



Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, December 1, 2022
Zoom Video/Audio Conference – 7:00 pm

Pursuant to Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2021, Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022 and Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022, Scituate Advisory Committee Members held the December 1, 2022 meeting via Zoom Video and/or Audio (Dial-in for those with only phone access). All participants participated remotely.

Committee Members Present: Jerry Kelly, Lynda Ferguson, Missy Seidel, Dan McGuiggin, Marc DiCosimo, Elise Russo, Patrice Metro and Jamie Gilmore; Chair

Committee Members Not in Attendance:

Also in Attendance: Nancy Holt, Finance Director/Town Accountant; Seth Pfeiffer, SCTV Facilitator; Anthony Vegnani, Select Board Chair; James Boudreau, Town Administrator; Jessi Finnie, Library Director; Mark Thompson, Chief of Police; John Murphy, Fire Chief; Mary Anne Palleiko, Beautification Commission Vice-Chair; Robert Chessia, Scituate Historical Society; Michael Minchello, Information Technology Director and Donald Knapp, Veterans Services Officer

Mr. Gilmore called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Kelly made a motion to accept the agenda which was seconded by Ms. Russo and voted unanimously in favor (8-0) by roll call vote; Mr. Gilmore-yes, Mr. Kelly-yes, Ms. Ferguson-yes, Ms. Seidel-yes, Mr. McGuiggin-yes, Ms. Russo-yes, Ms. Metro-yes and Mr. DiCosimo-yes

Mr. Kelly made a motion to accept the minutes of the November 17, 2022 meeting as amended which was seconded by Ms. Seidel. The minutes were voted unanimously in favor (8-0) by roll call vote; Mr. Gilmore-yes, Mr. Kelly-yes, Ms. Ferguson-yes, Ms. Seidel-yes, Mr. McGuiggin-yes, Ms. Russo-yes, Ms. Metro-yes and Mr. DiCosimo-yes

FY 2024 Departmental Budget Reviews

Library – Dept 610 – Jessi Finnie, Library Director

Ms. Finnie said this year they have been normalizing activities post-COVID and she noted that circulation is up almost 30% in children and teens area. She stated that she thought this was due to a desire for socialization. She noted that they will come forward for a new position after a few years of post-COVID data to support that request. She informed members they would be working on a new strategic plan. She updated progress on the Thoreau's Way project that had a difficult start but is coming along well now. The hardscape should be done in December and then the pollinator garden in the spring which is partially funded by a state grant. She stated that there is an increase in the materials budget due to the increase in costs in general as well as the exorbitant cost of e-books. The utility line items were also increased based on current information.

Ms. Russo asked if there should be a limitation on the e-books as there was an increase in physical book usage. Ms. Finnie said it is difficult as patrons may choose to go elsewhere for those items. Ms. Finnie also commented that people were reading e-books but did not realize that the library offered them. She stated that it is necessary for the Legislature to provide relief by limiting these fees from the publishers. Ms. Finnie stated that since we are a part of the network, we needed to provide those resources. She also clarified that she moved the other subscriptions to materials for a net increase of \$10,000. Mr. Gilmore asked if the full \$10,000 was for e-books and Ms. Finnie replied in the negative.

Mr. Kelly echoed Ms. Russo's concerns on the cost of e-books. Mr. Kelly commended Ms. Finnie on her work including the wheelchairs in the Library of Things. Ms. Ferguson asked if the change in personnel would result in lower costs and Ms. Finnie responded that the difference between a step 1 and step 8 library technician is not a great amount. Ms. Holt also noted that rather than just a cost of living increase, the new personnel were also receiving step increases.

Beautification Commission – Dept 650 – Mary Anne Palleiko, Vice-Chair

Ms. Palleiko informed members that the Commission was seeking a \$2,500 increase over FY23 and she provided a breakdown of the costs. She noted the special projects in FY23 included doing over the tax collector garden Special Olympics garden, the Maritime Center, a harbor adopt-a lot with two new picnic benches, the new Widows Walk retaining wall and the holiday tree at the gazebo. She noted that they are considering purchasing rain barrels to provide irrigation during drought periods but they don't have transportation. Alternatively, they may ask the contractors that work on some other islands.

Ms. Russo asked about the rotary island and Ms. Palleiko said it was handled by Kennedy Gardens and there was a height limit imposed by the Commonwealth on plantings. Mr. Gilmore commended the Commission noting the beautification efforts are as indicative of Scituate as the lighthouse.

Update from Select Board Chair Anthony Vegnani

Mr. Gilmore asked what was going on with the Town of Cohasset and increases in contract pays. Chair Vegnani stated that the Town of Cohasset was considering adopting a general bylaw that

would provide them control over part of Bassin's Beach enforcing authority over Scituate property. Mr. Vegnani stated they were in negotiations with the Town of Cohasset. Mr. Gilmore asked if legal counsel had been brought in and Mr. Vegnani responded yes. Mr. Kelly asked if the genesis was shell fishing and Mr. Vegnani responded yes from their perspective. Mr. DiCosimo asked who policed that area and Mr. Vegnani said it was easier access for Cohasset. Mr. McGuigan asked if the Commonwealth had clear borders for communities and Mr. Vegnani said there was an act in 1953 but it was not clear. Mr. McGuiggin asked if they should attend Cohasset's special town meeting and Mr. Vegnani said it would not likely help and it may need to be decided by other authorities. Mr. Vegnani said there will be legal costs incurred. Mr. Gilmore asked if there was a special counsel and Mr. Vegnani responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Gilmore asked about 10-12% increase in personnel contracts. Mr. Vegnani stated that it is public information and he noted that the Town Administrator was in his final year of his contract and they looked at salaries of other communities and negotiated a contract with him to keep him on board for another three years. Mr. DiCosimo stated that on yearly basis he sees 9-10% and 10-12% is not outside the norm for qualified people.

Mr. Kelly expressed concern on the Border Street acquisition and the inability to secure an easement to date. Mr. Vegnani stated that it has not yet been decided that an easement is not attainable and they were working with the new owners. Ms. Ferguson stated that citizens should have been informed at town meeting that the easement was not in hand at the time. Mr. Vegnani responded that the purchase of the property was not contingent on the attainment of easement. Ms. Ferguson said it was clear stated by some presenters at town meeting that the easements were going to be in place and yet they were not completed before the purchase. Mr. Gilmore stated that going forward there needs to be increased vigilance on these types of promises and agreements relevant to land acquisitions. Mr. Vegnani stated he agrees with their comments. Mr. Gilmore echoed Ms. Ferguson's request to see if there is any legal recourse against the owner that sold his property or the members of the group that said they were obtaining the easements.

FY 2024 Departmental Budget Reviews (continued)

Historical Buildings – Dept 691 – Robert Chessia, Scituate Historical Society

Mr. Chessia stated that the reason behind the budget increase was due to deferred maintenance on the buildings. He noted they were pursuing a \$200,000 grant for the lighthouse as well as a \$5,000 grant from Lighthouse Lovers Association. Ms. Ferguson asked if they had a plan for maintenance of the buildings when there are not any more volunteers as these are town properties. Mr. Chessia responded that they have a good group of dedicated volunteers right now and they maintain 18 properties including six that are town owned.

Mr. Kelly asked if there are any plans for a tenant at Mordecai Lincoln or rent the property as a wedding venue. Mr. Chessia said they had a lot on their plate now and it was up to the town for future uses. Ms. Russo asked if it was open to the public yet. Mr. Boudreau stated that the contents still need to be inventoried and appraised and currently they are securing the property for the winter. In the long range plans there could be a tenant in the small building. Ms. Ferguson asked about parking for kayak access to the river. Mr. Boudreau said that is all in the discussion phase and that is a policy matter and one of the issues is the difficulty in getting in

and out of the site. Mr. Gilmore commended the work of the Scituate Historical Society and their volunteers. Mr. Chessia said that HGTV was in town and Scituate would be highlighted in future programming.

Information Technology – Dept 155 – Michael Minchello, Information Technology Director

Mr. Kelly asked about the replacement of the audio visual system at the EOC. Mr. Minchello responded that if the project is approved the building would be at the seven year mark which is lengthy in technology terms. He noted that three monitors had issues as well as some rack equipment. Mr. Minchello noted the drivers of the budget increases included the full-year cost of the new position which was only budgeted for 75% of FY23. There was an increase in office maintenance due to new copier leases. The old leases had concluded but maintenance costs were increasing due to the older machines. He noted the software maintenance increases were from 3-6% for level service. There are new maintenance costs for the **financial transparency software** and capital budgeting software of \$15,360 and the Fire Department of \$8,000 for policy subscription service purchased in FY22.

Mr. Kelly asked where the migration from physical to virtual servers. Mr. Minchello responded there are replacing virtual servers with virtual servers through their Microsoft licensing purchased in 2019 at no cost. Ms. Seidel asked if the new staff person had been hired and Mr. Minchello responded the network administrator was hired the previous week after a very lengthy search since July. Mr. Gilmore asked if the departmental budget request or the Town Administrator recommended budget should go forward. Mr. Minchello said he was okay as the one time cyber audit was going to move forward outside of the budget and his only concern is the capital outlay line. He noted that he had gone to Capital Planning Committee twice for funding in the past.

Veterans – Dept 543 – Donald Knapp, Veterans Services Officer

Mr. Knapp noted the increases were in personnel costs, wreaths and the flags but the flags were reimbursed 75%. Ms. Russo asked about the reduction in the subsistence support and Mr. Knapp said that the Commonwealth's c.115 benefits were declining as he had been doing more fully developed claims for federal benefits. He does all the paperwork for them and those benefits are often better, tax free including better health benefits and then they no longer qualify for the c. 115 benefits.

Fire – Dept 220 – John Murphy, Fire Chief

Chief Murphy thanked all the firefighters for their efforts, especially during the pandemic. He said the department is in good shape due to capital and many successful grants for equipment. He stated that Humarock Fire Station will be open one year this month and the Public Safety has been open seven years. He noted the big challenge right now is the six vacancies out of forty eight. He said they were working with the Vo-Tech to start a paramedic program. He noted the addition in medical supplies which are required by the Commonwealth and the other increases are contractual for personnel. He noted they have a negotiated three year contract as well.

Mr. Kelly asked about the doubling of the educational incentive line. Chief Murphy noted the educational incentive payments for higher degrees in fire science was increased. Ms. Seidel asked about the loss of firefighters to neighboring towns. Chief Murphy said everyone is

clamoring for paramedics and the cancelling of paramedic classes due to COVID has hampered the process.

Public Safety Communications – Dept 230 -Mark Thompson, Chief of Police

Chief Thompson noted that things are going well at the dispatch center and there is some stabilization now. The budget is mostly salary and those increases are contractually based.

Police – Dept 210 – Mark Thompson, Chief of Police

Chief Thompson commended the men and women of the department for all of their work and the good initiative that benefit the department and the community. He noted there are challenges post COVID and due to police reform changes and the department is having the same staffing concerns experienced by the Fire Department. He noted their reliance on **part-time** staff which is no longer available under the police reform regulations and that fewer people were getting into the field. He stated that the collective bargaining is expiring and that will be impacting the budget.

Ms. Russo asked about the request for the new officers which was not recommended. Chief Thompson noted this was the second year and the inability to use part-time officers in the summer as well during the year to cover vacancies and paid time off. This was a savings of overtime as well as not ordering someone to work. The increase in staff would even out their operational curve and provide summer staffing. He understands it is a huge ask but people need to be cognizant of the need.

Mr. Kelly asked for clarification of the permanent intermittent officer issue. Chief Thompson said that a person could go to a 500 hour academy and take a position as a permanent intermittent officer. This allowed the department to have a vetting process as well as allow the person to see if policing was an appropriate career decision. The new model said that hiring will continue to be through civil service but now the person comes in untrained that must attend a 6 month academy and then have 3 months of additional training. Mr. Kelly asked about their efforts for accreditation. Chief Thompson said it is still a priority but they do not have an officer they can dedicate to it at this time.

Town Accountant – Dept 135 – Nancy Holt, Finance Director/Town Accountant

Ms. Holt noted the multiple **computer conversions** that were coming to a close. She stated there was a vacancy currently in the office that would be filled at some point. She noted that she was working on binding the old general ledgers and 2006-2020 had been completed in FY22. She stated that the budget increases were in the payroll lines for her contract and other personnel as well as funds for the general ledger binding.

Other Business

Adjustment to MGL c..44 §53E1/2 revolving fund expenditure limits

Ms. Holt

Ms. Russo made a motion to approve the increase in expenditure limits which was seconded by Ms. Seidel; the Committee voted unanimously in favor (8-0) by roll call vote; Mr.

Gilmore-yes, Mr. Kelly-yes, Ms. Ferguson-yes, Ms. Seidel-yes, Mr. McGuiggin-yes, Ms. Russo-yes, Ms. Metro-yes and Mr. DiCosimo-yes

Mr. Kelly made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Ms. Ferguson at 8:42 p.m.; the Committee voted unanimously in favor (8-0) by roll call vote; Mr. Gilmore-yes, Mr. Kelly-yes, Ms. Ferguson-yes, Ms. Seidel-yes, Mr. McGuiggin-yes, Ms. Russo-yes, Ms. Metro-yes and Mr. DiCosimo-yes

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Holt
Recorder