Town of Rutland

Finance Committee

Minutes: March 12, 2020

Meeting Opened: 7:08 P.M.

Attendance:
Board Members Present: Iain McKinlay, Dave Lussier, Karen Nahrwold, Peter O'Malley, Thomas Ruchala, Carol Martens
Board Members Absent: Edward Purcell
Staff Members Present: Mike Nicholson (Town Administrator), Tomeca Murphy (Secretary)
Guests: Anita Carlson, Rebecca Tuttle, Paul Mattson, Peter Craine

Votes:

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 5, 2020—Motion made by Peter O'Malley, seconded by Carol Martens; vote unanimous at 7:09 P.M.

Motion to close the meeting—Motion made by Karen Nahrwold, seconded by Peter O'Malley; vote unanimous at 8:33 P.M.

New Business

FY21 Department Budget Review

Town Accountant
Mike Nicholson presented on behalf of Dan Haynes, who was unable to attend. Overall, there is a net reduction of $200 and purchased services increased from $30,000 to $35,000 for Dan's salary. Dan will be leaving at the end of the fiscal year after more than 20 years as the town's accountant. The Central MA. Regional Planning Commission is currently assisting in the search for a new accountant. The metrics will come once a scope for the position is created. Dan will also have the committee's request for the revenue accounts prepared for the next meeting.

Treasurer/Collector
Rebecca Tuttle presented her department's budget to the Committee. Her contracted salary is $80,000 and it has been signed and approved by the Select Board. She is proposing an increase in hours for her assistant to 40 hours a week (currently 37.5 hours) and changing her rate of pay from hourly to salary. She also included a line item for a secretary position at approximately 12 hours/week. This is a contingent plan, but she wanted to account for it in the budget. Becky emphasized the important of a 2% COLA increase for the staff, as they are vital to the operation of the departments. There is a 20% increase for Purchased Services, which includes an additional fee for lock box services. That service is now outsourced and costs $3,000 annually. GFA and Cornerstone Bank are used for deposits and check turnovers. Karen Nahrwold felt that cost is high because payments are not received consistently throughout the year. Becky explained that the price is based on usage regardless of times during the year that are busier than others. There is also an increase from Harper's for the cost of W-2s. The department purchased a new printer, so there is a $200 increase for the toner because it's more expensive than the last printer was. The Tax Title line item remained the same and money received at Town Meeting helped to cover legal fees. Postage increased by $500 due to an increase in bills being mailed out and more tax demands. Machine & Paper remained the same.
Under debt services, there is $1,206,002.28 to be paid with $82,000 owed for the Rutland Heights property. There is still an overall decrease of 2.24% in total debt service. The proposed solar lease is expected to help as well. Any debts that are paid off, those payments will then go to the general fund to help decrease the deficit. There is still $8,186,953.87 outstanding in financed debt with $602,710 in temporary debt. The Worcester County Retirement plan is increasing 10.38%, $7000 for unemployment remained level and Health/Dental is increasing by 3.7% or $859,891.75. There are a large number of employees turning 26 this year who are now joining the health plan. The town also offers a buy out plan for employees who opt to go on a spouse’s health care plan. They are paid out $5,000, which ultimately saves the town $10,000 in costs. The life insurance is increasing by 8.41% due to increased enrollment, of which the town pays 50%. The FSA plan will be switching to Cafeteria Plan Advisors, which is the company used most by municipalities. Carol asked how Rutland compares to other towns on pay for their employees. Becky said she was unsure of specific numbers, but that staff are definitely under paid. The town pays 75/25 for health insurance and 75/25 for retiree health insurance, which is high compared to 50/50 in other towns. Carol asked about the request for an assistant and if it’s something that is needed now or down the road. Mike stated that the workload justifies the increase and request for additional staff. Lastly, the Medicare line item is increasing by 11.19%, but the town is required by law to budget for this.

Reserve Transfer Request
At the prior meeting, the Committee received a $1,000 transfer request from the Treasurer/Collector to cover the cost of additional hires payroll processing per week and W-2s increasing from $2.50 to $3.00. Becky said she has budgeted appropriately for this in FY2021.

- Motion to approve a transfer request for $1,000 for the Treasurer/Collector—Motion made by Peter O’Malley, seconded by Dave Lussier; vote unanimous at 7:48 P.M.

Town Clerk
Anita Carlson presented on behalf of her department. There is a step increase for the Town Clerk’s salary. There is a $912 increase due to a shortage last year, which was a result of an accounting error. There is a step increase for the assistant’s salary of $0.90/hr or $1,310.40 annually. Anita would also like to increase the assistant’s hours from 28 to 36.5 due to increased need for the help. She shared that Daymian Bartek is a very valuable employee and duties have increased with 600 new residents since 2014 and 700 additional registered voters. Anita added that they also assign street numbers, which is a task that was previously done by the Planning Board. The biggest impact to their staff has come from early voting. They had about 325 early voters in the last election on March 3, 2020. The purchased services increase is for coding for voting machines, there is no increase in supplies and a $400 increase for conferences in the 5700 account. The elections line item has increased because there are 3 elections upcoming in the next fiscal year.

Cable Advisory Committee
Paul Mattson presented on behalf of the CAC. The proposed expenses for FY2021 are $110,000 for a total of $822,354.77 as of the meeting date. Major projects include adding cameras to the Calkins Room in the Library and possible replacement of the Tricaster System. Other expenses include the library gift, insurance, etc. This money comes from Charter Communications, not the tax payer dollars. Another project is a server upgrade, which will allow them to record several meetings at once rather than one at a time as it is now. The total revenue for the town is $2,689,621.14. The next contract negotiation is set for 2022. There is no other town funding, as all revenue comes from Charter Communications. Peter O’Malley asked why the library gift isn’t being increased. Paul explained that they haven’t been approached by the Library, but it’s always open for discussion.

Conservation Commission
Chairman of the ConComm, Peter Craine, presented on behalf of the board. They are completely level funded from last year. They are requesting $1,050 total--$450 for purchase services, $100 for supplies, other charges are $500 (which covers trainings). Purchased services include the ConComm e-mail address, Tomeca’s e-mail
address and MACC certification fees. The secretary wages are paid from the Wetlands Protection Act account, which is funded by fees. Peter noted that the Select Board has made it clear that they would like the town to have a Conservation Agent, which would be an average salary of $57,000/yr based on a salary survey. This is a discussion being had by the Commission members, but they haven't been able to identify enough work to justify the hire of a full time agent.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tomeca Murphy, Secretary