

FINANCE COMMITTEE/BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Town Hall
February 21, 2024 3:30 PM

Present – Bob Gniadek, Bob Youdelman, Pat Callahan, Steven Patterson, Eileen Martin, Roger Manzolini, Alan Hanson, Neal Pilson, Angela Garrity, Danielle Fillio

Distribution of Materials – Danielle distributed all necessary materials to the Committee for department presentations.

Discussion of Department Budgets –

Fire – Chief Traver gave an overview of his proposed budget. He explained that the budget increase is due to maintenance costs. Hose testing costs have increased the last three years. Maintenance costs/parts have significantly increased. It was noted that a portion of his budget presented is for the bi-annual volunteer Fire Stipend payroll. There was discussion about obtaining grants for a new Fire Truck, the timeline, likelihood of sharing with West Stockbridge, or if a merger may happen between West Stockbridge and Stockbridge. It was suggested to re-look into Fire Stabilization as was requested by the Ambulance Department. The committee asked for a capital plan. It was noted that it was being worked on for this year. At the request of the committee Pete Beckwith and Danielle will revise the capital plan to include all equipment owned by the Fire Department in addition to the trucks.

Highway – Pete Beckwith presented his budget by line items with the committee. His main increases result from increased expenses in fuel, maintenance of machines, electricity, and the cost of salt and gravel. The salt cost has doubled due to the price of salt per ton and delivery fees.

The committee questioned Chapter 90 money in the budget. Pete explained the Chapter 90 paperwork process and how it works stating it is treated as a reimbursable grant and not guaranteed funds dispersed into the bank like regular state aid on the cherry sheets. This led to a discussion of the salary line increase showing a request for a foreman following the retirement of a current employee in August. This position would help oversee projects while Pete is meeting with engineers, or working on the paperwork part of the job which includes grants, reimbursements, bills, and payroll. It was noted that Pete is also in charge of pond monitors, lifeguards, and has now taken over parts of the cemetery and sewer departments due to the resignations of Tom Grizey and Steve Parsons.

Cemetery – Pete gave an overview of the cemetery budget. The salary and expense lines have been switched. The maintenance of the cemeteries will now be handled by the Highway Department and the burials and plot management will be shared between Pete and Rich Atwood. Rich oversees plot management for West Stockbridge, Stockbridge, and Great Barrington and is the company that completes all the burial work.

Sewer – Pete gave an overview of the sewer budget. He stated that he is working on bringing maintenance requirements up-to-date and reporting requirements with the state and the City of Pittsfield. It was noted that the 20-year agreement with Pittsfield will expire this year and that he and Danielle are working with the Public Works Commissioner and Mayor to renew this agreement. There was discussion of the investment of sewer funds and if there was an analysis of a potential shortfall on loans. Danielle and Pete explained the possibility of the shortfall. Bob Gniadek will go over figures with Jodi, Pete and Danielle to understand the concerns.

Topics not reasonably anticipated by the chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting – None

Adjournment – 5:40 PM