costs from the academy to equipment to training and first uniforms increased. He stated that in FY2020 this line item had been budgeted at \$6,500 and he had already used \$10,000. He reported that he was requesting an additional \$20,000 in the outlay line item to cover the taser lease program. He explained that every three to four years the current taser is discontinued which resulted in issues with repairs and cartridges. He stated that with leasing they would always have a new version. He added that with leasing the costs would not go away and he was

locked into a 5-year cycle on the current lease. J. Clancy commented that with the cost of maintenance and replacement it made sense to lease. K. Duffett asked how frequently tasers were used. Chief Spinney replied that they were used a couple of times a year. He stated that they were used to press against someone to make them comply or as a defense from an assault. He stated that the software logs the entry of deployment of the weapon so if someone deploys the weapon and doesn't tell anyone they would still know because of the software. Chief Spinney reported that the increase of \$17,500 in new equipment was from things like NARCAN and ammunition. He said that they go through hundreds of rounds of ammunition during training.

Chief Spinney reported that the animal control budget had no changes. He said that the increase under personnel services of a little over \$4,000 was from a cost of living increase and expenses decreased by \$500 due to small decreases in electricity and gas heat. He stated that the overall budget increased by just under \$4,000. He reported that the overall Police Department budget was increasing by \$884,368 or 13%.

Chief Spinney reported that the overall calls to service increased by 5% in 2019 to 36,746. He stated that motor vehicle stops were up by 17%, but motor vehicle accidents were down by 2.5%. He reported that breaking and entering was down by 33%. Chief Spinney stated that motor vehicle thefts had gone up by 54%, but he pointed out that this number was bloated as it showed leased or rental cars that were repossessed. Chief Spinney stated that he was happy to report that opioid overdoses were down by 34%. He added that in 2018 there had been four fatalities and in 2019 there were two. He stated that fraud crimes were up by 10% with 167 reported in 2019.

Chief Spinney stated that Chelmsford continued to be a safe community with less than 1% per 1000 residents being a victim of a violent crime compared to the state level of 3.4%.

Fire Department FY21 Budget:

Chief Ryan reported that the FY2021 Fire Department budget was \$6,654,792 with \$5,956,813 under personnel and \$411,000 under expenses. He pointed out that the personnel budget showed a 4.9% decrease from FY2020 due to a number of retirements replaced with lower paying positions. He noted that no collective bargaining agreements were included in this budget. He pointed out that he had eliminated the PTO line item because it only covered four people and it made no sense to separate it out. Chief Ryan reported that under expenses vehicle maintenance had increased from \$61,000 to \$90,000. He said that vehicle maintenance had increased by 125% over the last four years. He explained that the trucks were getting older and he was keeping an eye on them. He added that electronic parts were more expensive and the time to take them apart had increased.

Chief Ryan reported that the staffing level remained the same as the current year at 63.5 of which 61 were uniformed firefighters. He noted that they were down two firefighters which they would replace after the next service test. Chief Ryan reported that they had multiple inspections done at the fire stations which was driven by OSHA. He noted that there were OSHA related issues regarding the location of the bedrooms in conjunction to the bay areas. He stated that they would look into engine 2 first and consider renovating to address the issues. A. Langford asked why the bedrooms would be in the bay areas. Chief Ryan replied that in the 1950's the fire department had been volunteer based and there had been no bedrooms. When they added bedrooms, they just cut out a section of the bay area. Chief Ryan stated that they were going

through the stations again to see if there were more areas to gain energy efficiency. He stated that Engine 1 was the most efficient followed by Engine 2. J. Clancy commented that he was surprised that engine was the second most efficient. Chief Ryan replied that Engine 2 had the old mercury thermostats, but there was a cage over it so it couldn't be adjusted. He added that they needed flexibility to allow for adjustments.

Chief Ryan reported that Chelmsford did well when compared to other Fire Departments with a population of over 33,000, 22.5 square miles, 5 stations and 1.8 firefighters per 1,000. He stated that Chelmsford was in the 35% of towns in the U.S. with four or more fire stations.

Chief Ryan reported that overall call volume decreased by 8.74% in 2019. He said that there had been a jump in 2014 to 6,622 and then another increase in 2018 to 7,234 decreasing back to 6,602 in 2019. He pointed out that the number of overdose calls was at the lowest point in 2019 at 36 overdoses since 2014 when it had been 23. He said that he thinks the opioid epidemic has finally reached its peak. He said part of this may be due to the increase in the supply chain for NARCAN, but he hoped that some of it was that the education was working. He pointed out that overdoses spiked in the summer with August being the busiest month. A. Langford asked why this was. Chief Ryan replied that people were outside more and taking more risks. He added that people went away on vacation leaving others alone. He added that 32 of the 36 calls were one-time responses rather than repeat calls so it appears that they were getting better at this. D. Goselin asked how many of the 36 calls were Chelmsford residents. Chief Ryan replied that most were people living outside of town.

Chief Ryan reported that another area gaining attention was suicide. He reported that U-Mass Lowell hosted a fund-raiser for suicide prevention. He said that they have the goal of reducing the suicide rate in the U.S. by 20% by 2025. He reported that in Massachusetts there was a 21% increase in the suicide rate between 2013 and 2017. He stated that 28% of those who committed suicide from 2011 to 2017 were under the age of 30. A. Langford asked if suicide was higher among firefighters as it was among police officers. Chief Ryan replied that he believed it was.

Chief Ryan stated that he was keeping an eye on the timeline for replacement engines because the 15-year replacement period was coming up around FY22 to FY23. He added that he was thankful for the support of the town manager, committee and residents in the past for the new fire engine approved in 2014.

Library FY21 Budget:

B. Herrmann reported the theme this year for "One Book Chelmsford" was "stirring the plots" as the books were food related. She said that there were two books with one author having held an event on March 1st and the second author coming in on March 19th.

B. Herrmann reported that the library budget was a straight-forward, level-services budget. She said that adjustments from the union contract negotiations were included in the budget and the overall increase was 3.88%. She stated that Chelmsford continued to maintain the state requirements for state certification of maintaining a library budget that is an average of the last three years plus 2.5%, maintaining a book budget that is 13% of the total town library budget, that the library must remain open for a minimum number of hours per week and the library must employ a certified library director with a master's degree in library science.

B. Herrmann reported that the personnel budget was increasing by \$76,858 or 4.8%. She pointed out that they retained library staffing and the increase in personnel services included three staffers reaching the 20-year mark, four reaching the 15-year mark and three reaching the 5-year mark. She added that there was also an increase for the library pages due to the state minimum wage increase. She added that the other increase under personnel was from an evening shift differential, Sunday hours and overtime pay for custodians.

B. Herrmann reported that increases under expenses included \$1,100 for normal increases in line items offset by a decrease from moving to the town VOIP telephone system. She stated that the materials budget increased by \$3,000 to help with the collection development for the mobile pop-up library. She stated that they had purchased the pop-up library using grant money, donations and Friends of the Library funds. She said that they could take the pop-up library to the Senior Center, Senior Housing, parks and other areas in the community. She added that they had applied for a grant under the age-friendly community, but even without the grant they would try to make the pop-up library work. She reported that the Friends of the Library continued to be a strong and active group. She pointed out that they had a goal of reaching 2020 members within 2020. She pointed out that they had added 50 new members just this month. She said that she is sometimes asked why people should pay money to the Friends of the Library when they already pay taxes which support the library. She stated that her response is that all of the visitor programs which the library is able to provide are all paid for by the Friends of the Library. She noted that they had a nearly 30% increase in the library volunteer force last year.

V. Parks asked what was covered in the Other Charges/Expenses/Tech. line item. B. Herrmann replied that this covered technology including printers, copiers and software. She added that they also had their normal capital outlay program to replace aging computers.

K. Duffett commented that the library had a nice 20-year anniversary celebration. B. Herrmann replied that about 150 people attended and they had a cake, crafts and a piano player. She added that she would be posting the photos showing the library addition from start to finish on Facebook.

B. Herrmann reiterated that her FY2021 budget was a straight-forward budget. She invited Finance Committee members to send her a follow-up email if they had any questions.

Discuss Budget Hearing and Spring Town Meeting Warrant Article Schedule:

J. Clancy stated that the remaining departments left to come in included: Chelmsford Public Schools, Community Preservation, DPW, Facilities, Nashoba, PEG Access and Veterans Services. He said that he would see if G. Persichetti and S. Jahnle were available next week. K. Duffett said that L. Prescott from Community Preservation could come in on the 12th. V. Parks added that P. Pedulla from PEG Access also wanted to come in on the 12th. K. Duffett said that they were meeting with the schools on March 12th. J. Clancy stated that Chelmsford Public Schools and Nashoba could be scheduled on the 19th with voting ideally taking place on the 26th. K. Duffett noted that she would not be at the meeting on the 19th. D. Goselin suggested that she provide a list of questions and the committee would make sure that they were asked. K. Duffett stated that she was interested in getting a report from Nashoba of the post graduate numbers

similar to what they had provided last year. J. Clancy suggested that anyone not available for a meeting should pass along any questions they may have.

Public Comment:

P. Cohen reported that with the financial markets in a turmoil interest rates were low so they would be pursuing refunding of bonds in April to take advantage of the rates. He explained that they normally would not issue bonds until June, but with all that is going on with the virus and resulting turmoil they decided to do an analysis of all bonds and do refunding where it made sense in April. J. Sousa added that there could be significant savings, especially if the rates stay low.

P. Cohen reported that he expected that there would be a Special Town Meeting on May 4, 2020. He stated that the Planning Board had been looking at the Glenview Site and adjacent property and there would be an article on that. He stated that G. Persichetti and G. Ryan had been looking at what it would take to renovate and expand fire station 2. He said that they would have an estimate so the “ask” could go on the warrant.

P. Cohen added that another article that was being considered was a wildlife feeding bylaw. He stated that this was on the Board of Selectmen’s agenda for Monday. He said that it would not impact feeding birds, but rather would be aimed at the feeding or overfeeding of wildlife such as turkeys, deer and bears.

P. Cohen stated that the warrant would need to be signed by the second week in April. He reported that the fire fighter’s union was going to arbitration on April 16th. He said that this would need to end in either resolution or waiting another six months. He added that the recent mediation with the police sergeant’s union had not been successful.

J. Clancy asked if there was any movement on the old UMASS Lowell property. P. Cohen replied that there wasn’t. He said that he had nothing at this point to bring forward and it had been a year since it was acquired.

K. Duffett made a motion to adjourn. A. Langford seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela A. Morrison