

## **Cohasset Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday March 22, 2023**

**Virtual Meeting-Zoom Video Call**

**6:30 pm**

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

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Rob Hillman at 6:35 pm., Present – Mike Barclay, Present- Fran Collins, Present- Patrick Kennedy, Present- Ellen Maher, Present – Mary McGoldrick, Present- Meg Wheeler, Present – Rob Hillman

Mrs. Astino joined at 6:41 pm

Chair Hillman welcomed Mrs. Lenora Jenkins from the Water Commission. The Water Department budget materials were not delivered to Advisory Committee members, so it was suggested that review of the Water Budget be deferred until March 28. Chair Hillman thanked Mrs. Jenkins for appearing.

Mr. Nick Berardi, Director, Facilities Department presented his budget. He advised it is a level services budget with a slight increase in payroll due to contracts, +1.3% overall at \$1,132,829. From Capital, the Facilities Department has requested \$60,000 for a new pickup, \$15,000 for repairs to the sewer line at Cohasset Middle High School and \$250,000 for Beechwood. His biggest challenge this past year has been upgrading the HVAC systems in town which are all 20 years old. They are installing a remote system access which will provide real time alerts to issues with push notifications. Mr. Barclay noted the year-to-date spending lines are up. Mrs. Maher asked if there was anything requested that didn't make the budget and Mr. Berardi answered no. Chair Hillman commented that there have been lots of meetings amongst several committees discussing deferred maintenance in all buildings and he inquired if there are ongoing issues that are creating bigger problems. Mr Berardi responded that there is a priority list that is reviewed and updated. They cannot get to everything every year. The town infrastructure/systems are approaching 20 years of age and end of life; they are working to get ahead of major issues. The pandemic and building closures allowed Facilities to actually get more work done and get caught up on smaller projects. Chair Hillman asked if there was a 3-5-10 year Facilities plan. Mr. Berardi advised they have done roof assesments on all buildings and they are working on 10-year Capital Plan which is close to being completed. Mr. Collins inquired about the condition of the diesel generators and Mr. Berardi advised they were in good shape.

Chair Hillman thanked Mr. Berardi and his department for the Budget Review and his department's hard work.

Mr. Brian Joyce, Director of the Department of Public Works presented his FY 24 Budget.

Account 422: Department of Public Works \$1,537,599 request +1.1%

Account 423: Snow & Ice \$127,000 no increase, extremely unpredictable. Half the labor is contracted out when we have snow events. Our contract rates are competitive with neighboring towns.

Account 424: Streetlights \$50,500 budget request, even to last year.

Account 425: RTF \$579,754 request, +3.9% to last year

Capital requests include \$170,000 for John Deere Backhoe and \$40,000 for new F550 service pickup.

Mr. Joyce commented that he is now fully staffed at the RTF, the compost pile has been cleaned up and staff will begin enforcing penalties for noncompliance with the blue bag requirement. Mr. Collins inquired about the frequency of the Boutique being cleaned out. Mr. Joyce responded it is generally every 2-3 days. The amount of broken merchandise dropped off there to avoid paying the disposal fee is increasing, challenging the usefulness of the Boutique.

The Streetlight budget pays for electricity for the 511 town owed streetlights with a few hundred more in town privately owned. Mrs. Maher inquired about how "dark" the town is compared to other towns and Mr. Joyce advised that citizens could write to the Select Board to request more streetlights. There is no known plan in town for street light density.

Chair Hillman thanked Mr. Joyce for his budget presentation and his department's ongoing hard work.

Mr. Ron Menard, Director of IT presented the IT Budget. Total requested Budget \$1,016,577 +15.15% over last year.

An ongoing goal from FY 23 is to continue to enhance and refresh security. The town IT staff has been the same since 2016 with 141 new applications and software to manage. 66% of the FTEs are exempt status. A big part of the budget is the need for OT, as IT works 24/7/365 servicing all departments including schools. The Town's insurer requires Cyber Security Solutions which are not fully funded from a manpower perspective. FY 24 Security Breach/Mitigation line item has been an increasing budget cost for the last 3-4 years. The SOC – Security Operations Center provides real time data to mitigate vulnerabilities. New applications are coming such as electronic reporting by Cohasset Police Department when use of force is exerted. E-permitting for Planning Department for inspections of fire, electric, etc. Data Centers are at end of life, Capital request \$432,000.

(Mr. Maggi joined at 7:37 pm)

Mr. Barclay asked if the Azure Capital Request will get the IT department through the next 7 years in the Ops budget. Mr. Menard advised it is a one-time purchase with a service agreement. Mr. Maggi inquired if Cohasset is late in moving to the Cloud and what are other municipalities doing? He also inquired about the depth of the security initiatives. Mr. Menard responded that most towns, 90%, have on premise data centers instead of the Cloud. 10%, mostly school districts, have moved to a Cloud based solution. Data gets stored in the Cloud, processing doesn't. OT is the big issue. The Commonwealth mandates that exempt employees are entitled to overtime or comp time. We need to pay whoever is eligible. Security alerts come from the Department of Homeland Security as well as other state or federal sources. MIIA is requiring 2 factor authentication going forward. The overall budget fits within the Town budget.

Chair Hillman thanked Mr. Menard for his budget presentation and his department's hard work.

Chair Hillman advised that we would next be discussing Article 8, Capital Budget requests.

Mr. Brian Host, chair of the Capital Budget Committee joined the meeting.

The budget is \$1,996,000, even to last year. This budget doesn't cover requests.

Valid items won't get funded. \$572,000 is used for debt service, leaving \$1,424,000 to expend.

There is a \$246,000 funding gap between requests and available funds. Mr. Host reviewed the

items on the current warrant. The Deer Hill School floor tiling project can be delayed until all

funds are on hand to complete the project which has been a multi-year project. The request for

a Public Safety Building facility assessment can be deferred as the current complex does not

offer much opportunity for renovation and upgrades. It's likely the CBC will defer the request

for a replacement for the service vehicle and use a going out of service police department SUV.

CBC has requested that IT/Schools relook at the request to replace all iPad at the elementary

schools and perhaps it can be done in waves. Mr. Kennedy inquired if the debt service that is

remitted out of Capital is the town's total debt service and Mr. Host said no; only debt service

for Capital Items is funded out of Capital. Mr. Kennedy followed up and asked if the existing

debt was structured with fluctuating interest rates and Mr. Host advised that it wasn't. Mr. Host

advised that current Capital debt services is for cost overruns for Bound Brook Dam, Wilcutt

Commons Senior Center and Border Street Bridge. In response to Mrs. McGoldrick's question,

Mr. Host advised the bus lease is 4 years and the electric bus was funded at Special Town

Meeting. Further discussion took place when Mr. Barclay inquired about the \$155, 161 for

smart panels in 28 Middle School classrooms. Mr. Host agreed it seemed like that number could

be reviewed/reduces considering there are 320 students at the CMS.

Town Finance Director Jennifer Mullen advised that the CPC voted to approve \$1,000,000 for the Town Hall Renovate/Rebuild project as well as half of the requested amount for Fields & Courts design study (only \$119,000).

Chair Hillman commented that the Select Board charged the THBC to come up with a plan, and yet they (the SB) have not provided a funding mechanism for it. CPC has provided only \$1,000,000 on a \$6,900,000 request from THBC. This project has been in the works for years.

Residents have volunteered their time and expertise to fulfill the charge, money has already been spent by the Town. Mr. Kennedy commented that this is a failure of leadership by the Select Board.

Mr. Mark Cameron from THBC answered questions. In response to Mrs. McGoldrick, Mr. Cameron advised that right now they have estimates and they won't get actual bids until right before Town Meeting. There is a \$1,800,000 contingency in the plans. Mr. Cameron advised all costs are escalating and they are working hard to contain current estimates.

Mr. Senior advised that the School Facilities Committee has a new ask of \$435,000 for the feasibility study, much of which would be transferable to MSBA if Cohasset were invited to join.

Mr. Collins departed at 9:02 pm.

Mr. Barclay asked if the order of the warrant articles is set in stone and Mr. Senior advised that the Select Board can change the order, however the traditional "housekeeping" articles are usually at the beginning since they go quickly.

Mr. Senior presented new Article 26 and reminded the Committee that the Town voted at STM to remove the Police Department from Civil Service. This was an article to expedite that removal since there is a backlog on Beacon Hill of home rule petitions. Mr. Hillman motioned to recommend to Town Meeting **Draft Article 26** of the March 22, 2023 draft warrant; **Removal of Cohasset Police from Civil Service**, seconded by Mrs. McGoldrick. Roll Call: Aye-Jeanne Astino, Aye-Mike Barclay, Aye-Patrick Kennedy, Aye-Mark Maggi, Aye-Ellen Maher, Aye-Mary McGoldrick, Aye-Meg Wheeler, Aye- Rob Hillman

Ms. Mullen presented an overview of the Sewer Budget and advised it is a balanced budget. Mr. Kennedy inquired about the membrane failure and is it being claimed on insurance. Mr. Senior advised the Sewer Plant is still functioning, the warranty is in place with the manufacturer. The issue is premature degradation, and it is not an FY24 issue. The Select Board authorized AARPA funding. The lead time is 12-24 months to order new membranes.

Mrs. McGoldrick asked Mr. Senior about staffing at Town Hall and other than the Director of Planning position that is open, and the Police Department, staffing is in good shape.

Chair Hillman asked Ms. Mullen for a full budget by Friday so we could review and/or vote on March 29.

Motion to adjourn at 9:25 pm by Mrs. McGoldrick, seconded by Mrs. Astino. Roll Call Aye-Jeanne Astino, Aye-Mike Barclay, Aye-Patrick Kennedy. Aye-Mark Maggi, Aye-Ellen Maher, Aye-Mary McGoldrick, Aye-Meg Wheeler, Aye-Rob Hillman

