

**IPSWICH SELECT BOARD**  
**Meeting of Monday, January 27, 2020**  
**Ipswich 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 27, 2020 at 7:00 PM in Meeting Room A.

Board Members present: William Whitmore, Chair; Linda Alexson, Vice Chair; Dr. Tammy Jones; Kerry Mackin; Nishan Mootafian

Also present: Anthony Marino, Town Manager; Eileen Page, Recording Secretary

Abbreviations used: FY21, Fiscal Year 2021; FEMA, Federal Emergency Management Agency; ACO, Animal Control Officer; ZBA, Zoning Board of Appeals; FY20, Fiscal Year 2020

With a quorum present, Mr. Whitmore called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

Mr. Mootafian joined the meeting at 7:07 PM.

**Welcome/Announcements**

The Public Safety Facilities Committee will meet Wednesday, January 29 in the basement of Our Lady of Hope at 7:00 PM for a public forum.

**Citizen Queries**

Phil Goguen (4 Kingfisher Road) asked how the decision was made to hold budget hearings on two consecutive nights instead of over the course of six weeks. Mr. Whitmore responded that he had suggested the idea and the Select Board unanimously agreed to hold budget hearings in this format. The decision was made so as to allow the budget to be passed to the Finance Committee sooner, giving them more time to dissect it. Dr. Jones added that each department was also able to be afforded more time and respect by appearing throughout the year to provide presentations, rather than trying to fit a department update into their budget hearing. Mr. Goguen asked what decisions will be made on the budget tonight. Mr. Whitmore responded that there will only be preliminary approvals, and that nothing will be finalized without discussion with the Finance Committee.

Jack Mulhern (6 Liberty Street) stated his displeasure with interactions he has had with the Ipswich Police Department regarding speed limits and pedestrian safety on Liberty Street since he moved to town.

**FY21 Budget Review: Fire**

Fire Chief Andy Theriault appeared before the Board to present the proposed FY21 budget for the Fire Department. He reported few increases for expenses, with about a \$1,000 increase in radio equipment. Wage increases are due to contract negotiations, and larger expenses such as vehicles are built into the capital budget. Chief Theriault reported that the department will be losing four call firefighters, which is consistent with a national challenge right now of recruiting call firefighters. Call firefighters are paid by the hour on an on-call basis, and typically respond to false alarms and provide additional backup as needed by the department.

Ms. Alexson asked for clarification between line items Permanent Wages, Permanent Part Time, and Permanent Other. Chief Theriault stated that Permanent Wages refer to firefighter salaries, Permanent Part Time refers to call firefighters, and Permanent Other refers to lieutenants.

Mr. Whitmore asked to whom the boat currently parked in the back of the fire department belongs. Chief Theriault responded that the boat was obtained as government surplus at no cost to the Town, and is not currently in use. There are no budget lines allocated for the boat.

## **FY21 Budget Review: Police**

### **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

Lieutenant Jon Hubbard appeared before the Board to present the proposed FY21 budget for the Emergency Management department. He requested \$220 to bring an internet-powered phone to the Mobile Command Center trailer. He reported that the department has also received over \$180,000 in reimbursement from FEMA.

### **ANIMAL CONTROL**

Police Chief Paul Nikas appeared before the Board to present the proposed FY21 budget for Animal Control. He noted a salary increase for ACO Megan Sousa, as she has completed her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, with a concentration in Human Services, combined with a recent salary survey that showed that she is currently underpaid for the industry. The part-time Assistant Animal Control Officer position will remain funded to provide on-call coverage for weekends. Medical exam expenses were raised by \$250 as Quadrant Health Care has raised their prices.

Mr. Whitmore asked that the department focus on a campaign to combat the use of illegal retractable dog leashes in town.

Dr. Jones noted that ACO Sousa runs a well-managed department on a small budget. Chief Nikas added that \$62,000 was recently brought in by the Ipswich Humane Group to help complete the expansion of the animal shelter.

### **POLICE**

Salary increases for officers are driven by contract negotiations, and some will need to be paid retroactively. Chief Nikas reported the biggest expense in the FY21 budget will be a \$6,000 upgrade of the reverse-911 system, which now allows senior citizens to opt into being contacted directly during emergencies such as power outages. Medical supply costs have also increased as prices of items such as adrenaline and Narcan are raised. The department has allocated an additional \$1,500 per year for ammunition, as the Commonwealth now mandates firearms training twice a year. There was also a \$500 increase in travel expenses for officers who must travel out of state for trainings.

Ms. Alexson asked if Overtime and Overtime Court Fees might be offset by providing additional officers. Chief Nikas responded that while that may be a discussion in the future, the only additional full-time officer needed at this time is a dedicated parking officer. Ms. Alexson asked if court fees paid by defendants are ever returned to the Town; Chief Nikas responded that the Commonwealth takes all court fees.

Mr. Whitmore reminded viewers that the budget books are available on the Town website as a PDF.

Dr. Jones asked if the department has considered installing radar speed signs. Chief Nikas responded that each sign will cost anywhere from \$2,500 to \$6,000 depending on the model, and he is currently working with the Department of Public Works to identify critical areas for installation, such as Bialek Park.

### **HARBORS**

Harbors increases include a \$15,000 line item for the purchase of a harbor plan from the Urban Harbors Institute. The plan design will cost \$30,000 total. The harbor patrol boat will also need upgrades, including the replacement of its windows and rubber seals. \$13,000 will be spent on a new boat trailer, as the original is from 2005. Chief Nikas noted that Harbors is funded through mooring fees and boat excise tax, so the purchase will not affect the General Fund.

### **SHELLFISH**

The Shellfish budget is level-funded except for salary increase due to contractual obligations. Funding for the green crab mitigation program is included, at \$12,000. The program is largely successful in preventing damage to the clam flats and marshlands.

### **DISPATCH**

The Chief Dispatcher has retired after 22 years, and has not been replaced at this time. The additional funding of \$55,000 will remain in the budget in case the department decides to replace him at a later time. Chief Nikas reported

that there are no uncovered shifts, and the department has increased the use of per-diem dispatchers who provide coverage when needed.

#### **LEO THE COMFORT DOG**

The department recently welcomed Leo, a German Shepherd comfort dog, to the force. Leo has been assigned to Officer Brian Murphy and his family, and provides emotional support for victims of emotional trauma, and visits Ipswich schools and senior facilities. He has nearly completed his training, and will also be on the harbor patrol boat this summer alongside Officer Murphy. Leo made an appearance at the meeting.

*Vote: Ms. Alexson moved to preliminarily endorse the Public Safety budget, and Mr. Mootafian seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

#### **FY21 Budget Review: Planning Board**

Ethan Parsons (Director of Planning and Development) appeared before the Board to present the proposed FY21 budget for the Planning Board. The Board is level-funded across expenses. Salaries have decreased slightly due to staffing changes over the last six months, which included retirements and the hiring of new employees at a lower cost. This provides a slight decrease in the overall budget.

#### **FY21 Budget Review: Zoning Board of Appeals**

There is a slight increase in the ZBA budget due to salary increases.

Ms. Alexson asked whom the line “Temporary Part Time Zoning Agent” refers to. It was concluded that the inclusion of “temporary” was a typo. Marie Rodgers serves as the part time Zoning Agent.

#### **FY21 Budget Review: Historical Commission**

A temporary, part-time archivist position was added in FY20 which will continue into FY21. \$500 in special printing costs was cut. The budget for flags and plaques remains level-funded.

#### **FY21 Budget Review: Open Space**

Hannah Wilbur (Open Space Manager) appeared before the Board to present the proposed FY21 budget for Open Space. There is a 1.07% increase overall, with the biggest change in money allocated to allow staff to attend the Land Trust Alliance Rally, a conference for professionals in the open space field. In an effort to save money, the Open Space staff have elected to only attend every other year.

Dr. Jones asked how many permanent part time employees are in the department. Ms. Wilbur reported that she works 19 hours per week, and Beth O’Connor (Open Space Steward) works 30 hours per week.

Mr. Whitmore asked why the Temporary Part Time line item was dropped. Ms. Wilbur responded that the department has found that it is more cost-effective to contract work rather than hiring interns and sharing employees across departments.

Ms. Alexson asked for clarification on the difference between the Open Space Program Manager and the Open Space Steward. Ms. Wilbur responded that as the Manager, her work focuses primarily on planning and collaborating with landowners on conservation projects. As the Open Space Steward, Ms. O’Connor focuses on land already acquired by the Town, and monitors conservation restrictions. Ms. Alexson asked about the status of the trail on Linebrook Road at the Symes development site. Ms. Wilbur responded that the Planning Board has met with the developers and will be pursuing an agreement to decide exactly where the trail is going to be. Mr. Parsons added that a trail has already been set on the southern side of the property, and the Planning Board is now focused on the trail to be set at on the northern side.

#### **FY21 Budget Review: Public Health**

Colleen Fermon (Director of Public Health) appeared before the Board to present the proposed FY21 budget for the Public Health department. The only salary changes are due to contractual obligations. A mileage reimbursement was raised to accommodate additional travel of the part time health inspector.

Ms. Mackin asked if Ms. Fermon had seen an uptick in the number of appeals to decisions made by the Board of Health. Ms. Fermon responded that she has not.

#### **FY21 Budget Review: Code Enforcement**

Jim Bone (Director of Code Enforcement) appeared before the Board to present the proposed FY21 budget for the Building Department. Increases include the transition of the part-time assistant building inspector to a full-time position, which was deemed necessary due to the doubling of the number of permits produced by the office.

Mr. Whitmore asked what a typical turnaround time for a normal permit process would be. Mr. Bone responded that while there is no “typical” permit, residents who come prepared with site plans and other materials could have a permit within a day or two. More complicated projects will depend upon the applicant and the scope of the project, but Mr. Bone believes that have a second full-time inspector will speed the process up.

Ms. Alexson asked about staffing in the department. Mr. Bone responded that aside from himself, there is one full-time administrative assistant, one part-time local inspector, one part-time electrical inspector, and one part-time plumbing and gas inspector. 2.6 hours per week are available to the administrative assistant as needed.

Phil Goguen (4 Kingfisher Road) asked how many benefited employees are in the Building department. Mr. Bone responded that currently, there are two full-time, benefited employees. The FY21 budget would take the department to three full-time, benefited employees.

*Vote: Dr. Jones moved to preliminarily endorse the Planning & Community Development budget, and Ms. Mackin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

#### **FY21 Budget Review: Assessing**

Robin Nolan (Chief Assessor) appeared before the Board to present the proposed FY21 budget for the Board of Assessors. The education budget, listed as “Meals and Lodging”, has been increased by \$320 as the cost of education increases. There is also an added cost for subscription services so the department may subscribe to the *Chronicle Transcript* for legal notices. Salary increases are due to collective bargaining agreements.

Mr. Mootafian asked what the deadline is for residents to file for abatements. Ms. Nolan clarified that the date is February 3, 2020. It is listed incorrectly on the website and will be corrected.

#### **FY21 Budget Review: Treasurer/Collector**

Kevin Merz (Treasurer/Collector) appeared before the Board to present the proposed FY21 budget for the Treasurer/Collector department. The expenses line has decreased, as \$60 was moved to the mileage account. Mr. Merz also informed the Board that Ann Wright (Collections Clerk) will be retiring at the end of February. She has worked in the department for eight and a half years.

Dr. Jones noted a 6% raise in salaries. Mr. Marino clarified that a 6% raise was negotiated in Mr. Merz’s new contract.

Ms. Alexson asked for clarification on the Parking Clerk stipend. Mr. Merz stated that the Assistant Treasurer/Collector works an additional two hours per week as the Parking Clerk. The position is separate from her regular duties, and the stipend is less than her regular hourly wage.

#### **FY21 Budget Review: Town Clerk, Elections and Registrations**

##### **TOWN CLERK**

Amy Akell (Town Clerk) appeared before the Board to present the proposed FY21 for the Town Clerk. She noted that she removed \$925 in conference registration fees, as she recently became a Board member and will now be able to attend Town Clerk conferences at no cost.

##### **ELECTIONS**

Ms. Akell has budgeted for three elections in FY21. The presidential election will be held in November 2020, and town elections will be held in May 2021. She has budgeted for a third election as a precautionary measure. She also noted that the presidential primary will be held on March 3, 2020. Early voting for the presidential election will take place over 11 days, but exact dates are still to be determined. Early voting must be held during normal Town Hall business hours, with some Saturdays required.

Ms. Akell was recently informed that maintenance will soon be discontinued on the Town's current voting machines, as the models are no longer made. New machines will need to be built into the capital budget over the next few years. She noted that Massachusetts has strict rules regarding which machines are allowed to be used, and paper ballots are always provided as a backup to help prevent machine hacking. Ms. Akell reported that each election costs between \$7,000 to \$9,000 between ballot printing, coding machines, poll workers, and police details.

Ms. Alexson asked if a decision had been made on whether or not to use keypad voting at the Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Marino responded that he would ask the Town Moderator to attend a Select Board meeting soon to discuss it.

Phil Goguen (4 Kingfisher Road) asked how many election workers have been cut out of the budget by the Town's use of poll pads. Ms. Akell clarified that poll pads still require election workers to run them, but the time saved is enormous. She also noted that rather than manually entering meeting records, poll pads automatically upload check-in information, saving hours of administrative work.

#### **FY21 Budget Review: Purchasing**

Frank Antonucci (Director of Purchasing) appeared before the Board to present the proposed FY21 budget for the Purchasing Department. The Purchasing department consists only of Mr. Antonucci. The budget is level-funded, except for his annual cost of living increase.

Mr. Antonucci also noted that the annual Town report is available on the Town website, or as a CD at Town Hall. A link to a PDF of the booklet will be made available on social media.

#### **FY21 Budget Review: IT**

Jay Wassouf appeared before the Board to present the proposed FY21 budget for IT. The budget was compiled by Greg Parachojuk (IT Director, retired January 2020). Increases include software purchases such as School Dude, Open Gov, and additional Cloud storage. Changing times necessitated an upgrade of the library's currently free internet access, which will be provided by Comcast in the FY21 budget for \$21,500, funded by a grant written by Chris Dieter (IT Specialist).

Dr. Jones asked how secure Mr. Wassouf finds the Town's servers to be. Mr. Wassouf stated that upgrading desktops to Windows 10 over the last year has helped. He has made some improvements to the firewall, including enabling features that block emails from countries known for sending excessive spam. Dr. Jones asked if there is a system in place for training employees against spam emails; Mr. Marino responded that Mr. Parachojuk had previously hired a company to complete a security assessment, and had also sent test phishing emails to employees. Out of just over 200 employees, only four or five staff are reported to have opened the email.

#### **FY21 Budget Review: Accounting**

Sarah Johnson (Finance Director) appeared before the Board to present the proposed FY21 budget for Accounting. Salary increases include a cost of living adjustment for the Accounting Specialist, and a collective bargaining agreement increase for the AP Clerk. It was noted that the Accounting Specialist was also given a market salary adjustment. Printing expenses for W2 forms were cut, as the service is now outsourced to Harpers Payroll. Training costs have increased by \$200 to allow Teri White (Town Accountant) to attend municipal accounting training.

*Vote: Ms. Alexson moved to preliminarily endorse the General Government budget, and Mr. Mootafian seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

#### **New Business**

None.

**Old Business**

None.

*Vote: Dr. Jones moved to adjourn, and Ms. Mackin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

The Select Board adjourned at 9:10 PM.

*Respectfully submitted by Eileen G. Page  
01.29.2020*