

## 03/10/2021 Paxton Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

**Members Attending:** Richard Fenton (Chair), Mark Love (Vice Chair), Anthony Domineck (Clerk), Seth Peters, Tim Linton, June Herron

**Members Not Attending:** Jennifer Lennon

**Additional Attendees:** Carol Riches (Town Administrator), Peter Bogren (Selectman), Travis Thibault (DPW)

Virtual meeting called to order at 7:03 PM EST

- Love: Congratulations and thank you to the Paxton Board of Health and Select Board for a flawlessly executed COVID vaccine clinic.
- Interview with Travis Thibault (DPW)
  - Highway Department (1421)
    - Fenton: FY22 document does not reconcile with budget. Thibault: Several DPW employees have an option to gain additional licensure this year resulting in additional salary. Salary increase for Mr. Thibault.
    - Fenton: Please clarify step increases: Thibault: 3% increase for all annually and step increase on the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the union contract.
    - Fenton: Status of new building? Thibault: In infancy stages of the process. Need to garner public support. Currently there are safety issues, equipment stored outside, unheated outdoor buildings reducing the life of expensive equipment.
    - Fenton: What is \$45k for town garage for? Thibault: Heating system and other maintenance. Fenton: Is \$45k enough, last year was \$48k. Thibault: Not sure, not a full year in this position. Seem to be in good shape but not sure.
    - Fenton: What is storm water line item? Thibault: MS4 permit needed to deal with storm water. Going to be a large cost to all MA towns in coming years. Anticipate increasing from \$20k annually, hopefully not soon.
    - Fenton: What is gas line item? Thibault: For fuel used for excavating equipment, saws, etc.
    - Fenton: \$4200 for equipment for new equipment or repairs to existing? Thibault: Intent is for repairs although replacements could be required unexpectedly.
    - Love: Purchased services, why are garage and equipment budgets lower? Are you requesting enough? Thibault: Based on what I've seen so far cost is lower than expected year to date. Temp mechanic keeping equipment running. Addressing issues early to prevent long term, expensive damage.
  - Snow/Ice (1423)
    - Fenton: Years ago, switched from sodium chloride to green salt. Has this changed? Thibault: No change. Idea was to preserve environment and prevent vehicle corrosion. Liquid based salt/chloride spray may be an option in the future as well if cost effective.

- Fenton: How do we stand regarding deficit spending on snow/ice? Thibault: Salt barn is full and current budgeted dollars are just about used up. Enough money on hand to purchase another 150/200 tons of salt if necessary. Trying hard to avoid deficit spending but at the mercy of mother nature.
  - 1401 (cemetery commission)
    - Fenton: How is this going regarding budget? Thibault: Seems to be on track for now. May increase in future budgets.
- Police budget (1210)
  - Love: Clarify salary increases reflected in budgets (fire, police, DPW, etc.). Some are contractual, some are COLA, some are determined by department supervisor. Are the increases potentially double counted? Fenton: COLA is derived from the master spreadsheet. Should Step increase be coupled with COLA, if so for all? Fenton: Holding off discussion for now, need to discuss with Carol.
  - MTA Herron, 2<sup>nd</sup> Love, unanimously approved.
- Regional dispatch (1215) \$10k for maintenance. Fenton: Is there a grant to pay this? Riches: No, there is not a grant for the maintenance agreement. This is for Paxton to repair the lines if necessary. The grant pays for other dispatch costs and needs to be renewed annually by Holden Police Department.
  - MTA Herron, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peters, unanimously approved
- Fire (1220): Herron MTA, Love 2<sup>nd</sup>. Unanimously approved.
- EMS (1232): Herron MTA, Peters 2<sup>nd</sup>. Unanimously approved.
- Transfer request from tree warden for \$2800. MTA Herron, 2<sup>nd</sup> Love. Unanimously approved.
- Tree Warden (1295): Increased from \$6k to \$12k based on prior actual spending. Fenton: Already transferred \$7500 this year and spent over \$13k on tree removal, year not over. Love: 57 trees on list and many trees not on the list. \$12k is not going to be sufficient. Need a onetime sufficiently funded budget to catch up. Propose increasing to \$20-\$24k. Fenton: Can be an advantage taking from reserve, more flexible. Adding \$6k making budget \$21, 184.
  - MTA Fenton, 2<sup>nd</sup> Herron. Unanimously approved.
- 2/24/21 Minutes: Love MTA, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peters. Unanimously approved.
- COLA adjustment. Originally approved at 2%. Some departments added a step increase in their budgets.
  - Fenton: Is the COLA s permanent 2.5% each year and we are only adjusting those salaries that do not get step increase? Riches: Effectively yes. Contracted employees get raises based on the contract. Study reviewed non-contractual positions, approximately 10 positions were identified to receive 2.5% step each year. If COLA exceeds step, suggest giving the difference to those with a step increase.
  - Fenton: Step 1 – Step 12, assumed all start at step 1? Riches: Employees should identify the step they are at on the budget sheet. Many are not populating this. Study in 2019 looked at where people were and adjusted them to the step closest to where they were. Purpose was to guarantee at least 2.5% increase each year regardless of COLA.
  - Fenton: Are we keeping the COLA at 2%? Suggest aligning with step. Love: Is step up without COLA going to cause them to fall behind again? Riches: Purpose for study was retention due to competitive positions in surrounding towns. Compensation study is like a contract. Bogen: Suggest step plus COLA. Meant to reward longevity.

- Love: Propose a breakout discussion to solidify step process. Select Board should clarify the step up process and finance will then determine COLA.
- Motion to adjourn Herron, 2<sup>nd</sup> Love. Unanimously approved.

Virtual meeting adjourned 8:50pm

Respectfully Submitted

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Tony Domineck, Clerk