



TOWN OF HOPEDALE

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Finance Committee

February 24th, 2021 Meeting Minutes 6:00 pm, via Zoom

Attendees:

Finance Committee

Present:

E. Callahan, D. Comastra, C. Hodgens, D. Madigan, P. Maloney, C. Strapponi

Absent:

D. Piatt

The Finance Committee meeting was opened at 6:02pm by Chris Hodgens.

Votes:

Meeting minutes for February 10, 2021 were presented. A motion was made to accept the minutes; all voted in favor.

At 6:51pm discussion regarding the settlement agreement and other general business concluded. The chair requested a motion to enter into recess until 7:00pm at which time the Water and Sewer Board will present and discuss their proposed FY22 budget. All voted in favor.

Events:

1. The settlement agreement will continue to be an agenda item. A question was raised as to the requirement of current year funds; Diana Schindler, Town Administrator indicated is not clear at this time and it is possible the anonymous donor may be willing to cover those costs. The Town Treasurer will be proceeding with the preparation of bond materials as no official litigation has been received as of this date.
2. Public Safety Departments have requested more time to compile their proposed budgets.
3. Diana Schindler is working on capital budget requests. Initial thoughts have been presented and clarified the intent of a feasibility study on the Town Hall.
4. Future milestones have been earmarked as March 10th and March 17th to meet with departments and a goal of April 3rd for the first draft of a total budget. Annual Town Meeting will possibly be outside in May. As extensive changes are needed for zoning

- bylaws it is possible two meetings will be scheduled; one of budget purposes and one for zoning.
5. A brief discussion of the potential need for an override question to voters took place. Diana Schindler proposed the idea of having the ballot question put to voters prior to Town Meeting in order to know exactly what the budget should look like for Annual Town Meeting and have solidified budgets for July 1st.
 6. The Highway Department called their meeting to order at 7:02pm and presented their proposed budget.
 - a. Waiting for contracts to be settled; using 3% as an assumption for the time being.
 - b. Costs associated with the MS-4 project are significant.
 - c. Requests includes a replacement for the leaf pick-up vehicle as it is 30+ years old and is no longer compliant with current standards. A discussion about the continuation of the leaf program took place (possibly altering to just the center of town or areas identified with problematic drainage). The concept of doing a lease/purchase of a vehicle was raised.
 - d. The snow and ice account are currently negative due to the number of winter storms. The department is looking to make a purchase of salt and sand prior to the end of the fiscal year to get this year's lower prices.
 7. The Water and Sewer Department called their meeting to order at 7:45pm and presented their proposed budget.
 - a. Water and Sewer general fund transfers were reviewed. These transfers cover the cost of services provided to the department by general town government.
 - b. Holiday coverage for backwash procedures were reviewed.
 - c. Concerns of requirements of more testing were shared.
 - d. More water sources are being explored as well as expanding the customer base.
 - e. Costs for bid documents are escalating; the Town does not employ an engineer which is required to write the specifications of bid work, posting documents on the central register, reviewing responses, etc.
 - f. Diana Schindler is working with the Department of Revenue regarding guidance on the establishment and operation of general fund transfers for enterprise accounts; a policy will be created.
 8. The Finance Committee will continue meeting with departments to review and discuss proposed budget. Diana Schindler requested the topic of OPEB liability be on the agenda for the next meeting, scheduled for March 10, 2021.

The Finance Committee Chair called the meeting to Adjournment at 8:51 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth S. Callahan

Recording Secretary

Hopedale Finance Committee