

**Cohasset Advisory Committee**  
**Wednesday, January 7, 2021**  
**Virtual Meeting – Zoom Video**  
**7:00 pm**

Pursuant to MGL c 30A section 20(b), following Governor Baker's declaration of state of emergency in the Commonwealth arising from COVID-19 Pandemic, the Committee will meet virtually utilizing technology. **All votes will be taken by a Roll Call Vote.**

***This meeting was recorded***

**Documents received:** 11 budgetary documents relating to revenues and expenditures, the annual town meeting 2021 schedule, and a presentation from the Alternative Energy Committee relating to solar panels, all of which were sent by Chris Senior to Advisory Board Committee members on January 7, 2021.

Called to order at 7:00 pm.

Members in attendance: Helene Lieb (Chair), Rob Hillman, Fran Collins, Lee Jenkins, Jean Healey Dippold

Guests: Chris Senior, Don Piatt, Tanya Bodell

**General Fund:**

***Revenues – 48.8% of the budget has been collected through 11/30/2020.***

Local Receipts:

- Local Receipts are at 29.0% of budget collected, due to the timing of motor vehicle excise commitment/collections.
- All local receipt activity, except for motor vehicle excise revenues, are meeting or exceeding expectations.
- MV excise revenues come in through January/February, at which point the town will have a better sense of how those receipts are trending.
- Year over year, local receipts are down (4.2%) mostly due to interest earnings which was expected (interest earnings are at 55.8% of budget). That said, the positive news is that the Town estimated a 10% drop in receipts, so the drop is not as large as expected.

There was further discussion of investment earnings and charges for services (RTF), which are on track.

***Expenditures – 43.5% of budget has been expended through 11/30/2020.***

There were no issues noted within the departmental budgets. Approximately \$322,000 of expenditures are reported within departmental budgets (and public safety), the

majority of which are reported in the Emergency Management department, which will be reclassified to the Cares or FEMA grants, if and when those grants come through.

### **Sewer Fund:**

***Revenues – 48.5% of budget has been collected through 11/30/2020.***

Usage and connection fees were at 46.7% and 275% received, respectively.

Usage continues to trend ahead of target due to increased usage/commitments over the prior year.

Connection fees are up 277.3% over the prior year and \$103,125 was recognized in connection revenue during November 2020. Further, as to connections:

- Discussion ensued of how close Cohasset is to a 100% subscription to the sewer plant. Once we reach 80% capacity, Cohasset will need a new permit. Select Board authorized a sewer decision matrix about next steps; what to do if capacity is an issue; and if regionalization is an issue how to proceed.
- Cohasset is close to the 80% capacity, although we still have capacity for the 390 Chief Justice Cushing Highway project (new building with 20 units, with 5 units being permanently deeded affordable housing) and South Main Street homes (in light of the potential for inflow into the gulf, there is a need to hook up with sewer capacity).<sup>1</sup>
- The current increase in sewer/water connection fees represents six new water and sewer connections for new houses, as well as additional fees for increasing water capacity for existing properties.

***Expenditures – 57.7% of budget expended through 11/30/2020.***

General expenses are at 34.5% of budget.

### **Water Fund:**

***Revenues – 51% of budget collected through 11/30/2020.***

Usage and connection fees were at 68.3% and 204% received, respectively. Hook up fees are a big driver of revenue. Usage continues to trend ahead of target due to increased usage/commitments over the prior year.

***Expenditures – 63.7% of budget expended through 11/30/2020.***

Operating expenses are at 31.4% of budget. This is main indicator of how that fund is doing because the rest of the costs (indirect costs and transfers done at the beginning of the year and debt service payments made per their schedule) are set.

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<sup>1</sup> Side discussion relating to affordable housing units occurred.

### **Annual Town Meeting Schedule:** (C. Senior Report)

- Town Budget requests are due on January 8, 2021. Currently, Capital Budget is reviewing one-off spending items.
- May 24, 2021 Town Meeting
- March: Meetings to go over budget and citizens petitions
- April: Meeting to go over school budget.

Further, even though the state budget was adopted for this year, it is unclear about next year. And, although the COVID Cares Act money was extended, which means that we can seek reimbursements, this year's budget was tight. We expect a lot of joint meetings on the budgets and citizens' petitions in anticipation of the annual town meeting.

### **Alternative Energy Committee:**

Tanya Bodell from the Alternative Energy Committee presented on the solar array RFPs, the bids Cohasset received, the sites presented, and the next steps.

As to the bids:

- The AEC received bids for 5 to 9 times the amount of energy used by the Town.
- Incentives for solar arrays have been extended for two years, and it may increase the future, which AEC is considering as it reviews the bids.
- The AEC received RFPs from 9 bidders, and is recommending that Cohasset go with three bids: Ameresco; Palmer Capital; and Solect.

As to the potential solar array sites:

- The bidders offered 16 sites and information on those potential sites.
- The most lucrative site might be the DPW site.
- The school roofs may also be a good site, although those roofs are not scheduled to be replaced in the next 3 to 5 years, so the AEC may consider parking canopies (like those at the Hingham MBTA station). The AEC has permission to look into the school roofs from the Select Board and School Committee.
- Other town sites such as the water plant site may be an option, and that site plan needs to be developed.
- The AEC is targeting 76.5% of total usage to cover more than half of total billings.

As to the next steps: the Select Board and School Committee have provided approval for the AEC to move forward with the three bidders. Town Meeting permission is not required for the next steps.

### **Minutes from November 20, 2020:**

Lee Jenkins (motion); Jean Healey Dippold (second). Helene, Lee, Fran, Rob, Jean all voted to approve the minutes.

**Next Advisory Committee Meeting: February 4, 2021 7:00 p.m.**

The agenda for the upcoming meeting is the reorganization of the committee, and updates on the budget and warrants. Helene noted she will stay on until May, then her term is over. Helene notes that four applications for nine slots on the school facility committee.

Motion by Lee Jenkins to adjourn, Jean seconded. Lee, Jean, Helene, Fran, and Rob all voted to adjourn.

/s/ Jean M. Healey Dippold