



TOWN OF KINGSTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
OPEN SESSION
TOWN HOUSE-26 EVERGREEN ST. ROOM 200 & VIA ZOOM
DECEMBER 8, 2022

5:30 pm – CALL TO ORDER – ROOM 200

Chairman Kimberley Emberg called to order the meeting of the Board of Selectmen at 5:30 pm. Selectmen in attendance: Donald Alcombright (virtual), Sheila Vaughn (virtual), Jessica Kramer (virtual), and Tyler Bouchard.

Staff Present: Keith Hickey, Town Administrator, Carol McCoy, Finance Director, and Gloria Mitchell, Assistant Town Administrator.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

This meeting is being recorded by PACTV. Anyone intending to make an audio or video recording of the meeting should notify us at this time.

Financial assistance applications are available on the Town's website or by calling the Selectmen's office.

Ms. Emberg opened the Board of Selectmen's meeting with a roll call vote of 5-0-0.

OPEN FORUM:

Treasurer Carl Pike stated that he reviewed the questions and answers put together for the FY24 budget and expressed concerns with department heads appealing directly to Selectmen.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS:

DISCUSSION OF TOWN ADMINISTRATOR FY24 BUDGET

Mr. Hickey stated that reductions and additions were made as needed. The Department Heads, Town Administrator, and Finance Director worked together to create the budget. Ms. Emberg commented that the list of questions had been presented asking why and she appreciated the detailed answers. Ms. Emberg stated members of the Finance Committee were in attendance and asked the Finance Committee if they wanted to call their meeting to order. The Finance Committee members in attendance were Mary MacKinnon, Derek Billnitzer, David Fuller, and Debra Moran.

Motion by Ms. MacKinnon, second by Mr. Fuller, and a 4-0-0 vote, by roll call vote:

VOTE: I move to open the Finance Committee meeting.

Mr. Hickey thanked the Board and department heads for coming to the meeting. Not all departments were asked questions. The departments that did not have questions were the Harbormaster, Human Resources, Inspectional Services, Library, and Planning, and they were dismissed from the meeting, if they wanted to leave. Mr. Hickey recommended going through the budgets alphabetically, which the Selectmen had questions on, and moving Police, Fire, and Streets, Trees & Parks to the end as they are the biggest budgets and may require the most discussion. The first departments presented were Accounting, Adams Center, and Agricultural Commission which did not require further discussion. There were a few questions regarding Animal Control, but they were quickly answered. Mr. Hickey stated that Assessing and Revaluation requested an increase in hours to cover the office, and an increase is needed for

revaluations. The Town must review all parcels for new construction and must be reviewed every ten years. Mr. Hickey stated the Board of Health is requesting additional wages for the Public Health Nurse, but Laboratory Services is reduced as testing is not required. Mr. Hickey mentioned that funding had not been added for an additional staffing person for marketing as he would like the administrative assistant in the office to be more acclimated and take on some of that responsibility. Also, the Food Inspector stipend has been removed as the Health Agent has taken on that role. Mr. Hickey stated that a small amount had been added to the Capital Planning budget for an Administrative Assistant. The Collector's budget has lowered the training line as software training is not required. Mr. Hickey stated that there was a request for a letter from the Conservation Commission, which has been supplied to the Board. Mr. Hickey explained that there is a request for an increase in the Council on Aging meeting & travel as it was reduced during COVID and would like to bring it back up to the original amount. There have also been some line items in that budget that have been consolidated. Mr. Hickey stated there were questions regarding the abbreviations used in Elections and Registrations, which is for services the Town Clerk uses during elections and Town Meeting. The costs of details and printing have increased significantly. There was also a question on the Facilities budget requesting increased staffing hours for the administrative assistant, along with changes to the job title and responsibilities. Mr. Hickey stated that he had not proposed funding for any additional positions or increases in the budget at this time. And the decrease in maintenance is due to a reduction in requests and previous years that have been different and shows it can be reduced. The Land Management plan was to reduce this line and purchase small equipment rather than repair it, which will cost more in the initial investment but save the Town money. Mr. Billnitzer questioned if the line item for electricity was adequate due to inflation. Mr. Hickey stated that the Facilities Manager has locked in the rate until 2025. The General Operations budget, which includes gas and diesel fuel, has increased some. Mr. Hickey explained that the Harbormaster position would be transitioned back to a wage and personnel position, increasing that budget. The Green Energy Committee only has two members and has not met for a couple of years, and there may be a consideration to do away with the committee, which is why there is no funding in this proposed budget. Mr. Hickey stated that the Historical Commission would like to increase yearly to start gearing up to the 300th anniversary of Kingston. The IT budget has increased, adding \$10k to the consultant line to help with IT issues and to fill in when the IT Manager is not here. Mr. Hickey stated that the school's budget had been estimated due to it being so early in the budget process. Legal Services have been level funded as the Town is charged a monthly fee for the majority of services provided. Ms. McCoy stated that this is the first year there is no budget for Non-Town Net Metering. Mr. Hickey mentioned that the Rent Control Board does not have enough members to create a quorum, and consideration should be taken to eliminate this Board. Ms. McCoy provided the amounts spent in the Reserve Fund over the last few years. Mr. Hickey stated that there is a line item in the Selectmen's Budget for stipends for the Energy Manager position and \$3,000 for the Town Administrator bonus based on performance. In the Wastewater budget, there is an increase due to additional regulations from OSHA requiring tank cleaning caused by the flushing of pipes. The formula for Tax Title has been corrected. The amount for printing for the Town Clerk and the cost of elections has increased significantly. There has been an increase in the Treasurer's equipment repair line for a new printer and \$6,000 for professional services for borrowing and loan services. Mr. Hickey stated that there might be an additional fine from the IRS for FY24, which can come from the Reserve Fund if needed. In the Veterans' Services budget, the Veterans regionalize services are staying the same at \$2,500 per year, but there are funds for a software subscription for Veterans' Agents to document assistance. Mr. Hickey stated he is proposing to reduce the amount of assistance needed, which is reflected in the numbers from the past few years.

Mr. Hickey informed the Board that the security cameras for Solid Waste are being replaced, and the cost is less than \$15k; therefore, the impact of the Town Administrator reduction in engineering services is needed. Although, there is still a need to continue to monitor the landfill at \$26k. There will be an impact of reduction on the household hazardous waste day, which the cost for the last event was \$3k; this may reduce the number of residents that can participate. The highest spent on this was \$4,200, less than the original \$9k. In the Streets, Trees & Parks budget, it is proposed to reduce the lines for Engineering services, tree cutting, and additional signage. Mr. Hickey stated that there would be \$500k in the Capital Plan to fund road improvements.

The Police Department budget already has funding for an open sergeant's position, which will be filled. The GoToMeeting within the Police budget is the service for their secure remote log in to their server from their laptops. The

Chief, the Assistant to the Chief, detectives, school resource officers, and the lieutenant utilize the service to remotely access their desktop computers. The turnbacks in this department are higher than in the previous years due to a retirement as well as an open Sergeant position plus less court appearances and fewer in-person trainings due to covid restrictions reduced costs. Mr. Hickey stated that there was a request for an additional Patrol position in FY24, but he did not recommend adding the position as he believed it would not fit within the goal of level services that was set by the Budget Advisory Committee. The Town Administrator did not recommend any new positions to be funded in the FY24 budget. Ms. Kramer asked if the funding for police cameras is going forward. Mr. Hickey stated that it is in the Capital Plan for FY24 but will need to be added to next year's budget.

There was a discussion regarding the meaning of level services and if there is a need for additional staff or funding to provide level services as the Town continues to grow.

Ms. Emberg requested additional information from Fire Chief Mark Douglass for his initial request to add four firefighters during FY24. Chief Douglass explained that he applied for a grant to fund the salary and benefits costs of four new fire fighters for three years and was informed the news on whether the Town is set to receive the grant was delayed. Chief Douglass stated that call volume has increased and exceeded the ability to service the Town properly. He explained as Fire Chief, he is responsible for making the Selectmen aware of the situation. The Police and Fire go out and do the best they can, and they need the staff to provide the necessary service to the residents. Mr. Hickey stated that the reason for the request for four new positions is that there are four shifts, and each shift should increase by one. Chief Douglass noted that months ago, he brought the grant to the Selectmen for their support. Mr. Alcombright asked what the impact is on the grant if the Town funds the positions now. The Chief stated that we would still qualify for the grant funds right up until the start date of any new hires. The decision for the grant will be known before Town Meeting and can be changed if the grant is received. According to the Chief, some line items would need to be increased if the grant is received including gear and training. Mr. Hickey mentioned that the Fire Department had seen an increase in calls. Still, other departments have also seen an increase, and the Board needs to have a broader discussion regarding staffing, especially in the Fire Department, to explain to people the need. Ms. Vaughn commented that the Board also needs to consider what is being spent on recall and overtime. Ms. Kramer stated that the Board will know more about the grant in about a month and should wait to make a decision until then, and more research should be done. Chief Douglass stated that the Town should have been looking at this when it was looking at community growth. Mr. Hickey agreed with the Chief and would like to propose an adjustment to the budget process, especially the timing. He is concerned that this will pit departments against each other as other departments have yet to have the same opportunity to present to the Selectmen as they put the budget together collaboratively. Mr. Hickey asked the Board to advise on how to move forward with this request. Chief Douglas stated that he can provide information to support the request. Mr. Alcombright said the Board agreed that there was a need for additional staff whether the grant was received or not. Ms. Kramer commented that the budget should be voted on and could be adjusted at a later time. Ms. Emberg would like to see the amount of additional funds needed if the grant is received so that the Board can consider what the difference in cost would be from if we add the four fire fighters with the grant to the cost without the grant, as well as the cost of not adding any new fire fighters. Mr. Hickey stated that the budget can be given before the next meeting and can be voted on at that time. A budget discussion will be added to the agenda for Tuesday's meeting. Ms. Vaughn inquired if the Police Department could hire now to fill the vacant position; Mr. Hickey stated that it is in the process.

Mr. Hickey mentioned that Plymouth County Retirement notified him, and their increase has been reduced. Also, some other reductions were addressed in the cover sheet.

Motion by Ms. MacKinnon, second by Mr. Fuller, and a 4-0-0 vote, by roll call vote:

VOTE: I move to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting.

Finance Committee adjourned at 7:13pm

Motion by Ms. Vaughn, second by Mr. Bouchard, and a 5-0-0 vote, by roll call vote

VOTE: I move to adjourn to Executive Session, to not return to open session for the purpose of conducting strategy

sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or to conduct collective bargaining session or contract negotiations with non-union personnel.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

NEXT MEETING:

DECEMBER 13, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Gloria Mitchell
Assistant Town Administrator

Documents used at the meeting:

Agenda

FY24 Proposed Budget

Cost Analysis of Adding Firefighters

FY24 Budget Questions Asked by Board of Selectmen