

Cohasset Advisory Committee
Thursday, March 4, 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: Three documents from Chris Senior.

Meeting was called to order at 7:04.

Advisory Committee Members in attendance: Jeanne Astino, Fran Collins, Jean Healey Dippold, Helene Lieb, Lee Jenkins, Rob Hillman, Mary McGoldrick, Meg Wheeler.

Guests: Chris Senior, Don Piatt

Budget Review & Forecasting

Don Piatt presented on the budget and five-year forecast.

- *Levy:* this will involve a 2.5% increase. New growth is projected at \$450,000 (and not necessarily the \$700,000 or \$800,000 from past years). Also, the debt exclusion is based on school loans.
- *Revenues:* State aid is based on the governor's budget, which remains flat. The local receipts are also flat from FY21, due to a decrease of betterment revenue.
- *Financing Sources:* proposal is to use free cash to fund OPEB and Pension. The pension assessment went up 22% from last year, even though Cohasset budgeted a 10% increase. This was due to an updated valuation for Norfolk County, which has been changing a lot over the years. A brief discussion of the Norfolk County valuation system followed, including about efforts to better understand how and why these changes occur.
- *Transfers to Other Funds:* transfers to Capital Stabilization and OPEB are budgeted.
- *Facilities Department:* The budgets of the facilities staff reside within the school budget.

- *Shared Budget:* Brief overview of shared expenses, including property casualty insurance; William James College, which is an interface funded by a grant for mental health services used by the schools and citizens, and promoted by Safe Harbor; South Shore Votech and School Support Officer, the latter which was originally funded through a grant and now rolled off into the budget; and worker's compensation and health insurance premiums, which are going down.
- Brief discussion followed about the 61% - 39% split between the schools and Town, and goal for the reserve fund to be at 1% of the potential budget.

Cohasset Fire Department

Chief Silvia and John Dockery joined. Chief Silvia provided an overview of the following:

- *Salary and Benefits:* Salary, overtime, and stipends (associates – \$3,900, bachelors - \$6,100, masters -\$8,000)
- *Grants:* SAFER grant is a three-year grant, during which Cohasset paid a portion of salaries through this federal reimbursement grant. In year three, that reimbursement drops to 35% versus 75%. Cohasset also received a FEMA regional grant for Fire Pump training – if we apply for grants as a region, we are more likely to get FEMA grants.
- *Contracts:* Firefighters' contract will end on June 30. This salary does not request any increases, other than for the Chief and his Assistant, or step increases. Don Piatt said if there is an increase per the bargaining agreement, they will be proposing a one-time increase for costs through a warrant article in May.
- *Overtime:* Silvia went through categories of overtime, average rates and total hours. He noted that the vast majority of firefighters can't afford to live in Cohasset, so the callback system is getting harder because people live farther away. The Fire Department added an incentive to not use sick leave, which has been financially beneficial.
- *Expenses:* Reviewed Fire Department expenses, including the need to send repairs out, in part because engines are computerized now. Comstar, which is out of Amesbury, MA, does collections for Cohasset
- *Capital:* Ambulance, replacement of vehicle (50K for that vehicle), corrosion repairs to the Pierce fire engine, and replacement of rescue struts (to stabilize areas, so people working on it are safe).

Draft Warrant/Scheduling

30 draft articles – 10 are draft definitional zoning articles, some relate to changing the FEMA maps. Meetings are as follows:

- March 9: Joint meeting with Water and Sewer next week.
- March 16: Joint meeting for citizens petitions the following week.
- March 18: As many departments as possible, such as from DPW; IT; and police; stabilization setting, and routine articles like real estate exemptions, revolving fund renewals.
- March 25: Votech issues about facilities; Town Hall articles – whether to support an article to provide \$750K for architectural work and obtaining bids. It forecasts the whole town hall project.
- March 30: CPC; Capital Budget.
- April 1: Discussion about water and sewer rates, and other follow-up issues.
- April 8: Zoning articles – 5 are identical. One is FEMA floodplain article. Of the remaining four, one may not go forward. Remaining three come to us from the Master Plan implementation committee.
- April 13: School Committee. Issue about future Votech 2023 expenses.
- April 15: We have a placeholder meeting.

Minutes

February 4th Minutes: Lee Jenkins moved to approve and amend these minutes by removing the reference to document that Don Piatt subsequently sent around after the meeting. Second by Mary McGoldrick. All members present voted aye.

February 18th Minutes: Lee Jenkins moved to approve and amend these minutes to add Meg W. to Water and Sewer and CPC assignments and Mary M. and Fran C. to Town Hall assignments. Seconded by Helene Lieb. All members present voted aye, except Fran Collins who abstained.

February 23rd Minutes: Lee Jenkins moved to amend Feb. 23 minutes to change the date. Seconded by Helene Lieb. All members present voted aye.

Motion to Adjourn by Helene Lieb, Seconded by Lee Jenkins. All members present voted aye.

/s/ Jean M. Healey Dippold