



CHELMSFORD FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES

March 14, 2019

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TOWN OF CHELMSFORD PATRICIA E. DZURIS TOWN CLERK

MEETING: A meeting was held on Thursday, March 14, 2019 at 7:30 PM at Town Hall Office Building, 50 Billerica Road, Chelmsford

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

ABSENT: E. Chambers

ALSO PRESENT: P. Cohen, J. Sousa, G. Persichetti, S. Jahnle, J. Lang, J. Johnson-Collins, D. Newcomb and public

HANDOUTS: FY2020 Stormwater Enterprise Budget, Updated Finance Committee Liaison List and Warrant Article Schedule, OSHA's Top 10 Most Cited Violations for FY2018, DLS Planned Programmed Inspections FY2019-2023

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.

Approval of Minutes:

March 7, 2019:

J. Clancy asked if the Finance Committee members had a chance to review the minutes from March 7, 2019. Several members said that they had not yet read them. J. Clancy said that approval of the minutes would be tabled until the next meeting.

FY2020 Budget – DPW, Solid Waste, Sewer, Stormwater, Public Facilities:

J. Clancy introduced G. Persichetti, the Director of Public Works, and S. Jahnle, the Assistant Director of the DPW.

DPW:

G. Persichetti reported that FY2020 was another year with pretty much level-funded budgets. He added that FY2020 was also a year in which the unions would go before the town for negotiations. G. Persichetti reported that under Admin. & Engineering there was an increase in computer maintenance due to a new software contract. He pointed out that one line item that increased significantly was building maintenance under the Highway budget. He stated that it went from \$10,000 to \$30,000 based on what the actual costs have been. He stated that the contract services line item which had been \$65,000 in FY2019 had decreased to zero in the highway budget as it was moved into the Stormwater budget. He said that the gasoline and diesel fuel line items were increasing because again he was basing the budget on actuals. He stated that road materials increased by \$5,000 while departmental supplies decreased by \$10,000

so that was “a wash”. He pointed out that the traffic lights line item was increasing by \$15,000 because the traffic lights were starting to age. He said that due to the repairs needed in street lights he had to increase the line item. G. Persichetti reported that the Snow & Ice budget was budgeted at the same amount as last year at \$1,500,000. J. Clancy asked how the budget was tracking this year. G. Persichetti replied that it was tracking well, but the last storm was not in the system yet. He reported that under the Parks Division there was a one-time charge under outlay in the amount of \$16,000 for a mower. G. Persichetti reported that under Public Buildings there were minor changes based on budgeting for actuals as well as increases for the custodial services contract and motor pool maintenance. G. Persichetti reported that there were no changes under Street Lighting with it being budgeted at the same amount as last year at \$80,000. K. Duffett commented that it looked like Street Lighting had decreased since 2015. G. Persichetti replied that it had. He explained that when they had changed to all LED lighting they had dropped the line item by \$100,000 and then had dropped it by another \$80,000. He noted that the budgeted amount of \$80,000 worked well. He said that even though the lights are good for many hours, if someone hits a pole they often must entirely replace it rather than repair. He noted that the LED street lighting was very efficient, and he was happy with it.

Sewer:

G. Persichetti reported that he had budgeted the equipment repair line item in the Sewer Enterprise at \$300,000, because that was around what it had been running at. He stated that the new phone system had paid good dividends and he was able to decrease the telephone line item from \$16,000 to \$13,480. He stated that he had to increase the contract services from \$51,650 back up to \$90,000. He explained that this was for engineering fixes and changes at pump stations which they contracted with Weston & Sampson to provide. He stated that the Sewer Enterprise had an increase in outlay from \$160,000 to \$220,000 due to dehumidification needs at Southwell and Katrina.

G. Persichetti reported that grinder pumps were running well this year at about \$131,000. He said that they were keeping up with them and were able to budget at \$150,000 down 18.92% from the prior year. He said that they had not yet hit a point when numerous pumps were failing all at once.

Solid Waste:

G. Persichetti reported that the Solid Waste budget was essentially two big line items for waste disposal and the waste contract. He stated that the total budget was around the same as last year at \$2,698,209. A. Tanini asked if the change for apartment building trash pick-up had taken place. S. Jahnle replied that it had, and they no longer picked up trash at apartment buildings. He noted that they did collect from owner owned condos, but not from apartment rental units. J. Clancy asked if it was still taking longer at the trash facilities. G. Persichetti said that it was. He stated that there was a longer wait in line and some were not able to take the trash. A. Tanini asked if there were any fines for trash and what they were. G. Persichetti replied that it depended on the infraction. He noted that winter was a hard time with snow and finding a place to put the trash. He said that wind such as seen last week could also be an issue. He stated that the biggest problem was things like tires, tv's and such found at the side of the road. J. Clancy commented that the McCarthy Middle School held a fundraiser where they would take these types of items for a small fee and the funds paid would go to a good cause. P. Cohen added that

they ran this fund raiser every fall and spring. J. Clancy commented that it was a great service which he suggested residents take advantage of. He noted that it was much easier than calling and coordinating the pickup of single items.

Public Facilities:

G. Persichetti reported that Public Facilities still controlled 28 buildings in town. He said that the next year would be a contract year. He stated that some costs increased a bit because they based the budget on actuals and tried to build in a level of safety. He stated that there was a lot of old equipment which resulted in some increases. He pointed out that the equipment repair line item was increasing by \$20,000 to \$320,000. He stated that there was also a \$9,000 increase in building safety maintenance. He added that departmental supplies were increasing from \$8,000 to \$20,000 based on actuals. He said that the increases were due to equipment repairs and budgeting based on actuals. He noted that new equipment had computer driven controls.

Stormwater:

S. Jahnle provided the Finance Committee members with an updated Stormwater Enterprise budget. He explained that the only change was that they had included the debt service for the article approved at Town Meeting. He stated that the debt service in the amount of \$246,990 was included in the updated budget. He said that they did not have a full year yet of actuals but had estimated the FY2020 budget based on what the charges are and what should be collected. He noted that they expected the fee to remain the same in FY2020. J. Clancy asked how the start-up was going. S. Jahnle replied that the GIS manager was on board and in his third week and was coordinating with other departments. He said that they had interviewed four engineers yesterday and planned to bring back two for a second interview. He stated that the first field crew should be coming on in a couple of weeks to start on April 1st. He stated that they had vehicles and would buy some small equipment and start the first crew. A. Langford asked what they would be doing. S. Jahnle replied that they would start in the inspectional mode finding things. He reported that they had also received eight qualified companies' proposals for the master plan. He stated that they interviewed six and would bring back two or three for more information. He said that this would be finalized, and they planned to bring it to the Board of Selectmen this month and have a project on board for April. He said that they would be setup with a good road map. A. Langford noted that S. Jahnle had referred to the crew as the first crew. She asked how many crews they planned to have. S. Jahnle replied that they planned to add a second crew on 7/1/2019 which would be within the budget. He stated that this crew would be able to deal with the leaves and fall basins. K. Duffett asked about the small Newspaper Ads budget of \$500. G. Persichetti replied that anytime they put out an RFP they were required to put it in the paper. K. Duffett asked if it went in the Lowell Sun. G. Persichetti replied in the affirmative. He explained that they were required to publish these things so that anyone who wants to know about it will know about it. S. Jahnle added that anytime a project involved the Conservation Commission they also had to publish it in the newspaper.

OSHA:

G. Persichetti provided the Finance Committee members with two handouts regarding OSHA: OSHA's Top 10 Most Cited Violations for FY2018, DLS Planned Programmed Inspections FY2019-2023. J. Clancy asked G. Persichetti if he could explain the need for the addition of the OSHA personnel. G. Persichetti replied that starting in February all municipal personnel would

fall under the umbrella of OSHA. He stated that Wellesley had hired a full-time OSHA employee and Wilmington and Reading had part-time resources. He reported that they had talked with Chelmsford's insurance company, MIA, who indicated that other towns would be following suit. G. Persichetti added that Chelmsford was one of the few towns who had a DPW which did a lot of their own work. He said that with that in mind it was even smarter to jump on the bandwagon and add an OSHA employee. G. Persichetti reported that like most municipalities Chelmsford had good programs in place, but updated documentation was not always in place. G. Persichetti stated that Chelmsford did not want any part of serious accidents and wanted to keep up with the right record keeping. He stated that once there was a violation, they were apt to want to see everything. He stated that this person would make sure that all license, training and documentation was up-to-date. He noted that they were better off hiring someone in the \$72,000 range than having a large fine. D. Goselin asked if he saw the need to have a full-time person in this position down the road. G. Persichetti replied that he did. He noted that it would not just be for the DPW, but for the entire town including police, fire and schools. He said that with personnel changes this person would make sure new employees were trained. He added that he did see the need for this. A. Tanini asked if other towns outsourced this role. G. Persichetti replied that a lot of towns did outsource this. He noted that there would still need to be someone in town taking care of OSHA's contracted services. He added that ultimately the town would still be responsible. G. Persichetti stated that the first step was to sit down with all departments to see what they have in place and what they have done to date. He noted that they would not want departments all doing different things in different styles. J. Clancy asked what the benefit was of having someone on payroll versus using contracted services. G. Persichetti replied that an issue with contracted services is that the best job was not always done in writing the contract and the price could then go up. He added that there could also be a problem with the availability of the person since they would not be in town on a daily basis.

Warrant Article 27 – Street Acceptances:

S. Jahnle reported that Article 27 was a continuation of what has been in progress for a number of years. He added that it was a timing issue as to how many streets they could prepare each year for acceptance. He stated that five streets were included this year: Alyssa Way, Fay Street, Galloway Road, Hall Road, Mission Road. He stated that three of the last real long streets were included this year. He noted that a bunch of really small roads were still on the list to be done. S. Jahnle stated that adding the roads to inventory increased Chapter 90 funding. A. Tanini suggested putting this on a slide at Town Meeting to make this clear.

J. Clancy reported that no action would be taken on Articles 12 and 13 for the pumping station at Progress Avenue and the inflow and infiltration assessment of the sewer system. He asked why this was. S. Jahnle replied that the pumping station at Progress Avenue was more or less complete so no funding was needed. He stated that there had been a leak last fall, but it was an isolated incident. He said that the pipe from the sewer system was still where it should be and there would be no need to do more than what they already had funding for, so funding was not required for either article. He noted that they would do the INI testing in the spring and would be able to encumber the funds. He added that the article had been a place holder, but they were all set, and it was no longer needed.

FY2020 Budget – Chelmsford Public Schools:

J. Clancy introduced School Superintendent, J. Lang, School Director of Business and Finance, J. Johnson-Collins and School Committee member, D. Newcomb. J. Lang thanked the Finance Committee for having them in. She stated that he had met last Friday with the Finance Committee liaisons and had sent copies of the budget. He pointed out that he had added another year of actuals to the budget so that there were now three years of actuals.

J. Lang reported that the FY2020 budget was a \$2 million increase from last year's \$59 million budget to \$61 million. He stated that this budget had been approved at the last School Committee Meeting. He pointed out the key assumptions regarding the budget:

- All FY2020 salaries have been increased with the applicable collective bargaining agreements, contractual step and lane changes have been incorporated and anticipated teacher vacancies from announced retirements have been budgeted at \$56,967 (Step 3 - master's degree).
- Most collective bargaining agreements with union personnel expire on June 30, 2019.
- For budget planning purposes, a 2% across-the-board COLA is included in the recommended budget, adding \$880,000 to base salary expenses in FY2020.
- The FY2020 budget reflects a decrease of \$719,000 in anticipated out-of-district special education tuition costs offset by a decrease of \$50,000 in anticipated special education circuit-breaker reimbursement, as well as a decrease of \$75,000 in school choice funds offset, resulting in a net decrease of approximately \$600,000 in out-of-district special education tuition costs.
- The FY2020 budget reallocates 2.0 middle school teacher (7th grade) positions at McCarthy Middle School.
- The FY2020 budget adds an instructional classroom at the CHIPS Integrated Pre-School Program due to a projected increase in enrollment. Funding to provide a 1.0 Integrated Pre-School Teacher position and 2.0 paraprofessional positions has been incorporated into the recommended budget.
- The FY2020 budget includes an additional \$99,000 in contracted special education student transportation costs associated with the projected enrollment increase in the CHIPS Integrated Pre-School Program.
- The FY2020 budget adds a 1.0 Social Worker position at the Parker Middle School to provide a more appropriate student: staff counseling ratio.
- The FY2020 budget adds a .5 Special Education Teacher position at the Parker Middle School to provide required services in accordance with students' Individual Education Plans (IEP).
- The FY2020 budget adds 2.0 Elementary School Assistant Principal positions.
- The FY2020 budget reinstates a 1.0 Curriculum Coordinator – World Language & Exchange Programs position previously eliminated during the 2017/18 school year. In addition to administering the district's world language program, this reinstated position will be charged with the development and support of a student exchange program at 9 the middle and high school levels of the district.
- The FY2020 budget adds a 1.0 Special Education Administrative Chairperson position
- Funding for a 1:1 computer initiative in the 2019/20 school year has been

incorporated to provide all incoming 5th grade students at McCarthy and Parker Middle Schools and 9th grade students at Chelmsford High School with a district issued computer (Chromebook) for use at home and school. Additional computer technician staffing is included in the technology department to support this new 1:1 computer initiative.

- Funding to support “student service” and/or “student recognition” activities and clubs have been incorporated in the FY2020 budget. This action eliminates student activity fees for clubs at McCarthy and Parker Middle Schools and Chelmsford High School designated as “service” and/or “recognition” activities and clubs.
- Funding to support a reduction in student activity and club fees has been incorporated in the FY2020 budget. A reduction from \$125/year to \$100/year is proposed at Chelmsford High School and a reduction from \$100/year to \$75/year is proposed at McCarthy and Parker Middle Schools.
- Funding to support the elimination of student parking fees at Chelmsford High School has been incorporated in the FY2020 budget. The current student parking fee of \$200/year is proposed to be eliminated (\$0/year) in FY2020

A. Langford asked if there were any concerns regarding the elementary schools with the current fifth grade being at the largest class size now. She noted that the new apartments may result in additional growth in the elementary schools. J. Lang replied that they were watching this. He said that there was the potential to have students from the Turnpike Road development go to the South Row school rather than to the Center School since South Row had more capacity. He stated that the goal numbers were 20-22 students in elementary school moving to perhaps 22-24 by 4th grade. He said that middle schools aimed for about 22-25 students per classroom. J. Lang stated that he did not see this becoming an issue as there was enough capacity. A. Langford asked if the thought process went beyond the next year. J. Lang replied that they revisited the class room size each year and historically would come back and add a session, if needed. A. Langford asked if there was a core class size that they would not go above. J. Lang replied that the goal was 22 -24, with 25-26 being acceptable. He stated that the high 20’s would tip the scale as too high. K. Duffett asked if there was a policy with a specific number. J. Lang replied that there wasn’t. He said that they were only guidelines. He noted that the goal was to keep the size in the low to mid-twenties at the high school, but if they had to they could go as high as 26-28. He noted that they looked at the numbers when they did the scheduling and if they were running high they would come back and make adjustments.

A. Langford asked if the increase at the CHIPS pre-school was due to the addition of full-time kindergarten. J. Lang replied, that this was not necessarily the case. He explained that the kids in the CHIPS program had been identified as special needs. He noted that referrals were coming “fast and furious” from various early intervention sources.

J. Lang reported that the addition of a full-time social worker at Parker School would bring their student to staff counselor ratio from 351.1 to 236.1. He noted that this would augment the counselors with a social worker which would model as a pilot next year.

A. Langford asked what the level of the reinstated world language and exchange curriculum coordinator was. J. Lang replied that it would be in the high 90’s. K. Duffett asked what

languages were taught. J. Lang replied that it would be Spanish and French. He stated that Latin was being phased out. He noted that students could participate in different languages online such as German, but physically in class the options were Spanish and French.

J. Lang reported that the 1:1 computer initiative would start with the fifth grade and ninth grade in FY2020. He stated that the equipment would be leased for four years and the students would keep the devices for grades five through eight and nine through twelve. He noted that they could not keep up with having devices for all kids so are phasing in this program at two class grade levels. A. Langford asked what the cost of the program was. J. Lang replied that it would cost \$75,000 for the two grade levels. He added that parents would have to sign-off on receiving the device and if it was lost or stolen the family would be responsible. He stated that if the device needed repair, the school would be responsible. He noted that they would use school choice funds for this program. He stated that they would continue with the “Chrome Carts” for the other grades. A. Langford asked what would be done with the “Chrome Carts” when grades 5 – 12 had devices. J. Lang replied that they would shift the carts down to the elementary grades. A. Langford asked if there would be enough carts for each classroom to have a cart. J. Langford replied that there would, but he noted that it was quite likely that they would need to replenish devices along the way. D. Newcomb stated that programs like this were changing how things were done in classrooms. She added that most of the fifth-grade teachers had signed up for a class on using the Chromebook. J. Lang commented that the Google Classroom allowed for easier organization of assignments and notes and allowed parents to see what was happening. A. Langford noted that it also provided students with more time to hand in assignments online.

J. Lang reported that the removal of certain fees was based on feedback from families. He explained that it didn’t seem right to charge students to volunteer or charge them for receiving recognition such as with the honor society. He stated that because there was enough money in the budget they were able to remove fees from the community service and recognition clubs and programs. He stated that they also were able to decrease the activity fee from \$100 to \$75 at the middle schools and from \$125 to \$100 at the high school. K. Duffett commented that since the fee had to be paid only once for as many activities as desired it was a bargain. J. Lang agreed and said that they did not want the fee to be a barrier to participation. D. Goselin asked if there was an option for families that could not afford the fee. J. Lang replied that they would take care of the fee for those who qualified for the free lunch program. J. Lang reported that they had also removed the parking fees at the high school. He explained that all those in grades 7-12 had to pay transportation fees for the bus to help offset the costs. He stated that by law they had to provide transportation for grades K-6 if they lived more than two miles from the school. He stated that there was no cost to the schools for those that drive to school, so they removed the parking fee. J. Clancy asked about the parking lot maintenance. D. Newcomb replied that they had looked at a number of fees to see what they could decrease, and this is where they started.

A. Langford asked what the new budget item of \$60,000 for contracted services was for. J. Lang replied that this line item was added to provide for the costs associated with a review and upgrade of Community Home-School Communications including website, social media platforms, mailings and newsletters. A. Langford asked if this was a continuing amount. J. Lang replied that it was, but that they did not know what the amount would be each year. D. Newcomb replied that it was based on a great deal of feedback from parents. She added that

they wanted the website to be user friendly and accessible. A. Langford commented that the mobile site could be more user-friendly.

A. Langford asked if there were concerns regarding 200 students at the fifth-grade level next year resulting in 25 students per class. J. Lang agreed that the fifth grade was a big number, but he noted that some students may go to private school or charter schools, so he envisioned this number dropping. A. Langford asked what the overall enrollment needed to be for a grade level to add an extra home room. J. Lang replied that they would do so when it hit the 100-student mark. He noted that they also looked at the need level of the students and with greater need they may recommend another home room at the 98 or 99 student level. A. Langford asked if there were concerns regarding space at the elementary schools. J. Lang replied that Center was tight, but as he had mentioned they had the option to send the Mill Road/Turnpike Road students to South Row. He added that they could reallocated staff to elementary schools, if needed, and said that they also had the option to pull back special education into a smaller room. He added that the Byam School currently fed McCarthy Middle School, but Parker School had extra capacity, so they could move a section from McCarthy to Parker if they needed to. D. Newcomb commented that they looked at all of this and reviewed several strategies to determine the schools and classrooms.

J. Lang reported that J. Johnson-Collins had again included an appendix of school grants and revolving funds with the school budget. He stated that he had no issues or concerns with the revolving funds.

A. Tanini asked if the total for all of the school grants was the \$1.6 million amount. J. Lang replied that this was correct it was a total of \$1,589,173.

J. Lang stated that there would be a quarterly turf field update available at the end of March which he would make available. K. Duffett commented that L. Prescott had shown that the turf field had another 10 years or so on the debt schedule. J. Lang agreed that they were only on year four or five of the turf fields. A. Langford asked about the deficit in the turf fields. K. Duffett responded that they still had a balance of \$35,000 but had more expenses than revenue. J. Johnson-Collins added that they had to tap into reserves some years, but there was still the balance of \$35,000. J. Clancy asked if this was a trend or an anomaly. J. Johnson-Collins replied that she would need to investigate it further. D. Newcomb noted that they anticipated a drop in revenues from the turf fields as more turf fields were built. K. Duffett added that the fields were used by Chelmsford students first before being rented.

K. Duffett asked if they had been able to spend money from the childcare account. J. Lang replied that they had. He stated that they had made updates and enhancements at Westlands including a new playground, a computer network, upgrades to security and air conditioning upstairs to allow for year-round usage.

J. Clancy noticed that the collective bargaining counsel was down in FY2020 from the level it had been in FY2017. He asked if they expected an easy contract year. J. Lang replied that historically they level funded this line item at \$70,000. He stated that it was budgeted slightly higher for FY2020 at \$75,000. He noted that FY2017 had been a contract year. J. Clancy commented that there was also a jump in the special education counsel. J. Lang replied that they

had increased this line item by \$10,000 due to more student services going through the special education attorney. He noted that this attorney was more in tune with special education programs.

D. Newcomb commented that at the tri-board meeting the recommendation had been made to look at student fees. She reported that they did look at all of the fees and reviewed fees at other towns and found that fees are all over the place. She said that in some cases they were in the middle and in some they were lower.

K. Duffett asked about the new line item for offsets to the athletic revolving fund in the athletic department budget. J. Lang replied that this was added to give a more complete look at the budget. He noted that there would be little anomalies such as Chelmsford not hosting the Thanksgiving game next year. J. Clancy asked if FY2020 had the same number of athletics. J. Lang replied that the offerings remained the same, but that they had added rugby this year. He added that there was also an interest in a female lacrosse team. A. Tanini asked if there was a female hockey team. J. Lang replied that there was a co-team with Billerica.

J. Clancy asked if the MSBA project application had been re-submitted. J. Lang replied that he had submitted a roof project for South Row which would be about \$250,000 to \$300,000. He said that they were also retooling the high school project to make it more marketable. He said that the Board of Selectmen would vote on this on the 25th and they planned to submit it the first week in April. He added that the deadline was April 15th. He said that this would be the third attempt at the project. J. Clancy asked how many projects had been approved by the MSBA last year. J. Lang replied that he thought that 15 high school projects had been submitted last year and 4 had been approved. He noted that the 4 that were approved had a stronger physical need and one had been a technical high school. A. Langford asked if they would shift gears after a certain number of failed attempts. J. Lang replied that at some point they would have to. He noted that they were trying to sell this as bigger than just impacting the high school since with a new high school the middle schools could use the current high school and they could sell off or convert McCarthy. He added that Parker could become an elementary school and they wouldn't need the modular classrooms. A. Langford asked how quickly they would hear back from the MSBA. J. Lang replied that they would usually hear back by October or November.

K. Duffett complimented the schools on providing a great budget document. J. Clancy agreed that it was clear and concise and had all the information which was needed.

Review of Budget Hearing and Warrant Article Review Schedule:

J. Clancy commented that all of the major budget reviews were completed. He asked P. Cohen if the operating budget amendments would be ready for next week. P. Cohen replied that they would be. He asked if P. Cohen could talk briefly about the senior citizen property tax work-off program next week. P. Cohen replied in the affirmative. J. Clancy said that E. Belansky and someone from the Economic Development Commission could attend the next meeting to talk about the drive-through zoning article. He said that there should also be a decision on the façade and signage article by then. P. Cohen reported that there would be a meeting tomorrow morning at 10:00 AM regarding this article in Room 205 and they should have a decision during that meeting. J. Clancy stated that the Finance Committee should be able to vote next week. He said

there would be a few brief presentations, followed by the opportunity for public comment and then the voting. J. Clancy added that he would like Finance Committee members to provide contributions as to how/why they voted as they did on articles in order to have a more comprehensive letter. V. Parks asked if the meeting regarding Article 24 would be available to watch online or if there would be minutes for the meeting. K. Duffett said that she was going to try to attend the meeting. P. Cohen replied that any materials from the meeting would be made available.

K. Duffett made a motion to adjourn. D. Goselin seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela A. Morrison