

TOWN OF IPSWICH
Finance Committee
Meeting of February 28th, 2019
Town Hall, 25 Green Street

With a quorum present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:39.

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

Not present: Michael Dougherty, Walter Hartford

Chris arrived at 7:50.

Rob arrived at 8:15.

1. Citizens Queries – Janice Clements Skelton

- No citizens queries.

2. Acceptance of Finance Committee Minutes – Janice Clements Skelton

- 2/12/19 and 2/13/19
 - Motion to accept meeting minutes made Tammy and seconded by Jamie.
- Vote: Motion passed unanimously, 5-0

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

3. COA/Adult Services – S. Taylor

Sheila Taylor, Director of the Council on Aging discussed the scope and depth of the services for the department. Programs and services can be summarized into three categories: transportation, outreach, and fun and games. Transportation is provided within town for special road trips, supermarket trips, and special activities. There is also out-of-town medical transportation to twelve different locations. This is a contracted van. Volunteers also provide transportation if appointments are not to one of these twelve offices. Outreach Coordinator, Beth, works 32 hours a week, and takes care of anything that comes up, advocates on senior's behalf, and works with support groups as well as volunteers. Beth also manages the fuel, pet care, and emergency funds programs, which are grant-funded and can get people through tough times. Beth is part of the TRIAD group and works with the Rotary. She also established a memory café, works on the Tax Assistance Program, and works with SHINE, which helps people with health insurance. Lastly the department provides fun and games including fitness, health and wellness, cards and games, social events, mobile market, intergenerational programs, travel opportunities, art programs, and language lessons. Sheila then went over the organizational structure of the department, as referenced in the budget book.

Sheila then discussed the challenges of this past year. Transportation was a challenge, as the number of people requesting out-of-town medical transportation increased by 70%. Transportation demands were taking away from other responsibilities and the personal touch the department values, so Sheila and Beth met with Tony to figure out how to respond to increased needs, while still meeting other needs. Tony suggested to hire a Transportation Coordinator. This person now works 12 hours a week and is grant-funded. It is working out well so far. Another challenge was the Senior Tax Work Program. It is weak because it is tied directly to the minimum wage. Now that minimum wage has been going up, the number of hours a person can work goes down. The department relies on these workers and they are now no longer able to work the same number of hours. Sheila proposed that the hours would be the base, as opposed to the pay. She is proposing 100 hours. Money made will go directly against property taxes. This increases the bottom line by \$8,000. Janice asked how many people participate in the program. Sheila said it is 15. This program is income based to a degree... no minimum or maximum, but it is taken into account. Jamie asked if the money they are given goes directly toward the taxes or can they use it however they want. Sheila said people can use the money however they want but the idea is for it to help with the taxes. Janice said it needs to be considered that this will be extra labor being paid for within the budget.

One of the accomplishments this past year was transportation, as the department met the challenge of increased transportation needs within the town. The memory café is another accomplishment, which meets once a month for people

living with dementia and their families. It provides people with a way to socialize and enjoy refreshments and activities. Another new program within the department is for 50+ job seekers. This is a regional group that meets twice a month and helps people with resume writing, social media networking, and interviewing skills, as well as provides any additional support for people searching for jobs. The department also continues to expand intergenerational programs. One of the programs connects high school students with seniors to go into Boston and go to plays.

Next the operating goals were presented. There are almost 4,000 seniors in town. The portion of the town budget that the department receives is less than 1%. 40% of the department's funding is through additional grants. One of the increases to the budget this year is an hourly rate increase for the van drivers and receptionist. When compared to other salaries in town for similar positions they are very low. Jamie asked for clarification on the number of employees and hours they work. Sheila clarified they each work 19.5 hours. Janice said she believes that \$16 an hour is a very generous salary for reception, but there are no benefits attached so it is understandable. However, if it becomes a benefited position, the salary would need to be reduced. Sheila said she is not planning to have this become a benefited position. She also noted that compared with other receptionists at senior centers, \$16 an hour even with benefits is still considered low. Sheila also said this position is more than just a receptionist position. Tammy commented that the department is servicing a huge amount of people for a small amount of money. Jamie asked how many total seniors receive services; Sheila said she believes it's about half of the population. Michael S. asked Sheila if she has considered a means testing for seniors. For example, the transportation services are probably expensive, and perhaps not all seniors need this paid for. Sheila said the source for transportation service money is through donation and grant money. She does notice that people that are using the transportation seem to be of limited means. Michael asked if there is anything else that should be looked at with regard to income. Sheila said a lot of the programs offered do have fees along with them, such as the painting class. If someone can't afford it though, donations can be used. Michael also asked for clarification on how old someone has to be to be considered a senior citizen, it's 60.

Sheila also went over Capital Needs. There are none this year. They have two very new and very reliable vans. One future goal/ issue that will need to be addressed is parking around the town hall. It is very limited and people are parking in the back which is dangerous. Janice asked if there are any programs that Sheila would like to offer that we don't already. Sheila would like to offer some more Alzheimer's/ dementia programs. She also plans to do a repeat of a "Should I Stay or Should I Go" event. She is also working with police on an Alzheimer alert program called Safe Watch. Jamie asked Sheila for the breakdown of the 2,000-people served. 15% are male. Jamie asked how to increase services for men. Sheila said they have a great chess group, but they always seem to struggle to get men to join in groups. More men have been joining recently though, due to word of mouth, and Sheila is hopeful this number will continue to go up. Jamie asked about Cape Anne Transit. Sarah said it gets funded through the Cherry Sheet. Sheila said this is a new service and it is a \$5 charge round trip per person and takes people to the mall and to various out-of-town locations. The van is handicap accessible, but anyone can use the service. Jamie asked what is driving the 70% increase in transportation. Sheila said people are relying more on specialists, specialists are out of town, the aging population, and that the service is reliable so word spreads.

4. Recreation & Culture – K. Bates

Kerry Bates presented the purpose of the Recreation and Culture department, as presented in the budget book. Essentially the department is a one-woman operation. Judy Sedgewick works 10 hours a week doing book keeping, and the department fully takes advantage of these hours. In addition, a few people have been hired and are on staff but they don't work a set number of hours. The budget this year is essentially level-funded, with the exception of the request for part time help for events/holidays. Kerry then discussed the way the department delivers programs to the Ipswich youth: fee for service and community grants. The department is responsible for many programs within the town and it has been growing. Most programs are grant funded to a degree, but grants are typically available for initiatives and then programs are expected to become self-sufficient. Budget has now been stretched thin and the amount of money given to schools for programs has been reduced by about 50%. In order for the department to do other projects, they have been working with other departments and trying to find other grants. The challenge is to continue to grow and continue to fund programs that have been established. Janice asked what would fall under community grants; Kerry answered the programs at the elementary schools. Janice also asked for examples of the fee for service programs. Kerry answered those programs include pre-season baseball, floor hockey, and Campus Ipswich. Janice asked if the fee-for-service programs are income based or a flat fee. Kerry said they are very cost-effective programs, and nobody is ever denied access and scholarships will be available for families in need. Michael asked what kind of participation they have. Campus Ipswich had about 20 or 30 kids per day. Michael asked if they could accommodate more with an increase in expenses. Janice asked if there is a

need to accommodate more. Kerry said she thinks there are a lot of good programs in town and families seem to feel comfortable with certain programs, so she does not necessarily think they need more space in Campus Ipswich.

Upcoming programs include the Fourth of July parade, Downtown Tuesdays summer series, History Alive with the Ipswich Museum, Crane Beach Color Blast, and Switch Rival Art Scape installation at Bialek Park. Swing Dance series has been going on for a year and a half and has been very successful. This program is free to Ipswich residents, \$18 pp for out of town to pay for bands. Folk dance series has also been successful. Saturday, October 5th is Ipswich Illumination. Tammy commented that she has appreciated watching all that has gone on over the years and that it is impressive what Kerry has done with such a small amount of money. Rob asked what percentage of funding is being given to ACE, DEEP, and YMCA. The Y did not apply for the program again this year that has been used in the past. Kerry said she will follow up with the Y and ask why they did not re-apply. Kerry went over the breakdown of funding for Doyon DEEP, Winthrop, Tiger Den, and Ipswich Community Service. Jamie asked if Kerry is taking advantage of any Feoffees funding. She has in the past but is not using it this year. Jamie noted that some of the Feoffees money is being turned back due to not enough applicants. Jamie suggested Feoffees money should be used for some of this. Kerry said her understanding is that Feoffees money is for initiatives, and since most of these programs already stand, they do not qualify, but she would be happy to present this. Jamie also said he thinks these programs could also be funded from the school budget. Kerry also said she has been able to successfully outsource funding to other departments and grants, but she will also look into Feoffees. Rob asked for specifics on how many people are using each program. Kerry said she will get this information to FinCom by the middle of next week. Rob also asked what programs the department provides to the HS. There are no programs currently. Rob asked how the schools felt about the 50% cut. Kerry said these programs are loved and relied upon and would be sustained whether or not the department funds them. Rob asked FinCom members about the EDP program. They will bring this up to schools. Michael thanked Kerry for her good work.

5. Veterans – Karen Tyler

Karen Tyler, District Director, gave an overview of the Veteran's Services Department. She also went over the mission, as stated in the budget book. Chapter 115 benefits are made up of three parts: financial, medical, and fuel. You can qualify for just one or all three, depending on financial situation. In order to qualify for benefits, a single person must have an income less than \$2,023 a month with less than \$5,000 in the bank. Karen's office tries to get people on federal benefits first such as a VA Pension or disability. They also look into state benefits. Local benefits are the last resort. Karen also directs people to different resources to help save the town money, such as SHINE counseling to make sure the person is on the correct insurance. Karen also works closely with Ipswich Housing Authority and she shared some stories about what the department does for the community.

Town pays 100% of the fees upfront and the state reimburses the town 75%, but there is a lag in time which can be seen in the budget. Michael asked how many Veteran's the department is serving. Karen said she will get back to him, but she believes it's about 200 for the district. Michael also asked about the median age of Veteran's, Karen noted it is about 6 years older than the average median age for the state. If there is a Veteran that is within working age, Karen also does an employment plan with them to get them back to work. Tammy asked for an overview of how Karen is paid and how many people are serviced. Karen went over the operating budget which includes everything from salaries to pencils to health insurance. Ipswich is responsible for 24% of the budget, which is based on the total population. Jamie said they do not have the operating budget in the budget book, and asked for the total operating budget. \$263,581, and Ipswich pays for \$61,144 of that for salaries and retirement, as well as rent to town hall. Rob asked about how many people use each of the three categories of Chapter 115. Karen will get back to them with this information. Michael asked if there are any homeless vets in town currently. Karen said there has been a few people who have needed help getting back into housing.

6. Library – P. Ditullio

Patty Ditullio is the library director and gave an overview of the accomplishments. Highlights of programs and services include a huge increase in visits, book borrowing, attendance in programs, computer use, and downloading e-books. The library receives a lot of outside funding and this has been helpful. Regional library system and participation in network allows library to have access to much more than the town is purchasing. Municipal appropriation is just the beginning of how the library is funded. Goals are to continue to meet the needs of the community and create new initiatives. This past year the department hired a consultant to help with local history, as the department saw a need in this area. Patty went over the accomplishments this consultant has achieved so far, and explained that they are already on track to generate more income than this position costs the department. Jamie asked how many hours this new position is. Patty said it is 19 hours and does not include benefits.

Megan came up to answer questions about the new position and spoke about grant opportunities to help meet strategic goals. Jamie asked how Megan's position is funded. Megan explained that demonstrating a need for this position to the community can make the position more likely to be funded by grants, but working on this will take her time away from preservation work. Jamie noted that this position was not originally intended to be funded by the town and now it is, and it may eventually become more hours. Patty applied for the preservation grant last year to do a formal assessment to get a handle on what work needs to be done in collections for preservation. There were a lot of recommendations and there were no deadlines, but they want to slowly chip away at this work. No one else on the staff has specialist archives training. Having someone on the staff with this specialization is necessary so the town can take advantage of grant opportunities. Areas that need work are storage, HVAC systems in the library, town wide preservation assessment, digital opportunities so people can access content, technology. Funding for projects and who is needed to do the work is dependent on the project. Megan gave an overview of her experience. Tammy noted that although there is money being put into this now, if funding had been given 20 or 40 years ago we could have saved money in the long run. Michael said although he does share Jamie's concern about this being funded by the town now, he also knows how important it is to preserve what we have.

Michael asked what the work is that needs to be done. Pattysaid the preservation assessment included environmental concerns for housing materials, policy and procedure improvements regarding restricting access and insuring proper handling. There is also physical preservation work, and assessing what is in the room and what does not need to be there. Community members are also waiting to give the town materials, but currently the town cannot responsibly accept and preserve them. Michael asked about documents of the town. Patty said this needs to be collaborative Megan said a survey had been done in early 2000's that identified several storage areas in town hall and the police department that indicated that there is a lot of historic material that is mandated by the state to be preserved. The community is currently negligent for a lot of the records series just based on how old they are, anything pre-dating 1856. Jamie asked who is requiring this. Megan said it is through the state archives, which would be facilitated through the town clerk's office. Megan said she will provide the citations, but she has not come across a town in Massachusetts that is not negligent because it is a huge project. Michael asked if we have documents that might be of historic interest that could be displayed. Megan said absolutely, and she has talked with the museum about ways to get this out to the public. Patty said they have a responsibility to protect and preserve the collections, but they only have value if we are using them and giving people access to them.

Rob asked about the action plan. Patty said it is a 3-year plan, but the goals written in the budget book are only objectives for year one. She explained that the last big library update was 20 years ago before people were using the internet. The way the library is used now is not what it was designed for, so they are trying to make updates to meet competing needs. The spaces are not suited to current use. More quiet study space is needed, most of the collections are far too large for our size community so print collection should be reduced. Patty would like to hire a consultant to look at spaces and make recommendations for changes. The new website has been launched and is much more interactive. Patrons can reserve meeting rooms and museum passes, and can sign up for programs online. Rob asked what will be done at the end of 2020 with the consultant. Patty said it depends on what the report says, but it will be done piecemeal. Some projects can be small like removing some of the shelving. Rob also asked about furniture, Patty said furniture is usually funded by grants or Friends funding. Jamie said this sounds like a great plan and wants to know what the involvement in the facilities department will be. Patty said it depends on what the report suggests but they will likely be involved during implementation. Jamie encouraged her to include them earlier because they might have some good ideas. Rob asked if there is a library we are looking to mimic. Patty said no, no two libraries should be alike because it should tailor to the community. Jamie also asked what services will be offered for different ages. Patty said teen usage has been up 200%. There are homework programs, research assistants, fun programs, just to name a few. College students are typically looking for a space to work and research assistants. Tammy ask if we would be keeping the books elsewhere that they no longer need. Patty said most of them will go to charity or will be recycled if it's old and not useful. Collections are based on demand.

7. New/Other Business – J. Skelton

- Janice said she sent out the meetings for the month of March and April. March 5th will be canceled, and will be replaced by a tri-board meeting on March 18th. March 19th will also be canceled. There is still two sessions on the calendar for warrant hearings but may not need both. Jamie asked about a pre-Bean Counting meeting, the board chose Tuesday, March 26th.
- Kevin gave a Climate Action committee update. The subcommittee is preparing to submit the paperwork for the Green Communities Act which is due in October. At the March 18th tri-board meeting they will explain what the

process is and why the town is doing this. Biggest benefit is opportunity for revenue stream for funding for Capital projects that will reduce fossil fuels and energy costs. Boilers and HVAC and lighting controls in buildings are easy ways to accomplish this. Cost to the town will be a small charge to the rate payer on electric bill. It's about \$4 per year per rate payer. Michael and Kevin explained how the breakdown for this payment works to the rate payer. Chris expressed concern about forming a commitment with Green Communities and wondered if the town could accomplish the same things without becoming a part of Green Communities so that the tax payers don't get charged every year. Janice said this can be discussed at the tri-board meeting. Kevin also said the committee discussed getting a municipalities report card out to everyone.

- Janice asked Sarah if they could look at which of the salary increases were generated from a compliance perspective. The finance committee talked about essential services vs. discretionary services. Chris asked Sarah for a net number of salary expenses to compare last year to this year.
- Jamie asked if the archivist is a town employee, Sarah said she is a part time town employee. Sarah has to check if she is temporary or permanent. Jamie asked if we should be creating new positions that are not in the budget. Janice said since this is not a role that will be needed every year, it shouldn't be in the budget. Jamie noted that the Finance Committee was never aware of or consulted on creating this position within the budget. The Committee noted concern over this and that this has happened with other positions in the past that are started as a grant funded position and then are turned into positions in the budget without being a conscious decision. Kevin said we do not have a policy in place of how we hire someone through a grant, and that there needs to be a better policy on this.

14. Adjournment – Janice Clements Skelton

- Motion to adjourn made by Jamie, seconded by Michael.
→*Vote: Motion passed unanimously, 7-0*

Respectfully Submitted By
Alyson von der Esch
3.4.19