

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

February 25, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.

Hermann Foundation Room, Falmouth Public Library
300 Main Street, Falmouth, MA 02540

APPROVED MINUTES

Present: Keith Schwegel, Susan P. Smith, Nick Lowell, Kathleen Beriau, Joseph “Dutch” Drolette, Ron Dyer, Cynthia Eaton, Peter Hargraves, Mary Harris, Deborah D. Maguire, Judith P. Magnani, Jim Marnell, James Newman

Board of Selectmen: Megan English Braga, Doug Brown, Doug Jones, Susan Moran, Samuel Patterson

Absent: Joseph Lemay, Wendy Vogel

Public Present: Jennifer Mullen (Finance Director), Julian Suso (Town Manager), Peter Johnson-Staub (Assistant Town Manager), Michael Small (Fire Chief), Christopher Campbell (Consolidated Communications), Brad Cole (Falmouth Enterprise), Town Citizens

Handouts: Firefighter cost per; Firefighters needed

1. WELCOME

Keith Schwegel – Finance Committee Chair opened the joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen at 7:00pm

Megan English Braga – commented that this was a Finance Committee Meeting and the Board would not be voting on anything.

Keith explained that, due to the important Community impact of the Article being discussed, the Committee wanted to meet jointly with the Board of Selectmen.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

Sue Moran asked if the handouts given to the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen were made available to the public

Keith replied that only the questionnaire was made available, the rest would be part of public record and available upon request

3. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

None

4. APPROVE MINUTES

Nick Lowell moved the minutes of February 11th with one change; the amount moved and voted for the Reserve Fund should be \$325,001.

Dutch Drolette seconded

All in favor

5. PUBLIC SAFETY – FIRE/RESCUE DEPARTMENT BUDGET

Peter Hargraves moved \$7,732,968 for the Fire/Rescue Department

Dutch Drolette seconded

Peter presented the details of the budget, focusing on the following:

- Salaries and wages
- Additional Firefighters requested/approved
- Promotions within the Department

The Committee and Board of Selectmen discussed the following:

- Two new positions approved in the budget are only funded for half of a fiscal year and implications to the next Fiscal Year's budget
- Possibilities of using Free Cash to fund the two new positions for the full fiscal year and the reasons Management did not choose this option
- Possibility of hiring the new firefighters prior to the beginning of the next fiscal year and the difficulties of the process
- Lateral transfers of firefighter personnel from other locations
- New minimum staffing requirements and what that would/would not achieve
- Voluntary overtime
- Promotions of four Firefighters to Lieutenant and implications for call outs
- Possibility of revising the recommended budget for Fire/Rescue to allow for more new firefighters due to updated FY21 estimated revenue and expense figures

Keith Schwegel opened the meeting up to the public for questions and the following was discussed:

- Why the Town had rejected applying for a Safer Grant to fund new Firefighter positions
- The necessity of overtime and effectively managing a schedule
- Effect of budgeted Lieutenant promotions on call outs; budgeted salary cost
- Estimated Tax Levy procedures
- Fire/Rescue Department attrition as it pertains to new Firefighters hired over the last five years and for the Department as a whole
- Current vs revised staffing models; Long-term effects (overtime, morale, response times)
- Salary cost of the two new Firefighters in the FY21 Fire/Rescue Budget
- Citizen suggestion to keep one Firefighter with an SUV active at the West Falmouth Fire Station

Keith Schwegel called for a vote on the FY21 Fire Rescue Budget

All but one in favor, Nick Lowell opposed

6. WARRANT ARTICLE 14 – HIRE EIGHT ADDITIONAL FIREFIGHTERS

Susan Smith moved Article 14 for discussion

Ron Dyer seconded

Sue explained that it had been a long time since the Community had needed to entertain an override. She also suggested that the Committee delay voting on the Article until the Finance Director and the Retirement Board could arrive at a more definitive amount.

The Committee and Board of Selectmen discussed the following:

- Requirements to fully fund Retirement by 2032
- FY21 Retirement Budget; percentage of unfunded liability for past service/regular costs
- Funding per firefighter breakdown process
- Unfunded liability history
- Number of firefighters needed
- Possibility of a tiered ballot question
- Fire/Rescue shifts and coverage for vacations, overtime, injuries and sickness
- Overtime comparisons for an 40-hour a week business to a 24-hour/7-day a week Fire/Rescue operation
- Impacts of an override on citizens who are financially challenged and the projected median yearly increase
- How the increase of eight firefighters would impact staffing at all current stations

Keith Schwegel closed the discussion of Article 14 with a description of the process from inception to the Ballot

7. OTHER BUSINESS

None

8. ADJOURN

Keith Schwegel adjourned the meeting at 9:07pm