

TOWN OF IPSWICH
Finance Committee
Meeting of January 29, 2018
Town Hall, 25 Green Street

With a quorum present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:35.

Finance Committee members present: Chair Janice Clements Skelton, Tammy Jones, Chris Doucette, Rob White, Michael Schaaf, Kevin Murphy, Jamie Fay, Mike Dougherty

Also present: Anthony Marino, Town Manager; Alyson von der Esch, Recording Secretary; Sarah Johnson, Chief Theriault, Chief Nikas

Christopher Doucette arrived at 7:39.

Michael Dougherty and Kevin Murphy arrived at 7:64.

1. Citizens Queries – Janice Clements Skelton

- No citizens queries.

2. Acceptance of Finance Committee Minutes – Janice Clements Skelton

- Tri-Board minutes from 1/15/19 and 1/22/19
- Discussion over who seconded the motion to adjourn, it was Michael Schaff. This will be added to 1/22 notes before uploaded.
 - Motion to accept minutes made by Michael Schaff, seconded by Robert White→Vote: Motion passed unanimously, 6-0

-----Municipal Budget Hearings -----

3. Animal Control – M. Boissonneau and Chief P. Nikas

Megan Boissonneau and Chief Nikas spoke about the accomplishments and goals of Animal Control over this past year, gave a scope of the department, and fielded questions regarding the budget. Major accomplishments from this past year were as follows: Animal Control successfully took in 123 cats, 108 of them which were adopted, 10 of which are still kittens. This makes for a 96% adoption rate. The department also took in one dog from Beverly, which was adopted by the Town Manager. Another accomplishment was a reduced rate in complaints regarding dogs on the beach, which was due to informing the public about beach rules on social media and by word of mouth. Megan was able to attend a training at the Seacoast Science Center so she is now able to field calls regarding seals. The department was also proud of their ability to educate the public on the coyote families living in Ipswich, as they received a lot of phone calls asking for coyotes to be removed. However, coyotes are a protected animal and can only be removed if they injure a human. Coyotes have a 20-mile radius, so can be seen all over town and should not be approached. Domestic animals should be looked after. Lastly, the department helped treat and rehabilitate many wild birds with the help of a local rehabber. At this point, Janice asked about the eagle that lives in town. Megan explained that the eagle is protected, but we haven't had any issues with it. Biggest concerns for the eagle's safety are ingesting rodent poisoning or lead bullets. Megan reminded the public to not use lead ammunition when hunting. Amongst these accomplishments, the department is also responsible for loose dogs and cats, barking complaints, vaccinations, un-licensing, kennel inspections, quarantines, taking in domestic stray animals, wildlife education, bringing sick or injured animals to rehabilitation, orphaning wildlife, and working with rehabbers, NOAA, and the Seacoast Science Center.

Goals for the department are to continue to meet all of the state mandated requirements, to continue work with the Ipswich Humane Group, to continue educating the public, and to build a dog park. A discussion ensued regarding the dog park and what is needed to move forward. In order to get grant money, the dog park must be near a body of water, have ample parking, have at least one acre, and be owned by the town. This restricts location options. Once a location is decided upon, grant funding will cover 80%-90% of the costs and the rest will be paid for from the profits from dog licenses. Providing residents with a dog park will help to reinforce the leash law in town, as currently there is nowhere in town for dogs to run freely off leash. Christopher Doucette asked about dog fees. Just over 2,000 registered dogs, which brings in baseline \$30,000.

The budget for animal control was reviewed and questions from the Finance committee were asked. Chief Nikas also clarified that this is a 1.5-person department. Megan is on full time, and there will also be an on-call, part time

stipend position. Michael Schaff asked about the 8% increase in salary, and Janice and Chief Nikas explained that this is due to a market analysis study that was done. Janice also noted that there would be a lot of these increases throughout the budget book, per the Town Manager and the Mass Equal Pay Act. Michael Dougherty asked Megan how the Animal Control vehicle is working. Megan reported that she puts 6,000-7,000 miles on it per year and it is in good condition. Should continue work for 6 or 7 years. Tammy asked if the \$150 budget for maintenance was enough, and Chief Nikas said he believes it is. Robert White asked about the trainings that will be taking place next year. Megan is hoping to find a training on how to safely get a hold of and handle birds, and is also planning on attending an exotics training, which will teach her how to handle alligators and snakes. She is also looking to expand on large animal training since there are many barns in town. This would include teaching first responders how to handle large animals such as goats, sheep, horses, and cows.

4. Shellfish – Chief P. Nikas, S. Lapreste

Scott Lapreste and Chief Nikas discussed last year's accomplishments and setbacks, as well as the goals for FY20. Scott also gave an overview of his position and responsibilities. Position responsibilities include law enforcement of shell fishing laws as well as town by-laws, checking weight limits, and making sure people are following local regulations regarding which clams can be taken and when. This protects the resource and ensures that no contaminated clams go to market. Scott is also responsible for providing the state with data, and for educating the public. This is an important position as it protects this important resource to the town.

Janice asked about the progress with the green crab. Mr. Lapreste answered that they trapped over 50,000 pounds of green crab last year and are funded to continue trapping again in the beginning in April. It is important to start in April because this is when the females lay their eggs. The Department of Marine Fisheries uses Ipswich's green crab project as the model for the state. Within this model, five people are given green crab trapping permits. The town receives a grant from the state, and will pay 40 cents a pound. After that the green crab will be sold for bait or will be composted. Last year, 70% was sold, 30% was composted. Green Crab R&D is a non-profit that is working on finding more uses for green crab as a protein source. If the market becomes self-sufficient, the town will no longer need to intervene with green crab trapping to get control of the population. Tammy asked how long the grant money will last this year, but this answer is difficult to provide because weather can impact how often people go out to catch the crab. Last year the money lasted a few months, which Scott and Chief Nikas both felt was sufficient. Money also comes in from the clamming enhancement fund as well as money from the town. Michael Schaff asked about the effectiveness of the green crab programs of our neighboring towns and how this effects our green crab population. Scott agreed that this needs to be a regional effort. Each town handles it differently, and Scott would like to get everyone on the same program as Ipswich.

Scott then answered several questions from the Finance Committee. His truck has 20,000 miles on it, and the truck, boat and trailer are all in very good shape. When asked about permitting, Scott explained that permitting goes through the town clerk's office and goes through the town clerk. The past three years have been used as a way to estimate the amount that will be brought in this year for budget. He also noted that senior citizens over 70 get clamming licenses for free. Chief Nikas explained the revolving fund. They try to keep \$15,000-\$20,000 in the fund so they don't have to use the general fund. Michael Schaff asked about the clam harvest. Scott said they are having a very good year. On a scale of 1-10, it's probably 8.5 to 9. Jamie asked about oysters. Oysters are also having a good year and there are many large oysters in the Eagle River. Michael Dougherty asked if the town seeds every year, or only when they need to. Scott answered that they used to pay attention to this more, but then realized it didn't matter because the clams weren't taking anyway because of the green crab, so instead they decided to focus on the green crab population.

Goals for next year will be to trap green crabs and keep that program running as well as putting some pressure on outside resources so the town can take a step back. Maintenance of town landings will also be paid special attention to this year. Commercial clambers are required to do some labor for the town. This year, this will be used to help with the town landings. Brush will be trimmed back and crushed stone will be laid.

5. Emergency Management – Chief P. Nikas and Lt. J. Hubbard

The town's Emergency Management Director, Lt. J. Hubbard, and Chief Nikas explained the mission of Emergency Management as well as the org chart. This team is comprised of 14 members and they are responsible for emergency preparedness and planning, managing grants, and being liaisons between FEMA and MEMA. Accomplishments from this past year include operating two successful shelters for two power outages, successfully pursuing several grants, and working with the Great Marsh Plan. Goals include working on and completing the

Hazard Mitigation Plan, continuing to train the emergency response team, providing weather spotting service for the National Weather Service, and providing community outreach for the elementary schools and the Council on Aging.

Budget changes this year include an increase in the uniform budget to provide the Emergency Management Team with jackets. Having the team in uniform helps people in the town to feel safer. Also in the budget is \$2,500 to provide funding for Emergency Go kits, which are a part of a 6-week emergency preparedness program at the elementary schools for fourth and fifth grade students. Michael Schaff asked if there is any analysis of the effectiveness of working with kids on emergency management. Lt. Hubbard responded that this program is based on a FEMA program and is presented in a way shows students what types of emergencies can happen, but also shows them what they can do to help as well as how well the town is prepared to handle these situations. Christopher Doucette asked if this could be funded through the school instead of through Emergency Management. Christopher noted that he thinks this program sounds valuable, but has concerns that it will be a tax-funded program that will only go to 40 students after school. Lt. Hubbard responded that originally, he wanted to bring this program into the schools for all students, but it was difficult to push this through when considering curriculum needs. Janice said she will bring this up with the School Committee to hopefully get them a bigger audience.

6. Harbormaster - Lt. Hubbard and Chief Nikas

Lt. Hubbard and Chief Nikas went over the accomplishments, goals, and objectives. This past year accomplishments included upgrading visual aids for Pavilion Beach, completing the permit process for the wharf, and reducing the costs of structures.

Goals for the upcoming year include continuing state and coast guard required trainings. Harbormasters now have a new standard put forth by the state to hold a Captain's License. The exam for this will take place this Saturday. Another goal is to fix the stanchions at the wharf and install blocks to create a pedestrian walkway. Michael Schaff noted that he has concerns about the safety of the wharfs and noted that the town could be liable if someone were to get hurt. Lt. Hubbard also mentioned that the harbormaster will continue to work with the Conservation Commission, and is involved in educational projects regarding where and how boats should be stored. The harbormaster will also continue to work with engineers and Bruce Tarr's office to get additional information and funding for dredging the Ipswich River. The river should be 6 ft. wide by 4 ft. deep at low tide, and most of the river does not meet this requirement. The town has also worked with UNH to find a way to go about dredging the river successfully. Will likely cost around \$1,000,000.

The budget has been reduced on a few fronts due to the upkeep over the past few years. Overall, a 10,000 reduction has been made. Revenue comes from mooring fees, which brought in \$111,000 last year, as well as 50% of the state boat excise tax, which brought in additional \$18,000 last year. Although it is not in the budget this year, the engines will need to be replaced in the boats at some point in the future. This will likely be around \$50,000. Michael Dougherty asked if there were any land vehicles designate for the harbormaster, and there is one F150. Before concluding, Michael Schaff made a suggestion to not charge a fee for kayakers and canoers at the boat ramp.

7. Civilian Dispatch – Chief Nikas

Chief Nikas gave an overview of accomplishments, goals, and budget for Civilian Dispatch. Accomplishments last year included receiving 911 training money from grants, doing equipment updates, and re-training and certifying all of the communication officers. Another big accomplish was that now all of the calls made from within Ipswich will go directly to Ipswich instead of the regional dispatch center. This will increase response time and will also increase grant money. Goals for the upcoming year are to implement a 911 text system, as well as to do upgrades to facilities. The budget for Civilian Dispatch is minimal because most of what they do is funded through grants. There are some changes in salary that were put forth by the town. There is also an increase in overtime budget, which was due to the increase in hourly rate.

Chief Nikas then answered questions from the Finance Committee. Jamie asked what is happening regionally on dispatch. Amesbury is the regional dispatch. Robert White asked if the amount of calls received is average, and it is, although it has increased over the last 7 or 8 years because society has transitioned police dept. to become more of a community service. Michael Schaff asked about the overtime budget and why it is so high. Chief Nikas explained this is because there are only four full time staff. The town decided to do it this way a few years ago as opposed to adding another position at \$60,000 plus benefits. This can be revisited, and if we were to cutback the overtime this would need to be another full-time position, not part time.

8. Police Department – Chief P. Nikas

Chief Nikas gave an overview of the Police Department and the goals for the upcoming year. The department as a whole has 50 employees. One goal for the department is to do more community outreach, specifically around opioids. The town has seen a downturn of opioid overdoses and deaths since mental health counselors have been working with the town and the department, so want to continue this partnership. Another goal of the department is to get state accreditation. This accreditation will take over a year to complete, but it will allow the department to apply for additional state and federal grants, and will also protect the town from liability by using best practices. The department has been upgrading the drug recognition expert certification due to the legalization of marijuana, and also have school resource officers who donate their time and are very active with schools. Chief Nikas has been working with the superintendent to update security measures. They meet once a month and this has been going very well.

Chief Nikas then went over how frequently the department has been called to serve. There has been a steady increase over the years. Slight drop in arrests from last year but overall higher than in years past. Accidents have been down, drug arrests are down, overdoses dropped from 26 to 14. Christopher asked about drug related arrests, they are trending down, having averaged in the teens in the past years but in single digits now due to legalization of marijuana. Chief Nikas explained that the department concentrates on enforcement actions on dealing drugs, not as much possession. The department would rather get people help to become productive members of society. Michael Dougherty asked if there have been any threats to the schools, and there has not been. Robert asked for more detail on arrests. There were 168 summonses, 118 arrests (52 of those being OUI arrests). Janice asked if there are any new or alarming trends. Chief Nikas answered that there has been a reduction in larceny fraud/ ID theft.

Chief Nikas then went over the budget. Increases in technology will allow for 100% of the force to wear body cams. This technology will need to be replaced in 2 or 3 years if it is continued. Salary increases are outside of the budget but dictated through MEBA, as well as the document included from Mr. Marino regarding salary increases. The association dues budget has increased due to participation in the Regional Northeast Municipal Council. This allows Ipswich to network with other communities and provide towns involved with search and rescue and SWAT capabilities as well as school response plans. This is a good insurance policy for Ipswich to have in case assistance is ever needed. The \$2,500 in "Other Communications" is not a new expense, just money that has been reallocated, and will be used for the reverse 911 call contract, email servers, and thumb drives.

Robert asked why "Permanent Wages" were flat. Sarah answered that the Police Union negotiations are still under way and an agreement has not been signed as of yet. The funds for the Police Union increases have been added to the Management Transfer account and when the negotiations are completed the funds will be transferred to the appropriate budget lines. He also asked about operating expenses, including radio. Walter asked if there is money in the forfeiture account this year. Chief Nikas answered there is a balance of \$16,000, which is much less than previous years. Michael Dougherty asked about what the Ipswich Police Fleet consisted of and asked about the average mileage and where the vehicles go when we are done using them. Usually the vehicles are repurposed within the town, or are sold at auction.

9. Fire Department – Chief A. Theriault, Jack French, Deputy Chief

Chief Theriault gave an overview of what the department does on a daily basis and what types of outreach they do. He also discussed goals and objectives for the year. One goal is to maintain a staff of 12 call firefighters. Currently, there are 10. However, this will be dropping to 8 shortly. Another goal is to receive a high rating on the yearly review. Lastly, the department is planning to review and edit all standard operating guidelines from OSHA. This will help to develop a blueprint of where the department needs to be and how to get there.

Chief Theriault then went over the accomplishments from this past year. One accomplishment was hiring the new Chief Deputy from within house. This move also allowed for other firefighters to move up in the ranks, and showed firefighters that there is a way to move up. The department has also received several grants, minimized the usage of vehicles, and four department members completed programs.

Chief Theriault then answered questions from the Finance Committee. Janice asked about the calls and what percentage were false alarms. Ipswich averaged 41% and national average is 64%. Last year there was 8 structure fires. Janice asked about how the new engines are working out. They are working out well. Discussion ensued regarding life expectancies of future plan of vehicles. Christopher asked about the structure of how they replace firefighters. Are they looking to replace experience, or someone new? Chief answered they usually hire from the call list because they have experience and training already. Robert asked about training in the upcoming year and why the training budget is higher. Chief Theriault answered that the training officer will do a monthly training, the call firefighters will also come in twice a month for similar trainings. Unfortunately, fire training can only be done at the fire academy, the department cannot do trainings here in Ipswich due to water regulations. There will be an ice rescue training this weekend, and the department has capability to launch fire boats year-round.

Chief Theriault also talked about revenue and budget. Revenue has been trending upwards, even though it

dropped a bit last year. Burning permits are the department's biggest revenue, as well as other permits fees. There are changes in salary for audit. Permanent wages are down due to a drop in firefighter positions as well as new hires getting lower salaries. There is also money in the fund for buy-back of vacation days in case of retirement.

10. New/Other Business – J. Skelton

- Probably going to miss quarter two tri-board hearings because of budget.

11. Adjournment – Janice Clements Skelton

- Motion to adjourn made by Michael Schaff and seconded by Chris Doucette.
→*Vote: Motion passed unanimously 9-0*

Respectfully Submitted By
Alyson von der Esch
1.31.19