

**FINANCE COMMITTEE
IPSWICH TOWN HALL, ROOM A
25 Green Street
WEDNESDAY, Mar. 9, 2016, 7:30 PM
Accepted June 14, 2016**

FINCOM Members in Attendance: Mitch Feldman, Chairman, Kevin Murphy, Jamie Fay Richard Howard, Michael Schaaf, and Rob White. Walt Hartford, Janice Clements Skelton, and Ingrid Miles were absent.

Call to order at 7:37 pm with 6 (six) members present. The Chair announced that ICAM was recording, and the Minutes Secretary, Cindy Quinn, was present.

Others in Attendance: Stephanie Frontiera (Town Accountant), Robin Nolan (Chief Assessor), John Moberger and Karen Rassias (Assessors), Pam Carakastane (Town Clerk), (Kerri Bates (Recreation & Culture Dir.), Colleen Fermon (Public Health Dir.), Sheila Taylor (Director COA), Megan Boissonneau (Animal Control), Scott LaPreste (Shellfish Constable), Lt. Jon Hubbard (Emergency Service Dir.), Chief Gagnon (Fire Dept.), and Chief Nikas (Public Safety Dir.).

Abbreviations used: FINCOM Finance Committee, BOS Board of Selectmen, TM Town Manager, SC School Committee, FTE Full-Time Equivalent, DPW Dept. of Public Works, ELD Electric Light Dept., GIS Geographic Information System, ISO Insurance Service Office, MUNIS Municipal (financial management software) system

Documents used:

- Agenda 03/09/16
- FY2017 Budget & Capital Plan from R. Crosbie, 3/1/16
- Budget Matrix for FY17 Update 3816 from J. Breaker by email, 3/8/16
- Federal Forfeiture 2016 from Chief Nikas by email, 3/9/16
- Budget Packet by Code from R. Crosbie, 90 pgs.

CITIZEN QUERIES: there were no citizen inquiries.

REVIEW OF MINUTES: there were no minutes.

FINANCE DIRECTORATE

S. Frontiera, the Town Accountant, went over some of the changes in the accounting budget, which is down 4%. There would be some changes in some positions going from 4 FTE to 3.5. Other areas of focus are the State and Federal grants, the deadline for the audit, and filing for reimbursements sooner. With the new MUNIS system, it should help with the day-to-day work. More like a chief financial officer, the Finance Director would do more long-range planning. There will be some changes in the organization of the department with some staff moving to other departments, and this chart is in the budget. She did explain that some benefits and workmen's compensation costs are up, but at the end of the year, the Town receives wellness credits. Audit costs are about the same, and the management transfer line holds the money for negotiations.

Assessors Robin Nolan, John Moeberger, and Karen Rassias appeared before the FinCom and updated the committee. After Karen described the Patriot Property process, Robin added information about updated maps, GIS, and new growth estimates. For all new accounts, Patriot goes to visit them. If it is a business, they check on the furniture and other equipment. John spoke to the appeals process, running board hearings, and analyzing data. There was some discussion on the property at Little Neck where there are condominiums, and how each owner owns a percentage of the land.

The Town Clerk, Pam Carakastane, mentioned there is small increase in the budget but spent more time on some of the issues such as online documents like birth certificates and marriage licenses that need to be solved. The election budget has skyrocketed, as the Town will have to comply with the new early voting system for certain elections. Even though this will not replace absentee ballots, the early voting in the fall will happen for 11 days before the election, but there are no regulations yet. This special voting will happen when Town Hall is open, and the final ballots would be processed during Election Day. Pam did recount the story about why the ballots needed to be reprinted for the primary in March.

The Treasurer was not present, and the FinCom will try to schedule him later.

CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Kerri Bates, the Recreation and Cultural Director, talked about a level-funded budget with a few adjustments. There is an increase in the civic observances line for the band and refreshments for Memorial Day and Veterans' Day. The department has won some grants. With 122 events and nine different programs, they are busy, and Visitor's Center activities are up 14%. Volunteers there have worked over 1000 hours including staying late for the Farmers' Market.

For wayfinding signs, she wants to develop a walking map of Ipswich with three different tours. There will be more Downtown Tuesday events as well dinner deals and some dance parties on some Saturdays. Kerri continued with details about tracking visitor center data, Facebook activity, places to stay, after-school activities, and other items. The bus will go from the train station to the beach, but it will not stop at the Visitor's Center, where there is overflow parking.

Public Health Director, Colleen Fermon, identified some key areas that have increased such as greenhead traps and tick prevention. Regulations for farmer's markets are statewide, and there is a local responsibility for the testing at New England Biolabs. She talked about the process for overseeing the work there, especially when Ipswich students are doing trials. There was a conversation on the different types of food permits—temporary and seasonal—and packaging.

Sheila Taylor from the Council on Aging summarized some of the on-going activities at the Senior Center. Safety issues, health and fitness, courses in first aid, trips, and the senior tax program are a few of these. One item in the budget is the increase in the Outreach Coordinator's time. This person interviews seniors to work with them and make referrals. Over 2000 people are served, and 1000 use the program regularly. Even with this budget, Sheila outlined how volunteers provide \$50,000 in-kind funding.

PUBLIC SAFETY POLICE, FIRE, EMERGENCY

Animal Control Officer (ACO) Megan Boissonneau began by highlighting what could be done better. A part-time ACO is needed for after hours work, and there were a number of issues with feral cats, lost dogs, late fees, and permits for chickens. With the increase in the number of families with chickens, there is a need for different types of inspections depending on the size of the lot.

Scott LaPreste, the Shellfish Constable, provided information about the new Assistant Constable, concerns with Farley Brook run-off into the Ipswich River, green crabs, and razor clams. Collaborating with the Ipswich Watershed, he has data and maps of the downtown area in an attempt to find the source of the pollutants, which may be several sources. Concerning the crabs, he maintained that some areas are better, but the green crab is predatory. He suggested a regional approach. Ipswich will supply crabs for the study at a university, but the Town is still trying to find a market for them. There is a decent market for razor clams, but they are harder to dig and have a short window of time.

Emergency Manager Lt. Jon Hubbard commented on the new satellite phone service, the mobile hotspot, senior citizens preparedness, first aid, CPR, and teaching grades 3-5 emergency preparedness. The theme is "Don't be scared, be prepared." Students went home as emergency managers for their own home and to teach their parents. He brought up the emergency notification system for the disabled. There are some backup generators, but other departments may need one also including the DPW and Fire Dept. Emergency Management coordinates with the ELD for power problems. There is a Civilian Emergency Response Team (CERT) of 12-trained volunteers who assist with emergencies.

Fire Chief Gagnon reviewed the number of calls, inspections, lockboxes for the elderly, and in the fire safety education program. Staffing has remained flat, but the department received a grant for training. Some of the increases in the budget are for longevity, vehicle repair and maintenance, the capital plan, and replacing two trucks. He emphasized the ISO ratings for the town, mutual aid, water availability, and response times. Then he addressed some of the problems such as a high number of sick days, an inappropriate radio purchase, and boat fires. Some of the good things are the infrastructure, the hoses, and the procedure for medical calls. For the future, the town will be looking at a regional approach and long-term plans.

Within the Police Dept., Chief Nikas brought up professional development, increased foot patrols, DNA testing, command leadership training, and drug outreach. Some of the older officers are retiring, and he hiring younger ones who will need training. With the purchase of new cruisers, some of the older ones would be repurposed to other departments. He spent some time on various expenses especially the drug overdose costs. The program is designed for high school students and families with a regional and collaborative approach with referrals. Chief Nikas reviewed a variety of statistics on citations, medical assists, arrests, and outlined some concerns about parking. Road details, increase in traffic, and increased response times can be expected when construction begins on Linebrook Rd. He discussed using the Dept. of Justice fund and its uses. J. Fay left the meeting at 11:35 pm.

The Dispatch budget is flat, but Chief Nikas is considering a proposal with a few other towns. The harbormaster part of the budget is self-funded, and there is a need for a second person on the boat on beach weekends. The boat may have to be repowered and then refurbished later. In this account in the capital plan, there are some big expenses for the pump-out boat and another boat for the fire department. There are 1050 moorings, and that is at capacity. With the shifting sands, he urged the use of GIS for positioning the moorings and doing more applications on-line.

NEW BUSINESS

The schedule next week will be April 15th and 16th to hear the School Committee, but there will be no meeting on the 17th...

It was moved, and seconded, to adjourn at 11:52 pm. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Cynthia D. Quinn, Minutes Secretary