



TOWN OF KINGSTON

Finance Committee

26 Evergreen Street

Kingston, MA 02364

March 20, 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, Elaine Fiore, and Jason Viveiros. Derek Billnitzer and Debra Moran attended via zoom. Town Administrator Keith Hickey and Finance Director Carol McCoy were absent.

Public Comments

None

Reserve Fund Request

Discussion was held regarding a \$11,000.00 reserve fund transfer request by the Facilities Dept. to repair the sprinkler main valve assembly on the fire suppression system at the Police Station.

Motion: Elaine Fiore

Second: David Fuller

Vote: 7-0-0



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Elected Officials' Salaries

Compensation for elected officials is a separate warrant article. Compensation for stipend positions, such as Moderator, are already included in the FY25 operating budget. Town Clerk Paul Gallagher was present to request an increase to both his and the elected Collector/Treasurer salary. Discussion was held to recommend an increase for each position equal to approximately 3.8%, resulting in an amount of \$6846 for the article.

Collector/Treasurer	\$93,212 to \$96,763 for a \$3551 wage adjustment.
Town Clerk	\$86,496 to \$89,791 for a \$3295 wage adjustment.

Motion: Carl Pike
Second: David Fuller
Vote: 7-0-0

FY25 Departmental Budget Reviews

Board of Health Agent Joyce Krystofolski was present to answer questions. Elaine noted that some line items increased and some decreased. Carl is still concerned with unsustainable budgets. Number of employees are 2. David asked about the tobacco line and Joyce stated it is to hire undercover personnel to see if businesses are selling to minors.

Board of Health	\$174,755 for personal services + \$16,580 for expenses = \$191,335
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Motion: Elaine Fiore
Second: David Fuller
Vote: 7-0-0



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Council on Aging Director Marybeth Lawton was present to answer questions. Number of employees are 4 full time and 5 part time. David asked about the radios line and Marybeth stated they can't use police/fire radios because the COA goes out of town. Elaine made note of the increases to salaries again. Carl reiterated his concern with unsustainable budgets. He often hears that the schools get everything and the town doesn't. That is untrue when recommended increases should be 3-3.5% but become 5-12%. Expenses are under control but wages are out of control.

Council on Aging \$393,016 for personal services + \$40,368 for expenses = \$433,384

Motion: Elaine Fiore

Second: David Fuller

Vote: 7-0-0

Library Director Donal Colon was present to answer questions. Books and Periodicals line was reduced by Town Administrator but has to be restored to meet state requirements. David asked what the penalty would be for non-compliance and Donald stated it would result in decertification, loss of state aid, and the inability to apply for grants. Derek noted that some line items increased and some decreased. Carl asked about the condition of the building and Donald stated it is okay for now, some flooding, and he has spoken with both the Facilities and Highway departments. Carl suggested that he go to Capital Planning before other departments take all the funds.

Library \$618,635 for personal services + \$168,732 for expenses = \$787,367

Motion: Carl Pike

Second: David Fuller

Vote: 7-0-0

Conservation Agent Matt Panella was present via zoom to answer questions. Number of employees are 2. Carl reiterated his concern with unsustainable budgets, particularly with salaries. He asked about grants and Matt stated that they are successful in that area.

Conservation \$136,404 for personal services + \$8250 for expenses = \$144,654

Motion: Carl Pike

Second: David Fuller

Vote: 7-0-0



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Town Planner Val Massard was present to answer questions. She stated that her budget is being reduced because her assistant will be part time next fiscal year. Elaine asked if this was negotiated with the union and Val replied yes. Elaine noted that less development in town means less revenues.

Planning \$145,853 for personal services + \$5875 for expenses = \$151,728

Motion: Elaine Fiore

Second: David Fuller

Vote: 7-0-0

Recreation Director Sue Woodworth was present to answer questions. Number of employees are 3 plus seasonal hires. Elaine questioned the \$70,000 increase in salaries. Revolving Fund is approximately \$500,000. KYSO and CPC support some programs so the \$400,000 budget is more like \$1,000,000.

Recreation \$327,971 for personal services + \$80,225 for expenses = \$408,196

Motion: Jason Viveiros

Second: David Fuller

Vote: 7-0-0

Veteran Services Admin. Priscilla Brackett was present to answer questions. Both she and Denbeigh Forbes are part time and are both not returning next fiscal year. The part time Veterans Agent is Plymouth's Veterans Agent.

Veterans \$59,729 for personal services + \$249,025 for expenses = \$308,754

Motion: Michael Cowett

Second: David Fuller

Vote: 7-0-0



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Other Items as Needed

Discussion was held regarding the preliminary FY25 Education budget. Hopefully budget changes will occur to reduce the preliminary increase. One of the increases is due to 10 SPED paraprofessional educators being hired. The Circuit Breaker is in deficit and preschool changes will financially impact Kingston more than other towns.

Member Comments, Questions, and Concerns

Continued discussion regarding unsustainable budgets and the residents being overtaxed. Wages are the biggest cost. The large amount of Free Cash is partially derived from overtaxing the residents. Inflated budgets and warrant articles are raising taxes and paying for unnecessary expenses. Mike stated that the schools budget process gets later and later every year. Carl suggested the possibility of 2 budget articles, one for the town and one for the schools. The Finance Committee can recommend a different budget than presented for the local schools, but not for the Silver Lake assessment. Elaine asked if 5% or higher budget increases are the new norm when 3% was set by the Advisory Board. Carl stated if the school budgets come in at 3% then the town budgets should be reduced to 3%. Property tax bills may increase. Town Meeting is being moved from May 4 to May 11.

Adjourn

At 7:36pm a motion to adjourn was made by Michael Cowett, seconded by David Fuller, and passed unanimously.

Next Regular Meeting

April 3, 2024 at 6:00pm in room 203 and via zoom