



TOWN OF KINGSTON

Finance Committee

26 Evergreen Street

Kingston, MA 02364

February 14, 2024

Minutes

Call to Order

At 6:00pm Carl Pike opened the Finance Committee Meeting in Room 203 at the Kingston Town House. Also present were members Michael Cowett, David Fuller, Debra Moran, Elaine Fiore, and Jason Viveiros. Derek Billnitzer attended via zoom. Town Administrator Keith Hickey was present and Finance Director Carol McCoy attended via zoom.

Public Comments

None

FY25 Departmental Budget Reviews

Each department head previously met with two members of the Finance Committee to go over their budget:

Water Department Superintendent Chris Veracka was present to answer questions. David went over what he discussed with Chris. Increase to lab services line due to PFAS testing. Increase to treatment chemicals line due to third treatment plant now in operation. Increase to contract services line due to pavement repair. Increase to equipment repair line in case need to rent machines if they fail. Carl asked about the status of the land purchase for the new well, and if the water rates increase effective 11/1/23 will cover FY24 expenses. Chris stated the land will be purchased as soon as the estate is settled, and they are in the process of a rate study (paid by a grant) to determine if additional rate increases are needed to offset expenses. The Water Department is an Enterprise Fund where their expenses are covered by their revenues.



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Number of employees are 7.5 with one position currently vacant. There is still a moratorium on water hookups until the new well is in operation. Jason asked if they utilize ARPA funds and Chris stated they recently received 1.1 million from ARPA.

Water \$644,188 for personal services + \$1,450,321 for expenses = \$2,094,509

Motion: Michael Cowett

Second: David Fuller

Vote: 5-0-0

Wastewater Department Superintendent Dave Walsh was present to answer questions. David went over what he discussed with Dave. Overall the increases are due to the third tank being brought online in December. The fourth tank is not in use but still has some expenses such as electricity and water. Increase to licenses line due to DEP changes. Increase to telephone line due to additional line. Increase to treatment chemicals line due to third tank. Increase to contract services line due to sludge disposal. Increase to vehicle repair line due to increase in the cost of parts and labor. Suggestions to save money include installing solar panels on the new roof and covering the vehicles to extend the life of the vehicles. They are in the process of a rate study (paid by a prior article) to determine if rate increases are needed to offset expenses. The Wastewater Department is an Enterprise Fund where their expenses are covered by their revenues. Number of employees are 7 with one position currently vacant.

Wastewater \$562,824 for personal services + \$2,669,858 for expenses = \$3,232,682

Motion: Michael Cowett

Second: David Fuller

Vote: 5-0-0

Facilities Manager Robert Cuoco was present to answer questions. Elaine went over what she discussed with Rob. Their expenses are only increasing by \$3500 as they are utilizing Energy Efficiency Grants and Arpa funds they obtained for \$112,149. Number of employees are only 4 plus 2 part-time custodians.

Facilities \$332,532 for personal services + \$593,550 for expenses = \$926,082

Motion: Elaine Fiore

Second: Michael Cowett

Vote: 7-0-0



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Inspectional Services Director Jason Silva was present to answer questions. He stated that inspections have decreased due to a decrease in construction due to the moratorium on water hook-ups. Elaine noted her concern with the huge salary increases in this department and others and that they are becoming unsustainable. Keith noted that the schools are the biggest increase to the budget. Carl stated that both the town and school budgets need to be kept in check. Without knowing the school budget yet the town budget is already at 5.1 percent increase versus the recommended 3 percent increase.

Inspectional Services \$186,605 for personal services + \$2165 for expenses = \$188,770

Motion: Michael Cowett

Second: David Fuller

Vote: 7-0-0

Solid Waste Superintendent Paul Basler was present to answer questions. Recycling services decreased due to a contract with a new vendor. Rubbish disposal increased due to a contract increase of 2.5 percent annually until 2029. Discussion was held regarding increasing the cost of the transfer station stickers.

Solid Waste \$277,406 for personal services + \$544,025 for expenses = \$821,431

Motion: Michael Cowett

Second: David Fuller

Vote: 7-0-0

Streets, Trees, & Parks Superintendent Paul Basler was present to answer questions. \$175,000 for contract resurfacing (asphalt) only covers one street. Increase to equipment repair line in case need to rent machines if they fail. Increase to engineering services line due to drainage issues. Number of employees are 9. Drainage and maintenance have suffered due to 2 vacancies. Vehicle situation will be addressed with Capital Planning. There is also 68 miles of roads to repair that will need funding. Elaine noted that 2 department wages have increased \$78,000.

Streets Trees & Parks \$940,986 for personal services + \$412,075 for expenses = \$1,353,061

Motion: Michael Cowett

Second: Debra Moran

Vote: 7-0-0



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Member Comments, Questions, and Concerns

Keith Hickey noted he has four FY25 departmental budget changes...Police Chief, Harbormaster \$1250 increase, Veterans Benefits \$30,000 increase, and Library \$8531 increase.

Elaine stated that salary increases are becoming unsustainable and the town needs to generate more revenue.

Carl stated that if the Finance Committee disagrees with any budgets then they should not be afraid to vote to decrease the amount.

David stated that residents are unhappy with the increase in their tax bill but no one attends Finance Committee meetings or asks questions at town meeting.

Michael stated that residents need to understand the budget process.

Debra stated that she disapproves of rubber stamped budgets.

Adjourn

At 7:44pm a motion to adjourn was made by Michael Cowett, seconded by David Fuller, and passed unanimously.

Next Regular Meeting

February 21, 2024 at 6:00pm in room 203 and via zoom