



Town of Medway

FINANCE COMMITTEE

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Wednesday, March 30, 2022
Sanford Hall, Town Hall
155 Village Street

Present: Todd Alessandri, Chair; Jim Sullivan, Vice Chair; Ellen Hillery, Clerk; Brian Cowan; Chris Lagan; Jeff O’Neill; Michael Schrader; Sue Segarra.

Absent: Will Lane.

Staff Present: Michael Boynton, Town Manager; Carol Pratt, Finance Director; Peter Pelletier, Director of Public Works; Sean Harrington, Deputy Director, Department of Public Works; Julie Harrington, Director, Parks and Recreation; Barbara Saint Andre, Community Development Director.

Others Present: Dennis Crowley, Select Board; Cindy Sullivan, School Committee.

At 7:00 PM Chairman Alessandri called the meeting of the Finance Committee to order with eight members present and one member absent. As no one is participating remotely, all votes will be by majority vote.

Continued Review of FY23 Budgets – Department of Public Works

The committee reviewed the following information: (1) DPW section in the FY23 Budget Book; (2) FY23 Budget Summary prepared by the Finance Director; and (3) updated DPW figures resulting from the Select Board Budget Workshop.

Present: Peter Pelletier, Director of Public Works; Sean Harrington, Deputy Director; Michael Boynton, Town Manager.

Mr. Pelletier reported that the biggest change in his proposed budget is the desired addition of a Parks Heavy Equipment Operator. Otherwise, it is a level budget; Mr. Pelletier added that some funds were moved to the Parks budget for things typically handled by that department. There is a lot of stormwater work coming up this spring with catch basin cleaning and related tasks which will use up the remaining FY22 budget. Brief discussion followed on stormwater tasks, most notably phosphorous filtration.

Mr. Pelletier suggested that more money be added to the budget for tree work as the DPW is responsible for maintaining and trimming all the street trees which is ongoing.

Referring to capital expenses, there are several pieces of equipment that could be replaced [street sweeper] and the purchase of a stormwater vacuum. Mr. Boynton briefly reviewed other capital [vehicle] purchases, tractor, pothole repair and associated equipment.

Responding to a question from Mr. O'Neill, Mr. Pelletier stated that the biggest challenge is stormwater compliance. The department is working diligently on seeking out grant programs to secure additional funding. Brief discussion followed.

Mr. Pelletier explained that the department tries to do small road repairs that are connected to or adjacent to larger jobs, if time and materials allow. He stated that doing modest repairs (mill and overlay) can keep a road in good shape for a longer time and postpone the complete redo which is more expensive. Mr. Boynton added that sidewalks are repaired or added when the adjacent roadway is under repair or being replaced.

General discussion followed, concluding at 7:22 PM.

Continued Review of FY23 Budgets – Parks and Recreation

The committee reviewed the following information: (1) Parks and Recreation section in the FY23 Budget Book; and (2) FY23 Budget Summary prepared by the Finance Director

Present: Julie Harrington, Director, Parks and Recreation; Michael Boynton, Town Manager.

It was noted that the new position of an Assistant Director has been added to the budget. Effects of COVID-19 with respect to the fields not being used is starting to recover. Summer camps and concerts were held during the summer of 2020 but use by team sports had significantly decreased. Things are ramping up quickly as the pandemic situation improves.

Mr. Sullivan asked how rates for field use are determined, and whether the current scheduling software can track interest and usage. Ms. Harrington confirmed that the current system pulls all kinds of data in and she can prepare a report showing use by local vs. out-of-town groups. Mr. Sullivan theorized that this information helps during budget preparation and reviewing costs vs. revenues. Mr. Boynton clarified that the setting of rates is a policy decision by the Parks and Recreation Commission. Mr. Schrader suggested that an Enterprise Account could be helpful. Mr. Boynton responded it could never be run as an Enterprise Account as the money for that type of account must close out at the end of the fiscal year, leaving no starting balance for the coming year. Receipts [revenues] are not certified until November. Responding to a question from Mr. Lagan, Ms. Harrington reported that there are a couple new out-of-town groups that are using the fields as their regular fields have not opened up. Discussion followed during which committee members expressed thanks for the great programs offered by the department.

Discussion concluded at 7:35 PM.

Review of Planning and Zoning Articles on Annual Town Meeting Warrant

The committee reviewed the May 9, 2022 Annual Town Meeting Warrant, updated 3/30/2022.

Present: Matt Hayes, Chair, Planning and Economic Development Board; Barbara Saint Andre, Community Development Director; Michael Boynton, Town Manager.

Mr. Hayes reported that the Planning and Economic Development Board's public hearing was closed last evening for the two articles remaining in the Annual Town Meeting warrant:

ARTICLE 22: (Amend Zoning Bylaws – Solar Electric Installations)

ARTICLE 23: (Amend Zoning Bylaws – Housekeeping)

No major concerns were expressed by the public during the hearing.

Ms. Saint Andre spoke briefly on the changes suggested in Article 23 dealing with floodplain bylaw, Oak Grove and hours when interior construction work can take place as related to the Noise Bylaw. Currently the restriction on when work can be done does not differentiate between interior and exterior work. Brief discussion followed.

Regarding Article 22, Ms. Saint Andre explained that a solar bylaw was enacted last year. Now they are addressing smaller installations that may be limited to a single building in accordance with established criteria. It is being proposed that solar canopy installations will now be addressed under Site Plan Review and subject to the Zoning Bylaw. Canopies are in the highest level of solar installations and the concern is that a proponent may opt to cut down woods in order to make room for one. Three changes are suggested: (1) identify allowed districts including municipal uses; (2) allow lighting under solar parking canopies; and (3) identify where solar canopies can be physically located and requiring that it can be placed on an impervious surface. Brief discussion followed.

Mr. Lagan asked if this effort was triggered by an event. Ms. Saint Andre responded that the Town learned that a solar canopy could be placed over a school parking lot. Mr. Lagan expressed concern that this bylaw is too complex and difficult to understand. Mr. Hayes responded that the developers understand it, and will make appropriate changes to their proposals if there are issues. Continuing, Ms. Saint Andre theorized that these types of installations are typically constructed over an existing parking lot, and the associated lighting [under the canopy] illuminates the parking area. For a commercial use such as a retail parking lot, the installation would come under Special Permit review by the Planning and Economic Development Board. Mr. Cowan suggested excluding the residential area in Oak Grove.

At 7:55 PM Ms. Harrington, Mr. Harrington and Mr. Pelletier exited the meeting.

Continuing, Ms. Saint Andre reported that the proposed street acceptance for this year is Newton Lane in the Hartney Acres subdivision. The Planning and Economic Development Board has been trying to clean up these acceptances in some of the older subdivisions. There is a "punch list" of work that must be completed by each developer, and that work on Newton Lane is currently being done. The roadway will then be inspected by Tetra Tech and pass that inspection before the Town can consider accepting it. As required by state law, there will be a public hearing on April 19 for the proposed street acceptance.

It was noted that the Town plows the road for emergency vehicles. Mr. Boynton pointed out that the benefit to the Town is that Chapter 90 funds can be used for all accepted roadways. The funds held by the Town in the form of a performance bond will be released to the developer upon acceptance of the road by the Town. Discussion followed.

Regarding a Demolition Delay Bylaw, Ms. Saint Andre noted it has been in the works for several years. There is currently a twelve-month delay but there were no conditions or specific requirement. Now a punch list is being included to require documentation by an engineer, allowing the Historical Commission to hire a professional to evaluate the property and also to extend the demolition period based on the age of the structure. It was also desired to “put a little more teeth” into the steps one must take before demolition if someone wants to preserve the structure. The Historical Commission would have the ability to “release” the property before the end of the delay period if the applicant can prove they have done their due diligence. Discussion followed. Purpose is to make sure a property owner [or prospective owner] has made a good faith effort to either support preservation or submit significant evidence that preservation is not in the best interests of the Town.

Responding to a question from Mr. Schrader on who decides whether a structure is historical or just old. Ms. Saint Andre stated that there are guidelines or requirements, such as the structure was a home of a famous person, the location of a significant event, or significant architecturally and others. The age of the structure is included in the permit for a Demolition Permit submitted to the Historical Commission. Discussion followed during which Selectman Crowley reported that the Select Board was satisfied with the proposed changes and would be voting its recommendation at Monday’s Select Board meeting.

Discussion concluded 8:25 PM.

Two Article Changes

At this time, Mr. Boynton reported that there are two changes within existing articles: On the Annual Town Meeting warrant within Article 7, basketball court improvements at Burke-Memorial school can be funded through the Capital Improvement Planning Committee’s process of designating free cash for the work. While this work was not the “next in line” on the CIPC list, Selectman Crowley clarified that the cost of the work fit into the funding that was available.

On the Special Town Meeting warrant, there are a couple of changes that the Select Board must review. Article 4 is for appraisal costs relative to a property that has been offered to the Town. The Town is still in the negotiating process with the property owner, acknowledging that it will need funding for appraisal services and other tasks. The Select Board has to approve it on Monday night. Article 6 seeks permission to transfer from Certified Free Cash an amount directly to Capital Stabilization. The amount represents the remaining balance in the Snow and Ice budget.

Mr. Sullivan asked if the warrant articles referring to Medway Day or the new Native American day could be combined into a single article for a specific amount of money. Once the articles are approved, who will approve the expenses. He expressed concern that more committees will be looking for additional funding for projects or events that could be deemed “community”. Mr. Boynton theorized he would prefer to implement funding via budget line item such as Community Celebrations, listing each group or celebration separately and explained how that would appear in the budget. Mr. O’Neill expressed concern that some events could turn into “political statement” venues. Discussion followed during which Selectman Crowley suggested a process by which each group wishing to secure funding would have to provide a certain amount and the Town would then provide ‘matching’ funds.

Discussion concluded at 8:42 PM. Ms. Pratt, Mr. Boynton and Selectman Crowley exited the meeting.

Other Business

Reminder about Subcommittee Reports for the Annual Town Meeting Booklet

Chairman Alessandri reminded committee members that their subcommittee reports are due to him on April 15. As it is possible the April 13 meeting may be cancelled if the warrants can be voted following the public hearing on April 6, this may be the final reminder.

Review/Approval of meeting minutes

The committee reviewed draft minutes from March 16, 2022.

Mr. Sullivan made a motion to approve the March 16, 2022 minutes, as amended; Mr. O'Neill seconded. No discussion. VOTE: 7-0-1 (Lagan abstain).

Miscellaneous

Chairman's Report, Clerk's Report, and Liaison Reports

All reports were postponed.

Upcoming Meetings

The Finance Committee's public hearing will take place on April 6 in the presentation room at the Medway Middle School. If enough information is available on warrant articles, the committee may begin to vote its recommendations.

Adjourn

At 8:47 PM Mr. Lagan made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Cowan seconded. No discussion. VOTE: 8-0-0.

*Respectfully submitted,
Jeanette Galliard
Night Board Secretary*