

March 18, 2019

Town of Buckland Finance Committee meeting at Town Hall

Committee members in attendance: Karen Blom, Ben Murray, Ciara Hayden, Raymond Lanza-Weil, and Paula Consolo

Committee member attending electronically: Larry Langford (until 8pm, when he left the meeting)

Others in attendance: Bob Markel, interim town administrator; Dena Wilmore, Select Board member; Marilyn Kelsey, resident

Called to order by Karen Blom at 7:03pm

The committee members reviewed the minutes from 3/11/19. Karen Blom made a motion to approve, which Ciara Hayden seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

The committee members discussed questions and changes on the budget spreadsheet, including (but not limited to) expense items with large percentage increases:

- Overlay Surplus: Assessors have \$59,000 in account, but they do not see a surplus. (We also were given a definition of the different “overlay” items in the budget)
- Insurance expense: received (a letter stating if we paid the FY2020 insurance invoice by August 1st, we would be eligible for a savings) notice that this expense is declining by 2.8%. Adjustment made.
- Reserve Fund: for unanticipated and unforeseen expenses, as opposed to balancing out at end of year. Needs to be minimum of \$20,000, with a target of 0.5% and 0.75% of the annual General Fund. Adjusted to \$22,000 (0.5%).
- Treasurer’s Expense: Treasurer requested \$3,000 for assistant’s stipend. Shifted this amount from Treasurer’s Expense line item.
- Tax Title: is at zero because there is \$7,000 in the account. Will likely not be zero next year.
- Accountant expense: why did this rise?
- Town Hall expenses: discussed electricity and communications/IT expenses. There are still outstanding questions regarding the breakdown of these expenses. Bob is looking into it.
- Auditor: scope of audit is two years because we’ll need 3 years for bond rating. Added in money to cover this expense.
- Animal Control: increasing to match prior year. The town plans to use the Regional Animal Control service offered through FRCOG. The cost is yet to be determined.
- Buckland Library: adjusted to meet the MA Board of Library Commissioners requirement for CWMARS membership of 2.5% increase in the average of the last three years’ appropriation.
- Recreation Committee Maintenance: increase due to mowing the ball field
- Retirement: a portion still needs to be allocated to Wastewater, which will reduce General expenses.

- OPEB: Discussion regarding putting money into this from the anticipated surplus. Suggestion to fund \$20,000 this year. It was noted that this expense could be funded via a bond; Ben recommended that we consider this approach during the budget process next year.
- General Stabilization: discussed increasing the amount on this line. Target is 3% to 5% of operating budget.

Discussed Town Administrator salary: some of it is allocated to Wastewater budget.

Discussed a variety of housekeeping items and outstanding questions regarding debt, stabilization accounts, and salaries.

The committee reviewed the Special Town Meeting warrant. The following amounts were noted:

- Article 1: \$3,000 from free cash
- Article 2: \$5,500 from free cash
- Article 3: Transfer \$10,000 from free cash to Reserve
- Article 4: Is a transfer; doesn't affect free cash
- Article 5: \$16,000 from free cash
- Article 6: Housekeeping; doesn't affect cash

These recommendations leave approx. \$11,000 in reserve and \$91,500 for free cash.

Paula moved the recommendations listed above. Raymond seconded. Approved unanimously.

Public Comment: Marilyn asked about debt exclusion. Will it be presented at Town Meeting? Karen explained that we intend to post information online as well as hard copies at Town Meeting.

Marilyn commented that some people prefer a paper ballot for the upcoming vote on the planning changes. Discussion ensued regarding the length of the meeting and the order in which controversial items should be presented and voted upon. The committee generally agreed that such votes should be held at the end of the meeting.

Motion to adjourn made by Karen; seconded by Raymond. Unanimously approved. Adjourned at 9:10pm.

Respectfully submitted by Raymond Lanza-Weil

Next meeting: April 8 at Town Hall.

Handwritten signatures in blue ink, including names like Karen, Paula, Raymond, and Ben.