

**FINANCE COMMITTEE
IPSWICH TOWN HALL, ROOM A
25 Green Street
TUESDAY, Mar. 8, 2016, 7:30 PM
Accepted 3/16/16**

FINCOM Members in Attendance: Mitch Feldman, Chairman, Walt Hartford, Kevin Murphy, Janice Clements Skelton, Richard Howard, and Ingrid Miles. Michael Schaaf came in at 7:40 pm, and Rob White arrived at 7:44 pm. Jamie Fay was absent.

Call to order at 7:38 pm with 6 (six) members present. The Chair announced that ICAM was recording, and Cindy Quinn, the Minutes Secretary, was present.

Others in Attendance: Vicki Halmen (Water & Wastewater Manager), Karen Repucci (Utilities Business Manager), Bill Hodge (Facilities Director), Greg Parachojuk (IT Dir.), Jeff Civitarese (IT Dept.), Anthony Torra (Code Enforcement Dir.), Glenn Gibbs (Planning & Dev. Dir.), Jeff Putur (Cemeteries/ Parks Supt.), Rick Clarke (DPW Director).

Abbreviations used: FINCOM Finance Committee, BOS Board of Selectmen, TM Town Manager, SC School Committee, DPW Dept. of Public Works, GIS Geographic Information System, HVAC Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning, MUNIS Municipal (financial management software) system, ZBA Zoning Board of Appeals

Documents used:

- Agenda 03/08/16
- FY2017 Budget & Capital Plan from R. Crosbie, 2/22/16
- Budget Matrix for FY17 Update 3816 from J. Breaker by email, 3/8/16
- Gen Gov and Fin Update 3816 from J. Breaker by email, 3/8/16
- Budget Packet by Code from R. Crosbie, 90 pgs.
- FinCom Report FY17 Timeline from M. Feldman by email 3/7/16

CITIZEN QUERIES: there were no citizen inquiries.

REVIEW OF MINUTES: there were no minutes.

WATER AND WASTEWATER

Vicki Halmen, Water and Wastewater Manager, summarized some of the changes. Because this budget is up 13%, she outlined the areas with the largest increases in the budget—salaries, health care, OPEB, contracts, and of the expenses. Other sections that went up are the long-term debt (up 15%) and capital spending (up 44%).

Last year, the upgrades to the treatment plant were completed, and there was a 12% rate increase. This year, the revenues are ahead, and if there is a surplus, it goes to fund the emergencies. Talking about causes of revenue shortfalls, Vicki mentioned that the weather, especially if it is rainy and water bans as prime causes.

For wastewater, there was a \$6 million upgrade at the treatment plan. The department tries to balance between the rates charges, upgrades to the system, and an analysis of the volume of septic hauling. There was a conversation about the backup near the Choate Bridge and how that was solved. On weekends, certain things still need to be checked resulting in overtime, and Vicki spoke about this and emergency call outs.

In the water department, the Jeffrey's Neck Rd. water replacement is complete, and the Linebrook Rd. project is out to bid. There are some water quality issues at Pinefield (water mixing system) and at the reservoir (preventing algae bloom). Over the next few years, the new water meters should be installed, and then water problems would be reported to the office through the meter immediately. The office could alert customers of an issue sooner. Some other expenses are the dump truck and expanding the capital fund for wells and the 30-year old treatment plant.

Water rates rose 7%, and the long-term debt is up 51% with the work on Jeffrey's Neck and Linebrook. Capital spending grew 81%, and Vicki expects the water rates to increase again to help build a surplus by 2020. There was discussion on the Parker River basin and the Egypt River concerns.

When asked about the lead in the water, she reported that they have had to change how they treat for manganese, so it does not increase the lead levels. They are now utilizing a different product and testing more frequently to control the levels. There was some dialogue on replacing older pipes.

FACILITIES

Facilities Director Bill Hodge commented on the major changes in overtime (driven by scheduled events) and the drop in gas/oil prices. Maintenance, repairs, purchased services, and material costs are up, while a completed lease contract will decrease in price. He focused on the capital needs in some of the Town's buildings as well as numerous problems at the High School, which should have been commissioned years ago when it opened to be sure the systems were in good working order. At that school, he is working with staff on the HVAC, the water softener system, motors, and balancing the systems.

He had requested a part-time person for Town Hall to save on overtime costs, more cleaning supplies, and repair funds at the schools. For the solar panels on the roof, a structural engineer would have to inspect the High School to see if the roof would support this. Further discussion centered on the submitted listing of Town Hall upgrades.

BUILDING INSPECTOR

Building Inspector Anthony Torra has been here since last May, and he now has an assistant who is doing most inspections. Tony can focus on the safety issues and do annual inspections with the Fire Dept. Currently he is reviewing the fee structure, and the number of inspections is up.

Where the emergency lighting at many businesses is not lasting long enough, those inspections are every two years instead of every five until a place is in compliance. There was talk of some frustrations in the process and putting some of the paperwork on the computer.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

For the Information Technology (IT) department, Greg Parachojuk spoke about some of the new initiatives to refresh the system, upgrade MUNIS, and consider cloud computing with MUNIS. Repair and maintenance costs have increased. He is thinking about a dashboard product and automating more functions. Other changes are in disaster recovery, having redundant Internet, and moving to the cloud system.

Jeff Civitarese spends much of his time with the computers in utilities, and mapping is almost complete. Greg mentioned the new website and how the IT department is responsible for the school technology, 12 other sites, and many projects.

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (Planning, Conservation, Historical Commission)

Glenn Gibbs, Director of Planning and Community Development, explained the various sections in his department. Those that are level-funded are planning, conservation, and ZBA. When talking about the plan that is 13 years old, he remarked that some items could be removed and others could be added to focus on economic development. They are utilizing the GIS system.

He is working with various partners on some of the projects. Downtown parking needs more spaces, and some of that might be accomplished by reconfiguration of the lots. Another idea is to approve the appearance and access to the areas. The possible school building sites would be considered once the School Building Committee makes recommendations.

Some of Glenn's priorities include Hammett St. parking, Wayfinding signs, housing development, the street where the brewery is located, and open space proposals. There is some activity at the old Chevrolet place. Another business has discovered its lease is up, so it is searching for another local location. Focusing on what the Town can do with funds for the plan, the Senior Planner will oversee the proposal. There was some discussion on land proposals and working with various local organizations.

Conservation is seeing more activity both residentially and commercially, and the ZBA has a full crew for the appeals. The Historical Commission has identified some projects, particularly the Old North Burying Ground, which may be funded using State or matching grants.

DPW (including cemeteries and parks)

Rick Clarke (DPW Director) and Jeff Putur (Cemeteries/ Parks Supt.) proceeded to give details on the various part of the Dept. of Public Works. Jeff noted that Parks and Cemeteries budget increased some and indicated what improvements were done at the playgrounds and cemeteries. The GIS work is labor intensive. Under civic observances, the increase is funding the flag replacement before Memorial Day and Veteran's Day. Jeff informed the committee about using some capital funds for the playing field irrigation and lights. He does the safety inspections for the playgrounds and schools, and some of the capital projects may be done the following year.

In public works, Rick commented on the grant for Jeffrey's Neck Road and some of the in-kind work that could be done similar to the plan for Linebrook Road. He talked about vehicle maintenance and building a wash bay at the maintenance area. For the snow and ice budget, he explained the need for an emergency shed for salt, which the department could build in-house.

Rick outlined some of the highway projects at Currier Park, Jeffrey's Neck Road, and Doyon School parking; much of these were completed in-house. Some of the upcoming projects need approval from the Conservation Committee and start as early as April.

The Pavement Management Plan increased by \$150,000, and he listed some of the upcoming proposals, which include paving and sealing cracks. There was a discussion on temporary fixes during the winter and placing tar in the cracks of newer roads. For the High St. work, Rick informed the FinCom that there would be survey work and drainage issues before looking at the Chapter 90 funds. Sidewalks, bike paths, and surrounding streets are part of the High St. problem.

In the Forestry department, Rick is trying to hire a foreman and a tree worker. There was a conversation about the size of Ipswich, the bucket truck use, and the large number of trees in town. Currently, the one man in Forestry works with another DPW employee with the bucket truck, but on other days, Forestry helps the highway department as needed. Forestry also does work for the Electric Light Department.

Next, Rick spoke about the trash contract with JRM, which is in year 3 of 5 and can be extended for 5 more years. 500 customers are participating in the composting program with Agrisource, and it is effective. The recycling rate is at 43%, and in the future, we may have dual stream recycling and pay as you go trash program. Solid waste covers the work at the catch basins and road sweepings. Now they can sift it and take some of it to the Transfer Station and recycle it. There was some dialogue on the some of the recyclables at the station.

NEW BUSINESS

The Warrant Hearing will be April 12th instead of March 22nd. The draft FinCom report is due April 12th. It was moved and seconded to have the Warrant Hearing April 12th. Unanimous.

It was moved, and seconded, to adjourn at 11:22 pm. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by

Cynthia D. Quinn

Minutes Secretary