

IPSWICH SELECT BOARD  
Meeting of Monday, February 25, 2019  
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, February 25, 2019 at 7:00 pm in Meeting Room A.

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

Board Members present: Nishan Mootafian, Chair; William Whitmore, Vice Chair; Linda Alexson; William Craft; Edward Rauscher

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

Abbreviations Used: FY20, Fiscal Year 2020; COA, Council on Aging; SHINE, Serving the Health Information Needs of Everyone; AARP, American Association of Retired Persons; CATA, Cape Ann Transportation Authority; DPW, Department of Public Works

Public Information: Agenda; Meeting Packet

**Welcome/Announcements**

Mr. Mootafian reminded residents of the March Select Board schedule.

- Monday, March 4: Full meeting, with budget items on the agenda.
- Monday, March 11: Budget business only.
- Monday, March 18: Regularly scheduled meeting. Mr. Craft will not be present.
- Monday, March 25: NO MEETING.

Ms. Alexson acknowledged the generosity of residents who donated and helped out at a fundraiser for the victims of the Town Farm Road housefire. She added that there is a Go Fund Me available online for those who wish to make monetary contributions.

Mr. Marino announced that Coffee with the Chiefs and Town Manager has been postponed until Sunday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>. The event will be held at Zumi's from 11:30am to 1:30pm. Mr. Marino, Police Chief Paul Nikas and Fire Chief Andre Theriault will be available to meet with residents and answer their questions.

**Citizen Queries**

None.

**FY20 Budget Review: Assessor**

Robin Nolan (Chief Assessor) and Karen Rassias (Board of Assessors) appeared before the Board to present the Assessor's Office proposed FY20 budget. The Assessor's Office handles property inspection and evaluation, tax abatements and exemptions, annual property reviews, property and excise tax billing. In the past year, the Office set the tax rates early, were able to grant additional senior tax exemptions, and replaced two retiring staff members. Iwona Wilt and Pam Thompson have been hired as the two new clerks, and Ms. Wilt has taken two courses to earn her Assessors Designation. The proposed budget is largely the same as last year, with increases for dues needed to appoint Ms. Wilt to the Massachusetts Assessor Association and the Essex County Association.

Ms. Alexson asked how seniors are informed about tax relief programs. Ms. Nolan stated that she uses the Town website, Council on Aging newsletter, and local bulletin boards. Ms. Alexson asked why boat excise tax bills are sent at a different time of year than vehicle excise bills; Ms. Nolan stated that the boating fiscal year begins July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Whitmore asked how many seniors qualify for tax relief, and how many take advantage of the program. Ms. Nolan answered that while there is no way to know how many could qualify, 25-40 seniors are currently utilizing the relief program, most of whom are veterans.

Mr. Rauscher mentioned an estimate regarding senior qualification that had been figured a few years ago. Sarah Johnson (Finance Director) was present and said that at the 2010 census, 20% of Ipswich seniors earned \$20,000 a year in income, and 50% earned \$50,000 or under. Ms. Johnson would like to spread word that while the State will grant tax exemptions for the year in which a senior applies, they will also retroactively give reimbursements for up to three previous years.

### **FY20 Budget Review: COA/Adult Services**

Sheila Taylor (Council on Aging Director) appeared before the Board to present the Council on Aging's proposed FY20 budget. The COA provides four main services to Ipswich seniors:

1. Transportation: Two COA vans are available for in-town transportation to residents age 60 and older. The vans also provide transportation to Market Basket four days a week, and are used for road trips.
2. Outreach: The COA employs Outreach Coordinator Beth Wright, LCSW. Ms. Wright works as an advocate, recruits volunteers, manages support groups and financial programs, provides information on resources available to seniors, and runs the monthly Memory Café for seniors with dementia and their caregivers. The COA also offers SHINE services, and an income tax assistance program run by three AARP-trained volunteers.
3. Fun & Games: The COA offers fitness activities, lunches, informational presentations, art and language lessons, and travel opportunities.
4. Senior Tax Work-Off Program: Previously, this program was tied to the minimum wage rate, which limited the number of hours seniors could work for the Town. Ms. Taylor proposed increasing the hours to a set level, regardless of minimum wage. This year, seniors involved in the program will be able to earn up to \$1,200 to be used against their property tax.

Ms. Taylor cited medical transportation as the COA's biggest challenge this year, as requests for transportation increased by 70%. This has been addressed by increasing days that Cape Ann Transportation Authority is available to Ipswich seniors, but is still heavily reliant upon volunteer drivers. Additionally, a part-time Transportation Coordinator has been hired to handle ride requests more efficiently.

Ms. Taylor noted that the COA's budget makes up less than 1% of the Town budget. The biggest requested change for FY20 was an increase of \$2 per hour for van drivers, and an increase of \$1.75 per hour for receptionists. The Town Manager and Finance Director approved a \$1 increase for van drivers, which will be paid out of the Van Gift fund. There are no Capital Budget requests, as the COA received funds for a new van last fiscal year.

Mr. Craft asked for an update on the 50+ Job Seekers program. Ms. Taylor stated that six participants have successfully found employment, one of whom is now working as a college professor.

Mr. Rauscher asked about transportation options for seniors with memory struggles. Ms. Taylor responded that while the COA cannot provide hands-on personal care, the van drivers or CATA vans will assist a senior with their walker, provide door-to-door service, and offer guidance throughout activities at the senior center.

Ms. Alexson asked about options for seniors who are unable to leave their home. Ms. Taylor spoke about Friendly Visitor volunteers, and noted the need for volunteers to shovel snow and provide yard work.

Mr. Whitmore asked about internship opportunities within the COA. Ms. Taylor responded that there have been interns in the past, mainly focusing on social work and nonprofit management.

### **FY20 Budget Review: ReCreation & Culture**

Kerrie Bates (ReCreation & Culture Director) appeared before the Board to present the proposed ReCreation & Culture Department FY20 budget. Ms. Bates is assisted by Judy Sedgewick, who provides billing and invoicing administrative work, and is in the office up to ten hours per week.

Ms. Bates shared several upcoming Town events:

- Saturday, March 8, 7:00pm: Final Circles, Lines & Squares community folk dance
- Sunday, April 28: Crane Beach Color Blast
- Saturday, May 18: Local Color Celebration
- Thursday, July 4: Fourth of July Parade

- Tuesday evenings: Throughout the summer, the department hosts Downtown Tuesdays at the Riverwalk in partnership with the Ipswich Chamber of Commerce.
- May 2019: Concrete will be poured for The Switch Rideable Artscape
- June, July, August: Living History will be performed in partnership with the Ipswich Museum every other Saturday throughout the summer months.
- Third Friday of the month: Swing Dancing in collaboration with North Shore Swing Dance, tentatively moving to Saturday nights. Free for Ipswich residents, \$18 for out of towners to cover the band fees.

Mr. Mootafian asked about the department's efforts to inform the public about events. Ms. Bates stated that she keeps a public calendar in partnership with The Local News, works with Gordon Harris (Town Historian) to update the Ipswich Historical Society webpage with local events, and reaches out to residents on social media.

Mr. Whitmore asked for clarification regarding an increase in Temporary Part Time salaries. Ms. Bates seeks to have reliable, consistent employees who could be contacted for set up and break down of Town programs.

Ms. Alexson noted a lack of funding for ReCreation buses in the budget. Ms. Bates clarified that the DPW covers maintenance. Mr. Marino added that the buses are insured through the Town, but volunteer drivers are advised that their own insurance acts as a primary insurance.

Mr. Craft stated that he enjoys the swing dancing series and would like to see it continue.

#### **FY20 Budget Review: Veterans**

Karen Tyler (Veterans Agent) appeared before the Board to present the proposed Veterans Office FY20 budget. The Office is run by Ms. Tyler and Kathy Collins, who are both Army veterans, and assists veterans and surviving spouses with obtaining and navigating the benefits system following their discharge.

The FY20 budget seeks to hire a part time, 19 hours per week position at \$18 per hour. Because the Office is partnered with the Eastern Essex District, the cost for the position covered by Ipswich would total \$1,832.55. The position would be trialed for one year, and then reevaluated.

Ms. Alexson asked about state reimbursement. Ms. Tyler stated that up to 75% of the budget may be reimbursable, but it would be at least 12-18 months before the funds were returned to the Town.

#### **FY20 Budget Review: Cemeteries & Parks**

Jeffery Putur (Superintendent of Cemeteries & Parks) appeared before the Board to present the proposed Cemeteries & Parks FY20 budget. The department contains a part time clerk and five full time staff, one of whom is a floater position between Cemeteries and DPW. The department manages around 40 properties made up of over 400 acres, including nine cemeteries and five parks. They handle about 100 funerals per year. Vehicle maintenance is done in-house by the DPW mechanic, and the crew also assists with Snow & Ice removal.

In the FY20 Capital Budget, the department seeks \$15,000 for a mower that is more versatile than the ones currently owned. Operating Budget increases include Union increases, a \$4,000 increase for overtime that would fund extra workloads and Saturday funerals, and a "wish list" item of \$15,000 for a new basketball court. Mr. Putur acknowledged that this item has been a part of the Operating Budget in the past, but perhaps under the new Town Manager it should be moved to the Capital Budget. Other increases include parts for in-house vehicle repairs, grounds keeping equipment, and maintenance for rails and fences.

Mr. Mootafian asked about the minimum age for summer help. Mr. Putur responded that the only current requirement is a valid driver's license and the ability to drive with a passenger. Mr. Mootafian referenced a mower purchased a few years ago, and Mr. Putur explained that a 72" mower was purchased for Pony Express maintenance. He is now phasing out some of the older mowers and replacing them with newer equipment. Mr. Mootafian noted that the line item "Civic Observances" was removed from the ReCreation budget and moved to Cemeteries & Parks. Mr. Putur explained that this refers to reimbursements for Memorial Day and Veterans Day events, and because the department works closely with several local veterans, he took on Civic Observances to streamline processes.

Mr. Craft commended Mr. Putur and his staff on their preparedness and sensitivity in funeral management.

Ms. Alexson asked if the department is responsible for managing Pavilion Beach. Mr. Putur responded that they maintain the beach, but management responsibility has been uncertain in the past. Ms. Alexson asked for Mr. Putur's thoughts on the parking lot in the summertime, and Mr. Putur responded that he has worked closely with Rick Clarke (Director of Public Works) and Chief Nikas in posting more signage, and possibly stationing an officer at the lot on weekends. In the past, there has been a high school or college aged attendant to direct traffic. Additionally, the department would like to install posts with thick nautical rope to guide vehicles to designated entrances and exits. Ms. Alexson referenced complaints received regarding clammers parking on low tide marks in the winter months. Mr. Putur stated that due to this practice, pollution is a concern, and the department rake the beach following the end of the clamming season to fill in ruts left over. Ms. Alexson asked about flagpole management, and Mr. Putur stated that while the department manages the flags themselves, the poles are managed by the Facilities department. Flags are replaced twice a year, and many flags were recently outfitted with solar lights to remain lit throughout the night.

### **FY20 Budget Review: Library**

Patty DiTullio (Library Director) appeared before the Board to present the Library's proposed FY20 budget. She shared that in the past year there have been 127,000 visits to the Library, 140,000 loans of material, 43% increase in adult programming attendance for a total of 10,000 attendees, and 10,000 audiobooks downloaded. A free workshop for child development professionals was recently offered through a grant. The Library has also hired Meghan Petersen as a part time archivist, who has written an archival plan that includes policy revisions, procedures, and environmental improvements that can be made to preserve the integrity of archived documents. Additionally, a \$30,000 grant application was recently submitted for the digitalization of historic records and newspapers.

Mr. Whitmore praised the tracking of Library usage and the presentation of Library analytics.

*Vote: Mr. Whitmore moved to approve the presented budgets with the proviso that they may be revisited at a later date in the budget cycle, and Ms. Alexson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

### **Approval of Minutes**

January 30, 2019  
February 11, 2019

*Ms. Alexson moved to approve the minutes, and Mr. Rauscher seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

### **Consent Agenda**

- a. One Day Wine and Malt
  - a. Appleton Farms for Hiking Trails and Beer Tasting on 3/23
- b. One Day All Alcohol
  - a. Appleton Farms for Maple Open House & Tasting on 3/2
  - b. Ipswich Masonic Temple for Birthday Party on 3/23

*Mr. Craft moved to approve the Consent Agenda, and Mr. Whitmore seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

### **Town Manager Report**

#### **PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING**

Mr. Marino advised the Board that a contract with HKM architects has been signed. They will conduct a study for location and building design, and options will be drawn up for the Town to review. The presentation should be ready by the Fall Town Meeting.

#### **MARCH 18<sup>TH</sup> MEETING**

Mr. Marino would like to have the Climate Resiliency Committee present an update for the Board on March 18<sup>th</sup>. The Affordable Housing Trust is also scheduled to speak with the Board at this meeting.

#### **TOWN MEETING WARRANT**

Mr. Marino is working on a draft of the warrant. There are currently 13 to 18 articles, and no citizen petitions. One article was brought forward by the Town Moderator seeking to add electronic voting to the Town Charter, and

another was brought forward by Chief Nikas and Animal Control Officer Meghan Boissonneau that would add clarify and add language regarding barking dogs. Ms. Alexson would like to discuss the possibility of an Open Space vote being added to the ballot in the near future.

**New Business**

Mr. Whitmore provided an update on the Waste Reduction Committee, which is currently running a project to install outdoor refillable water stations, and another to education local business and customers about the negative impacts of straw usage. The Ipswich Middle and High Schools were also recently recognized with a Green School Award by the State.

Ms. Alexson asked for an update on the Water Demand Study. Mr. Marino advised that Vicki Halmen (Water & Wastewater Director) will be asked to discuss this during her budget presentation.

Mr. Craft advised the Board that the Electric Light Subcommittee will be meeting on Wednesday, February 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm.

**Old Business**

None.

**Miscellaneous and Correspondence**

None.

*Vote: Mr. Rauscher moved to adjourn, and Mr. Whitmore seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

*The Select Board adjourned at 9:11pm.*

*Respectfully submitted by Eileen G. Page  
02.26.19*