

TOWN OF IPSWICH
Finance Committee
Meeting of February 6th, 2020
Town Hall, 25 Green Street

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

Finance Committee members present: Janice Clements-Skelton, Michael Dougherty, Walter Hartford, Michael Schaaf, Joseph Bourque, Jamie Fay, Rob White, Timothy Goodrich, Chris Doucette

1. Citizens Queries – Janice Clements-Skelton

- none

2. Acceptance of Finance Committee Minutes – Janice Clements-Skelton

- no minutes

FY21 Budget Reviews: Public Safety

3. Fire Department – Chief A. Theriault

Chief Theriault gave a Fire Department update. There are 16 full time firefighters and three officers, as well 8 call fire fighters. Last year the department handled 21,064 runs which is up 2.5% from last year. The Chief went over last year's accomplishments. The staff has taken on additional duties such as trainings and leading programs, and they are on target to meet all of the goals and objectives that were set last year. Next year, the department is going to update their Strategic Plan and they will also look for additional grants. They will also request for additional burning permits and will host a MA Firefighter Academy program. They will continue to work with the schools and Council On Aging with the Safe program. Chief Theriault also went over last year's accomplishments which included firefighters being promoted and completing recruit training programs. The department was also rewarded money for student awareness and fire education programs as well as for the Safe program. They also got a gear grant and they purchased protective hoods for all firefighters and officers. They did skin cancer screening and hearing testing last year for all firefighters which was very beneficial. Janice asked if they are annual screenings. The Chief said this was the first year they were done but we can do it every year. The Chief discussed the performance measures from last year and he went over the number of incidents for each part of town. Jamie asked if this is a good breakdown of population. The Chief said yes, with downtown being the biggest population. He also said from 2016-2019 the types of incidents have stayed pretty consistent, except for EMS calls which went up to 42%, and service calls which went down to 13%. For revenue for FY20 they are now up to \$17,827 which puts them on track to exceed FY19. Funds come from permits and inspections. Joe asked what the "good intent" graph is for. The Chief said good intent calls are for authorized burning, wrong location, steam mistaken for smoke, or accidental calls. Service calls are for lockouts, water problems, animal calls. Janice asked about the categories for rescues, fire, and EMS and asked if they are all accounted for in a three-tiered response. Chief Theriault said this is just for their department. Jamie asked what a car accident would be, the Chief said it usually falls under rescue, but if there is an injury it would fall under EMS.

Chief Theriault then went over the changes in the budget. Janice said most of the changes seem typical but asked about the permit line item and the overtime line item. The Chief said the FY20 that is listed is the budget he submitted last year but it doesn't include all of the pay increases that came when the collective buy in agreements were put into place. Janice asked about the over-time and holiday pay increase since staffing has stayed pretty consistent. The Chief said they added a 13th holiday in the contract negotiations whereas last year there were only 12 holidays. The overtime has not been increased in a few years. Janice asked about the civic overtime. The Chief said it's for illumination and it has gone up because illumination has expanded so much. It is over a much larger area now and the events go on for several days now. Janice said the committee is starting to see that they haven't necessarily been adding money to the recreation budget for events like these but they are seeing increases in other aspects of the budget. She said perhaps the recreation department should have a "total costs" sheet for the events they put on so they can fully understand the expenses to the town. Jamie asked if there are any major capital acquisitions this year. Chief Theriault said as far as he knows they are requesting funding for a pick-up truck and ladder truck. The current pick-up truck will go to facilities when the fire department gets a new one. Having a pickup truck is important because it minimizes the use of the larger trucks. The ladder truck will likely be purchased in 2024 or 2025, but they want to start putting money away for it now. Jamie asked if they are good

equipment wise other than needing these two vehicles. The Chief said they are doing good other than needing these two trucks down the line. Rob asked how many service calls they have outside of town and how times have other towns support Ipswich. The Chief said they do more going out of town. They do more service calls for Rowley and Topsfield due to “automatic aid” on Linebrook. They also go to Gloucester when they have a second alarm. Rob asked what they have planned for fire training. The Chief said they will do training on ground ladders, pump operations, roof operations. They do everything from firefighting to EMS to HAZMAT training and they do these all year. The firefighters each typically do about 100 hours of training. The \$4,000 in the budget for training is usually for equipment needed for training. The actual pay for training comes from the overtime budget.

Chief Theriault also said the department is currently down 4 call firefighters and they are trying to replace them now to maintain 12. Nation-wide call firefighters are hard to find. They have to go to a training program for 200 hours and then additional medical training. It’s also difficult to find people that are able to do the schedule needed and a lot of volunteer-only departments are closing because of this. The guys they have now are great but half of them are 50 and older so they will be aging out soon. Rob asked how much money call firefighters can make, the Chief said it depends on how much you show up. The person that shows up the most makes maybe \$600 a month. They changed their pay scale a few years ago to keep up with other towns but it’s still not as high as they would like. Chris said he wanted to clarify for people that the Collective Bargaining Agreement drives the salaries for the firefighters. Michael S. asked about why they assist Topsfield and Rowley more so than other towns. The Chief said they help provide coverage for Rt. 1 in Rowley and Topsfield since they are closer, and those towns help Ipswich to cover outer Linebrook since they are closer. Michael noted there is a decrease in incidents by 14%. The Chief said that was updated and it is pretty even. Michael asked how many fires we had last year. The chief said structure fires last year tripled (from 2 to 6) and it always varies from year to year. Michael also asked about how sick days contribute to overtime and how the trends in sick days are. Chief said last year was slightly up due to family medical issues. He also said he doesn’t like to see his firefighters coming in sick so they don’t spread it to each other and to the public. Lastly, the department has been doing a great job with on-shift trainings and the overall morale is very good.

4. Police Department – Chief Nikas

Chief Nikas went over the makeup of the police department. The big accomplishments from this past year were completing the One Mind Campaign which is about handling, de-escalation, and processing with individuals who are in crisis. The department is required to have 25% of the staff trained in critical intervention training and 100% must be trained in mental health first aid. They have accomplished this. They also contracted with Beth Israel Lahey to have a mental health counselor in their department and she comes to Ipswich once or twice a week for follow up with people. This is funded through a grant. The department also works with a recovery coach who assists the department with people dealing with substance abuse. She works with the department 20 hours a week and assists with follow ups. They also have Leo, the town’s new therapy dog. He is almost finished with his training. The department also recently purchased two new hybrid police cruisers which should save about \$8,800 in fuel. However, they are about \$7,000 more than the current cars the department uses. Their life is only two years, but then they are given to the town to use. One of the big goals going forward for the department is to become an accredited Police Department. They have been working on this for the past year and will continue to do so. It refocuses the department and its policies, and ensures that all of the policies are best practices and follow a certain set of standards. It also helps with liability. The accreditation should be completed by this time next year. Michael D. asked about the increase in malicious property damage and motor vehicle accidents. Chief Nikas explained what crimes would fall under these sections. There was a spike in vandalism but he isn’t concerned yet, however if the trend continues he would be concerned. The accidents may have gone up because the state has made it much easier for people to report their accidents without calling the police, and it doesn’t necessarily mean the police department has responded to these calls. It is logged into the system as an accident but it may just be a fender bender that someone has reported themselves.

Chief Nikas then went over the budget. The salaries for the department are pretty much all collective bargaining. The police sign their agreement late so they level funded the budget in the current year and when they signed their contract it got backfilled. Sarah said they had the money in Management Transfer and she has already transferred it to Chief Nikas’ budget now that the amount of money has been agreed upon. The reason it looks so high is because it’s a two-year increase. The Chief also said he asked for another staff member but he withdrew his request for more help after speaking with the Town Manager about it. He still thinks there is a need for it but he understands the reality of the financial impact. Jamie asked about the medical exams. Chief Nikas said it is a pre-employment medical and psychological test. Joe asked about the designated traffic officer. The Chief said that was done before he spoke with Tony. That is what the difference is between the request and what the Town Manager is allowing. Mike D. asked about the

\$6,000 increase in other communications. Chief Nikas said it is for the Rave Communications and it used to be broken up into three departments. They took it out of emergency management and instead all of the costs are now in this budget. Michael S. asked how many FTE's there are, the Chief said there are 25. Chief Nikas also reported that the department is very active in the schools and the D.A.R.E. program is going well.

5. Animal Control – M. Boissonneau

Megan went over the accomplishments of the department. Last year the department was able to take in 100 animals, all of which have been adopted out except for one. They were also able to help other departments and Megan received all of her mandated credits for trainings. The Humane Group funded expansions for the shelter, which gave them a space specifically for dogs. They have 3 dog kennels now as well as a separate space for sick animals or animals from the same household. For this coming year they plan to continue to do mandated and recommended training requirements, to continue the Strong Association, to continue to work with the Humane Group, and to continue to assist other shelters. They will also educate the public on wildlife. Calls for wildlife such as coyotes have dropped significantly due to education. Recently, there have been a lot of calls about bobcats so they will focus education on that. They will also continue to work with other departments to create a dog park.

Chief Nikas said Megan recently completed her bachelor's degree in criminal justice. He and Tony decided it would be appropriate to bump Megan's salary up. Chief Nikas went over the budget and reported that the expense lines have not gone up dramatically. There is an opening for the assistant animal control officer. Jamie asked when they decided to add the assistant. Chief Nikas said it was last year but they don't have anyone in that position now. It's for 8 hours of patrol on weekends as well as emergency calls on weekends. The Chief said there isn't much financial incentive for people to take the job, especially when they are asking people to give up their weekends. Because of this he is reaching out to other towns to see if they could find someone to share this position. Right now, the police handle weekend calls unless it's a true emergency and then Megan is called. Michael S. asked how this past year compared to previous years in terms of how many animals were taken in. Megan said there was a similar amount of calls but less animals this year, because the year prior there was one call with 38 cats. Since Megan began, the animals that are taken in annually has doubled, mainly due to the building updates and their ability to take in animals long term. They are able to hold 50 animals in a pinch. Michael asked if this could be because of leash law regulations or higher amounts of domesticated pets. Megan said she thinks it just varies from year to year. She said we are lucky in Ipswich, we don't have a very big feral cat population. Because it is a low population they are able to help handle to population by capturing the cats, spaying and neutering them, vaccinating them, and then hopefully getting them adopted. They have also been helping other towns with cats by taking them in and then adopting them out through the Humane Group. Michael S. asked about bears, Megan said they have seen bear scat and tree scratches but nobody has seen one. Michael D. asked about the pickup truck. Megan said it's the only vehicle for the department and it is working well, they still have 4 or 5 years with it. Tim asked about the Ipswich Humane Group and if they are a good source of revenue. Megan said they are going strong and they do a lot for them. The vet bills last year for the department were around \$30,000. When they take animals in they hold them for 10 days and then surrender them to the Humane Group. The town very rarely has to pick up a vet bill. Facilities has really stepped up and helped the Humane Group with their building maintenance which has been nice since the Humane Group helps the town so much. Joe commended Megan for the response and information given for coyote calls.

6. Harbormaster – Chief Nikas

Chief Nikas went over the accomplishments for the department which include replacement of buoys and working with the State Access Board for the Wharf Improvement Project, which is anticipated to be completed by June 1st. The wharf will not be available for boat launching on Memorial Day weekend. Janice asked if the Ipswich residents can use any other public access landings. Chief Nikas said Newburyport has a public landing and there is also a public access point at the Parker River. This past year 1,050 moorings were issued. There are 287 people on the waitlist. The average wait list time is between 3-5 years. Officer Brian Murphey has done a great job with helping people with the process of the waitlist. Chief Nikas also said they get a Pump Out Grant every year which allows them to hire a few high school or college kids and provide them with safe motor training so they can pump out boats. Ipswich is a no discharge zone. Last year they pumped out 82 vessels and 75% of this cost was reimbursed by the Federal Government. There is no cost to the boat owners for this. Goals for the department are to maintain the regulatory and navigational buoys.

Chief Nikas then went over the increases in the budget. One of the increases was for the Harbor Management Plan which is a \$15,000 one-time cost that was approved at a special town meeting. The other \$10,000 is for redoing the boat windows which should extend the life of the boat by 10 years. This will fix the door and windows leaking when it rains.

Lastly there is a \$13,000 increase in boat supplies which is for replacing the original trailer. Janice asked why this is not in the Capital Budget. Chief Nikas said it was originally but it made it easier to put it in the harbor budget so it can be voted on all at once. There will be \$45,000-\$50,000 in reserves after everything is said and done. Michael D. asked what they have for equipment. Chief Nikas said they have the pump out boat, the trailer, a 21 ft. Boston whaler, the public safety pickup truck, and a boat and trailer. Everything is working well and has been maintained. Michael S. asked if there are any major issues or opportunities that the Harbor plan will address. Chief Nikas said not necessarily but they are bringing in Open Space to help with a number of items regarding protecting the resources. The comprehensive plan will allow them to go after state and federal grants. One example of an item on the plan is dredging. Michael said this sounds sensible and seems like it will be useful to the town. Chief Nikas said they are currently meeting with boards and committees and will also be holding public meetings soon. Michael S. said he sees a lot of boats speeding in Fox Creek but he doesn't see patrol there. He also asked if the landing on Fox Creek by the bridge is private or town owned. Chief Nikas said it is private. Lt. Hubbard said they increased the signage in that area but their boats can't get up there in low tide to patrol. They are in the process of purchasing a drone to help with this. Jamie asked for an update on the Harbormasters authority on regulations and who appoints the Waterways Advisory committee. Chief Nikas said the Government Study Committee is coming forward with a proposal to have the Advisory Committee appointed by the Select Board. Jamie asked John how he feels about that. He said he thinks that makes sense and he also likes that the Town Manager appoints the Harbormaster. Rob asked how many people own more than one mooring. Chief Nikas said they don't count it, but they only allow one or two per household. You have to have a boat specific to each mooring, so you can't have two moorings with only one boat. Jamie asked what the total revenue for moorings for the year was. Chief Nikas said they are anticipating \$117,000 in mooring fees as well as an additional \$16,500 in boat excise tax. Jamie asked if we should charge more for moorings from people that are not Ipswich residents. Chief Nikas said he will talk to Manchester and Marblehead to see how they handle this.

7. Civilian Dispatch – Chief Nikas

Chief Nikas reported that the department just installed the new alarm system through the 911 grant so all of the offices will have an alarm that rings directly to the police station. There is also the potential to put alarms at the park. They are going to reach out to the banks, the BioLabs, and EBSCO to see if they would also like to be a part of the system for a fee. The operating grants were for training and for the alarm system. The Chief Dispatcher, Paul, retired and he helped to build the system we have. The salary changes are due to the new Chief Dispatcher. There are currently 4 full timers, 1 part timer, and 4 per diams. The per diams work in surrounding communities and run the same computer systems so they are up to date whenever they are called. Michael Schaff asked about the year to date budget and noted that it is 54% of the total. Chief Nikas said this is because it was right after the payout to Paul when he retired, and he is not concerned.

8. Shellfish – S. Lapreste

Scott went over the goals and objectives for the department. Scott also went over his position which is a state mandated position. Scott enforces state and federal shellfish rules that revolve around public safety, resource management, and preservation which are put forth by the FDA and CDC. Every state in the country is under this umbrella. This job is 365 days a year 24 hours a day, so now that Scott has an assistant he is able to work a more normal work week. The main thing the department does besides daily enforcement is trapping green crabs. Scott said last year Janice asked if they were funded enough for this, he said he thinks where they are at right now is perfect. Last year they trapped 63,000 lbs. of green crabs through the state program. Trapping the crabs has allowed for other crabs to survive. The program Ipswich has created is being used in many other towns as well. Janice asked if they are anywhere near finding a market for the green crabs. Scott said it's an ongoing process and there are a lot of efforts to do so. There is a way to turn the green crabs into compost but its time consuming. There is a nonprofit that is looking for ways to use the crabs because right now they are just trapping and killing them. Scott would love to see a way for people to use the crabs so that they can be caught by people for commercial purposes vs. the town having to catch them. Scott said he has a boat trailer and a truck and they are in great shape.

Chief Nikas said there is a slight decrease in the budget because they won't need to replace as many items as they did last year. The part time Constable is hired at \$19 an hour for an average of 18 hours a week through the course of the year. This person covers when the flats are closed for health reasons and makes sure that no clams are getting to market when it's not safe. They also covers Sundays when the flats are closed and makes sure people know not to clam on Sundays. Most time this is people clamming for recreational purposes that just don't realize. Jamie asked what they are bringing in for revenue and how many full-time commercial clamming licenses there are each year. Chief Nikas said it is

done by lottery and only 125 licenses are given out. Recreational permits are on the increase, some are looking for clams and some are looking for oysters. There are no commercial license for oysters, they are not allowed to be harvested for commercial use. All together the town probably gets about \$70,000 a year from licenses. Jamie said total revenue is about \$70,000 against a budget of \$117,000 a year. Chief Nikas said the biggest change in the budget is the \$20,000 that they have allocated for the green crab. They get additional money for green crab trapping. \$20,000 from the General Fund, \$12,500 from a state grant, and the Enhancement Fund will add another \$12,000. It is very important to keep the green crabs under control because in the winter they burrow into the salt marsh and destabilize it. This is considered a danger to the collapsing of the marsh because they burrow in so deep and weaken the wall. They are also a danger to the clam population and other crabs.

Jamie asked when the last time was that they raised fees for permits. Scott said recreational fees were increased 3 years ago but not by much. The commercial permit fees have not been raised since 2005. Jamie asked why, Scott said he doesn't know why and it would be a decision made by the Select Board. Jamie said perhaps we should raise the commercial fees since we are spending \$115,000 to protect this resource but only getting \$70,000 in return. He recommended looking at how we sit relative to other communities as well as how much the permits are relative to what these guys are making. Scott said they researched it a few years ago and they are similar to other towns but we have a much larger area to protect than other towns. Michael S. asked what the trends are in the closures of the clam beds and what have the factors been that have caused this. Scott said Ipswich has 5 different growing areas and each one is connected to a different set of rainfall criteria to close it down. This year there was a rainy summer and a red tide so the flats were closed most of the summer. It all depends on how much it rains and when the rain falls. Michael also asked how the harvest is looking for the upcoming year. Scott said things are looking good, they increased the weight limit a few years ago and that is continuing to work well. Chris asked how long have they been capped at 125 for commercial clambers. Scott said it has been since 2005. Chris said maybe that should be considered again, if it could go up by 5 or 10 they would be making a lot more money. Scott said it's not the clams but it's the parking that can't handle more permits. Scott thinks 125 is a good amount but he thinks raising the permit fees by \$100 would be fine. There is a lot of value to that permit.

9. Emergency Management – Lt. J. Hubbard

Lt. John Hubbard, Emergency Management Director for the town, went over the achievements from last year as presented in the budget book. Highlights include completing trainings, applying for and collecting money from grants, getting approval for plans, and providing the town with volunteer service, trainings, and supplies. For the budget they are only asking for an increase of \$120 which will be used for the service for the EOC trailer. Janice asked what will be next for training. John said for the Cert Team they will go over the CPOD plan and the Emergency Dispensing Site Plan. They are also planning to install the EOC camera soon but they are not applying for any more grants until the summer. One big thing John wants to work on for next year is a town-wide emergency communications plan.

10. New/ Other Business – Janice Clements-Skelton None

11. Adjournment – Janice Clements-Skelton

- Motion to adjourn made by Rob and seconded by Michael D.
→Vote: Motion passed unanimously, 9-0

Respectfully Submitted By
Alyson von der Esch
2-10-20