**02/24/2021 Paxton Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

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

**Members Not Attending**: June Herron

**Additional Attendees**: Carol Riches (Town Administrator), Peter Bogren (Selectman), Mike Pingitore (Fire Chief), Mark Savasta (Police Chief), Jim Robert (Tree Warden)

Virtual meeting called to order at 7:02 PM EST

* Interview with Police Chief Mark Savasta:
  + Department was able to get $90k in grants this year for equipment and OT shifts. Also had a homeland security grant $34k for active shooter equipment.
  + Police budget increases primarily due to contractual obligations. Able to reduce OT, offset by salary increases.
  + 3% increase for admin already in budget (COLA should cover/replace this).
  + New fee split with AMC for indoor firing range due to unfunded training requirements.
  + 5400 supply line item went down $3500 because don’t have to buy parking tickets this year. Everything else level funded.
  + Total budget up $36k (3.1% increase).
  + Questions:
    - Fenton – Why did OT go down? Savasta –School resource officer hired last year, able to use to cover for other officers. We now have 10 officers paid for by the town.
    - Fenton – What is network dispatch? Savasta – Still must pay for record management system, air cards. Has gone down due to regionalization, lower but still required.
    - Fenton – 5200 has ‘teletype’ included. Savasta – It’s actually software, not teletype. Fenton – What are organizational dues? Savasta – Multiple organizations for the chief, legal, etc.
    - Fenton – Clothing, gear, vests are $12k, is this correct? Savasta: it’s contractual. Not many vendors to choose from.
    - Fenton: Any chance of grant for regional dispatch charge? Sav: No, we must pay it.
  + 1210 budget – per Love why wasn’t maintenance included last year. Riches: It was, that was all that was on it but was covered by a grant.
  + 1250 budget – Love – who owns and will present this budget? Savasta – fire chief can speak to this one.
* Review 02/10 minutes. Motion to approve by Love, 2nd by Peters. Approved unanimously.
* Interview with Fire Chief (Mike Pingitore) regarding Fire and EMS budgets
  + Overview of fire department and services provided
  + 26 employees, 18 call, 8 full time FF/EMT/Paramedic
  + 30% of budget is Public Service (inspections, lock outs, etc.)
  + Overall fire budget decreased 1.4%
    - Moved All EMS mechanic expenses to EMS budget. Previously was ½ on fire and ½ on EMS budget.
  + EMS Budget increased
    - Mechanic previously mentioned moved from fire to EMS budget because that’s where the contract lies
    - 3% contractual increase
    - Fenton – does standby rotate through personnel? Chief: 1 person could do all 3 days of any 1 weekend.
    - Fenton – what was the process before standby? Chief: All employees notified of every call where assistance is needed.
    - Fenton – thought mutual aid was fire, not EMS? Chief: State law requires us to provide mutual aid for fire and EMS if we can do so. Not good to rely on it and could be costly.
    - Fenton – Smoke scares, do we send complete complement of trucks, etc.? Chief: Have to take the calls seriously. OSHA requires 2 people in the house investigating, 2 people outside.
    - Fire/EMS combined 4.3% increase.
  + 1291 Emergency Management Budget – level funded from last year. Mike Pingitore still handling
  + 1250 Public Safety Building Budget – level funded from last year.
  + Fenton – Gift/special donation funds can that be used for equipment? Chief: Could not in the past, looking into it. Right now, have a medic on disability leave, paying OT to cover.
  + Love – Account 1220 (fire) dollar amount is higher on EMS for the ½ mechanic amount moved to EMS budge. Chief: $34,195 +3% increase per contract made it higher
* Jim Robert (Tree Warden) discussion of budget increase
  + Enormous number of trees dying in Paxton, no money to take them down. Have had multiple opinions for the trees on the current inventory list. Current $12k is probably not enough to cover the current list.
    - Love – how many trees does $12k cover? Robert: Varies based on the size of the trees.
    - Love – Prior year budgeted $6k, have come to the reserve fund multiple times. Maybe budget should be $25k for the next 2 years to catch up. Robert: Problem goes back to the 2008 ice storm. State cleaned up tops but left the trees.
    - Love – Why statement about “not expecting help from light department”? Robert: Never had a prior problem with other managers if town trees were going to damage wires, light dept. would pay. Not able to do the same with current management.
    - Love – How is the process working when a resident calls 911 and is referred to light dept. Robert: Call goes to Travis, Travis calls Jim. Light department has been refusing to take them down recently.
    - Fenton – How do you hire companies? 1 tree at a time, etc.? Robert: Try to bunch work up as much as possible. Every tree this year was an emergency cut except for 1.
    - Fenton – Why $1k for tree planting? Robert: Last year rolled over into tree cutting. Cost increased from $129/tree to $199/tree, we buy them from Bemis. Trees are sunset maples.
* Next meeting planned for 3/3 or 3/10
* Love – next time we meet can we make a point to discuss the school district budget?
* Fenton – Need to reconsider COLA increases due to new information
* Riches – School committee meets 3/8 to discuss WRSD budget. 4 towns were not happy with the increases presented on 2/22/21. Suggest finance committee attend.

Virtual meeting adjourned 8:50pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Tony Domineck, Clerk