

**TOWN OF IPSWICH | MASSACHUSETTS
SELECT BOARD MEETING
Monday, January 23, 2023 7:00 PM
Meeting Room A – Town Hall, 25 Green Street**

Pursuant to Open Meeting Law M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §§ 18-25, written notice posted by the Town Clerk and delivered to all Board members, a meeting of the Select Board was held on Monday, January 23, 2023, at 7:00 PM in Meeting Room A.

Board Members present: William Whitmore, Chair; Sarah Player, Vice Chair, Linda Alexson; Kerry Mackin

Also present: Stephen Crane, Town Manager, Mary Gallivan, Assistant Town Manager, Sarah Johnson, part-time Finance Director

Mr. Whitmore announced this meeting is the first of two meetings for the presentation of the town budget with information from public safety, planning and community development, general town government and the Town Manager.

With a quorum present Mr. Whitmore called the meeting to order.

Welcome and Announcements

Ms. Alexson announced the Waterways Advisory Board will present a draft of the Harbor Plan on January 30 at 6:30 PM, the Public Safety Property Reuse Group will meet January 31 at 7:00 PM in the Resource Room and the Shellfish Advisory Board will meet February 7 at 7:00 PM in the Resource Room.

Ms. Player announced the 3A Task Force will meet on February 1 at 5:00 PM in the Mary Conley Room, the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board and the Ipswich Housing Partnership will meet on February 9 at 7:30 AM in Meeting Room A.

Mr. Whitmore asked if there was an emergency parking ban due to snow fall and received confirmation from Mr. Crane there is no ban at this time. Mr. Whitmore also indicated he is volunteering for the COA Snow Angels and if anyone would like to volunteer for the program to please contact the COA.

Citizen Queries

None. Ms. Mackin mentioned flooding of Jeffreys Neck Road and Mr. Whitmore requested residents be mindful of weather events that can affect common flood areas and not to drive through these areas.

New Common Victualler, Weekday Entertainment and Sunday Entertainment License Applications from Synergy Restaurant Group dba Choate Bridge Pub

Due to snowy roadways, the representative was unable to attend. Mr. Crane shared background on the application and the concerns expressed that led the applicant to alter the times requested for the entertainments. Research on the entertainment hours granted to Ipswich businesses and learning that the applicant is mirroring the previous owners permitted hours, Mr. Crane recommended the board approve the Common Victualler and the entertainment licenses, either the amended hours or original.

Ms. Alexson conducted research of annual renewals over the last six years and noted her comfort level with moving forward with the amended application of an end time of 12:00 AM.

- Vote: Ms. Alexson moved to approve the 2023 Common Victular application from the Choate Bridge Pub as presented in the meeting packet as well as the 2023 Weekday entertainment license application with requested hours of 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM and 2023 Sunday entertainment license application with hours of 12:00 PM to 12:00 PM. Ms. Player seconded, the motion passed unanimously.

FY24 Budget Review

Facilities Mr. Crane indicated inflationary increases of \$420,000 to maintain level service limited what the town could do in other areas. Chris Rais, Director of Facilities and Purchasing, indicated his budget is level funded for the most part except for a 25% increase in utilities and noted the instability in oil prices. Buildings and operations are level funded. Town buildings are operational with preventative maintenance for longevity. Mr. Crane added the Facilities department has taken on procurement and there is currently an absence in that role. Mr. Rais has received a \$5,000 stipend due to additional responsibility. Mr. Whitmore inquired if \$155,000 is adequate for building maintenance and repair. Mr. Rais indicated that is adequate for the town side. Ms. Player explained Mr. Rais' role is divided between the school and the town and inquired about the cost sharing of the salary. Ms. Johnson provided the allocation of Mr. Rais' salary is 49% school, 41% town and 10% utilities.

Ms. Alexson inquired about the stipend, Mr. Crane indicated this stipend is for FY24 and the consideration of a procurement role for both town and school that sits at town hall. Ms. Johnson explained the unfunded position correction. Discussion ensued regarding an \$8,818 stipend paid by the town for the Assistant Facilities Director, Brad Orme who also does work for the town.

Ms. Alexson requested a list of stipends. No further questions for Mr. Rais.

Fire Department Mr. Crane commented on the expenditure trends on overtime and indicted Fire Chief, Paul Parisi will explain the value to residents and related operational goals. He also commented on stipends for paramedics under training line and that increases in personnel items are based on obligations of collective bargaining.

Chief Parisi introduced Deputy Chief Lee Prentiss as a resource of information. Chief Parisi detailed areas of increase, some due to collective bargaining agreement and the addition of five call fire fighters currently going through the academy. Chief Parisi detailed shifts, station locations and staffing and national recommendations and value of having four fire fighters on an engine company and recent OSHA requirement of two fire fighters in and two fire fighters out.

Mr. Whitmore asked the value of EMT training with Ipswich's access to Action Ambulance staff. Chief Parisi indicated the shared services mean they aren't always available. Mr. Whitmore asked about sending a large engine out on every call and the value of squad vehicles responding to basic calls not fire related. Chief Parisi responded that there is a small Squad 1 vehicle for brush fires and other routine calls. However, the problem is with splitting the company and leaving one fire fighter at a station when a

fire call comes in. Mr. Whitmore wanted to know whether adding to staff would be feasible. Chief Parisi indicated cost of benefits and collective bargaining with the union is a consideration. Mr. Crane indicated overtime is inevitable whether there is an addition to staff or not.

Ms. Player asked how the five new call fire fighters will be worked in or what is their role. Chief Parisi indicated Ipswich will have a total of 10 call fire fighters after they completed the academy and they will be able to staff a second engine or ladder company. They will be able to arrive within 10 minutes of the first engine or respond to a second event. Chief Parisi indicated call fire fighters are paid hourly. Ms. Alexson asked about grant opportunities for capital requests. Ladder trucks aren't typically paid for via grants, the amount set aside for the ladder truck is \$225,000 and ladder trucks are more than a million. Gear expires, is technical and specialized. No more questions.

Public Safety – Emergency Management Lt. Jon Hubbard shared that emergency management is level funded. All programs are funded and using grants to fund radio purchases. Ms. Player inquired of the citizen response team that is a total of twelve volunteers to help in emergencies. Lt. Hubbard mentioned the need of a new emergency response truck that was inoperable during recent flood.

Public Safety – Police Mr. Crane spoke for public safety related to overtime following expenditure trends, holidays, maintenance contract for new taser system. Chief Paul Nikas mentioned significant increase in overtime due to staff taking time off and vacation hours causing overtime, additional holiday, and being down one position. Some salaries are over the 3% due to education qualifiers for increases.

Discussion ensued on staffing shifts and how the town is charged by vendors. Ms. Alexson congratulated Chief Nikas on AAA rating of the department and asked if there is money for dedicated traffic enforcement officer. New traffic counters are impending and will be installed. Potential additions to staff will be discussed with the town manager. Chief Nikas indicated a big jump in the budget is upgrade to live scan system and replacement taser program. Mr. Whitmore asked about increases due to education and additional opportunities or advanced challenges on the job as a result. Mr. Crane indicated the result is a better level of service. Ms. Alexson asked about cruisers. Chief Nikas replied there are eight marked, six front line cruisers and two spares used for SRO for the school and emergency management has one and there are two unmarked vehicles. A cruiser total cost is \$55,000. The town took in \$19,000 turning in two vehicles that was returned into general fund. The public safety front line vehicles are hybrids. Discussion on the ill-advised, illegal (?) repurposing of vehicles ensued.

Animal Control Mr. Crane indicated increases in software fees and printing costs and everything else is level service. Shelter Pro software allows tracking, networking and record management. Regional animal control is currently being discussed among several communities. Ms. Alexson asked if Ipswich has a part-time animal control staff member. Chief Nikas said it has been vacant but is left in the budget. Ms. Alexson asked about coverage during Animal Control Officer Megan Sousa's occasional absence from work. Chief Nikas replied it falls to police or DPW or it doesn't get addressed.

Harbormaster Mr. Crane expressed this budget is funded via mooring fees and one notable increase is \$18,000 for the replacement of a boat engine for the fire response boat. Mr. Crane intends to request the use of state aid that was added to the reserve fund during special town meeting and will be requesting the Finance Committee to vote on this another other items. Historically this has been part of the harbor budget. Cost increase for mooring vendors was mentioned.

Shellfish budget is level funded with no questions.

Dispatch budget changes were related to collective bargaining and contracts only with no questions.

Planning and Community Development Interim Planning Director, Glenn Gibbs is employed part time. Work load and night board meetings are tapping the same staff members of the Planning department. Consideration of current staff and work load may be in order to determine needs.

Conservation as part of planning with Conservation Agent, Jenna Pirrotta. Ms. Alexson asked about the increase of salary of the Conservation Agent. As part of the hiring agreement for Ms. Pirrotta she will receive an increase upon completion of a probationary period and a COLA in July.

Code Enforcement Jim Bone, Director of Code Enforcement, hired part time assistant building inspector and increase in fee for weights in measures consider regionalization. Ms. Alexson inquired of salary increase. Ms. Gallivan indicated it was a salary negotiation after compensation review of comparable communities. Discussion on employee retention ensued.

Open Space Beth O'Connor, Open Space Manager, is funded by revenues rather than the general fund. Ms. Alexson inquired about the part time salary. Ms. O'Connor explained her unique department and role and how they work with other town departments. Other expenses increase to pay increasing consulting fees.

General Government - Town Clerk Amy Akell, Ipswich Town Clerk. Mr. Crane indicated wages were collectively bargained. Justification of salary increase after 2022 increase was made but town manager proposed budget had been determined in advance of the meeting.

Assessing - Mary-Louise Ireland, Chief Assessor, discussed staff development and succession planning, maintenance contracts, funding salary changes. Mr. Crane mentioned capital plan funding of software upgrade or purchase.

Accounting Terri White, Town Accountant. Mr. Crane commented accounting has an allocation to utilities. Discussion of payroll processing on Monday holidays ensued with inquiry on allocation of Finance Director salary and the expectation of filling that position for FY24.

Treasurer Collectors Office Kevin Merz, Treasurer. Mr. Crane commented on contractual salary obligations and attrition savings with new employee and expenses are relatively flat thus level serviced budget. Utilities allocation of 6% of treasurer collector salary.

Information Technology Jay Wassouf, IT Director. Mr. Crane mentioned the decentralization of copier contracts and IT taking responsibility. This led to funding of maintenance contracts line item and addition of GIS under the IT department in a combined IT help desk/IT specialist and GIS role.

Historical Commission is level funded.

ZBA has a 3% COLA increase and no additional expenses.

Town Manager Mr. Crane indicated salaries were determined by contract or position change and Civic Overtime relates to cultural events or civic events that require details for police, fire or DPW. Legal fee trends are running higher with increase of rates of town counsel. Finance Report printing fee is expected to increase. Salary allocations are shared with utilities for new assistant town manager role.

Ms. Alexson recommended Select Board recording secretary increase to match Finance Committee per meeting fee. Discussion ensued about outsourced services.

Increases in benefits could be higher based on Ipswich claims. Inquiry on admin salary was presented and request for additional details or columns in budget docs and request to be notified on adjustments. Discussion ensued on salaries and staffing.

New Business

None.

Old Business

None.

Mr. Whitmore announced the January 24th meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn.

Vote: Ms. Alexson motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Player. Motion passes unanimously.

Leah Niska 2/16/2023