



Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 13, 2022
Zoom Video/Audio Conference – 7:00 pm

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, Scituate Advisory Committee Members held the January 13, 2022 meeting via Zoom Video and/or Audio (Dial-in for those with only phone access). All participants participated remotely.

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

Committee Members Not in Attendance:
Lincoln Heineman, Michael Westort

Also in Attendance: James Boudreau, Town Administrator; Nancy Holt, Finance Director/Town Accountant; Stephen Mone, Harbormaster; Mike Gibbons, Waterways Commission Chair; Brian Kelly, Waterways Commission Member, Michael Dimeo, Shellfish Constable; Pamela Avitabile, Treasurer Collector; Seth Pfeiffer, SCTV Director, John Murphy; Fire Chief.

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

Ms. Metro made a motion to accept the agenda which was seconded by Mr. Kelly and voted unanimously in favor (6-0) by roll call vote; Mr. Gilmore-yes, Ms. Seidel-yes, Ms. Russo-yes, Mr. Kelly-yes, Mr. McGuiggin-yes and Ms. Metro-yes

Ms. Ferguson joined the meeting

Mr. Gilmore called for a motion to accept the minutes of the January 6, 2022 meeting which was made by Mr. Kelly seconded by Mr. McGuiggin. The minutes were voted in favor (7-0) by roll call vote; Mr. Gilmore-yes, Ms. Seidel-yes, Ms. Russo-yes, Mr. Kelly-yes, Mr. McGuiggin-yes, Ms. Ferguson-yes and Ms. Metro-yes.

Review of FY 2023 Departmental Budgets

Dept. 298 – Waterways Enterprise

Mr. Mone highlighted the completion of the Cole Parkway Marina piling project under budget and on time. He also noted that the new marina fared well and as designed during the October

2021 Nor'easter. He also noted that the new Harbormaster's boat finally arrived despite being several months late due to supply issues, especially the windows. The boat was launched at the end of April 2021 and training has been completed with his staff and the Fire Department. He also mentioned that there were other repairs throughout the marinas and at the Town Pier on gangways. He is concerned about the condition of the docks at Cole Parkway and he updated the members on the grant application and the matching grants that had already been obtained previously. He is hoping to hear on the \$1M grant application in the next month or two which will complete the rehabilitation project. Mr. Gilmore asked about the Norwell High School intern program. Mr. Mone stated that this is an annual program and the students do a variety of clerical and cleaning tasks. Mr. Gilmore asked if there was a Scituate High School program and Mr. Mone said they had not inquired but they were welcome. Ms. Ferguson noted that the entire Norwell high school class has to do internships so that may be why they are participating.

Ms. Metro asked if the grant funds and the matching funds will be sufficient to complete the project and Mr. Mone responded in the affirmative. She also asked about the Fishing for Energy program. Mr. Mone responded that the lobstermen come across a lot of abandoned nets and they bring them in to shore and this grant pays for the cost of dumpsters for the disposal of this abandoned property. Ms. Metro asked about the risk caused by overcrowding and inexperienced boaters. Mr. Mone mentioned multiple incidents that resulted in rescues. Mr. Mone said they try to address the issue by educating people about the risks and the appropriate behaviors for water safety. Ms. Metro asked when the Coast Guard gets involved in rescues. Mr. Mone said they get involved all the time and sometimes they both respond.

Mr. Gilmore asked if the slip fees had been raised. Mr. Mone responded that the slip and mooring fees had both been increased for FY22. Ms. Russo asked if there were issues with the revenue or were some lines just being estimated conservatively. Mr. Gibbons said it was being conservative but he expected to realize the same as the prior year. Mr. Kelly asked if the lease had been reduced in order for the Coast Guard to stay and Mr. Kelly from the Waterways Commission responded no and that the Coast Guard lease is small and that Scituate Boat Works lease contract which can be variable as it is based on income. Ms. Metro asked why there was no miscellaneous revenue projected. Mr. Mone stated it depended on the amount of fines collected and Ms. Holt responded that miscellaneous revenue is not normally budgeted. Ms. Seidel asked about the new three slips and Mr. Mone responded they did generate additional revenue of about \$12,000. Ms. Ferguson asked about the transient fees and Mr. Mone identified them as the Overnight Tie-ups in the revenue schedule and they don't normally charge unless the boater is staying overnight.

Mr. Gilmore noted the project was fairly level funded and asked about the reduction of the technical services by \$10,000. Mr. Mone said it was for legal expenses that were not expected to be incurred. Mr. Kelly asked about the \$247,942 expense on the summary form and Mr. Mone responded that it is the capital project for a joint dredging project with the Town of Marshfield in the South River. Mr. Kelly asked about the town share for dock project and where it was reflected in the documents. Mr. Mone responded that it was approved in a prior budget process. Mr. Kelly asked if the Waterways Commission chair was comfortable with the budget and Mr. Gibbons responded in the affirmative and noted things might be tight for a year or two but there is a debt service reduction coming in FY24-25 and retained earnings will increase. Mr. Gilmore

asked about upgrades to the Harbormaster facility. Mr. Mone stated he had \$100,000 in FY25 in his capital plan for design and engineering for upgrades for replacement of the facility and he would be looking for grant for that project. Mr. Mone stated he is trying to make the building more ADA compliant. Mr. Kelly asked if the facility was at risk of fines for non-compliance and Ms. Holt said no. Mr. Gibbons noted that a significant improvement to the facility would necessitate the facility come into full ADA compliance. Mr. Mone noted the de-icers are allowing for the docks to stay in the water.

Dept. 295 - Shellfish

Mr. Dimeo noted his budget is level funded. Mr. Dimeo stated that there had been a river closure a few years ago and they are working on a plan based on a study from U Mass Dartmouth on effluent flows to re-open the rivers. Mr. Gilmore asked about the aquaculture program and Mr. Dimeo said it was still progressing.

Dept. 220 – Fire Department

Chief Murphy noted that replacement of Humarock Fire Station had been completed by winter. He highlighted that the Department had brought in \$1.4M grants in the last seven years including a \$240,000 grant for a brush truck that was on the capital plan. He praised his personnel for their work during the pandemic. He said they are still working on improvements for emergency management including obtaining partitions for the shelter with grant funds to make it safer and more private. He noted the new senior center is very helpful including as a warming enter. He stated they had hired eight new firefighters and recruitment of paramedics is quite difficult and the new facilities are very appealing to prospective employees. He said the biggest challenge right now is just keeping everyone healthy in order to continue providing services.

Mr. Kelly asked about the goal for simulation of power loss or communication loss. Chief Murphy said the new fire station in Humarock has now completed the loop and improved the communications. He wants to make sure what they have in place for back-ups is sufficient and that they have a plan in place. Mr. Kelly asked about the succession plan for the department based on the longevity of the senior management. Chief Murphy also informed members that they have two state of the art ambulances, LUCAS machines and the electronic Stryker stretchers in response to Mr. Gilmore's earlier question. He noted that EMS was 70% of their job. Mr. Gilmore asked if revenues had increased due to the equipment and if the reliance on Cohasset for mutual aid had been reduced. Chief Murphy said they had reduced their mutual aid request by half and doubled their outgoing mutual aid runs.

Mr. Gilmore noted the budget was fairly level funded. He noted the reduction in overtime. Chief Murphy stated that was an early estimate and they had filled many of their long term vacancies and it was still a \$106,000 increase. He went through payroll lines highlighting the changes to each. Chief Murphy noted that \$9,000 of the increase in purchase of services was due to equipment warranties and \$5,000 was for the online training system they had started to use since pandemic started.

Ms. Metro asked for clarification on the reduction in fires. Chief Murphy noted that the reduction creates challenges as there need to be additional trainings to maintaining firefighting skills. He noted that the deadly fire from the 1990s resulted in the funding of the SAFE program

which provides education in the schools on fires to help children learn how to be prepared in the event of a fire.

Dept. 159 – Scituate Cable Television (SCTV)

Mr. Pfeiffer reminded members that their funding is from Comcast and not from taxpayers. He stated the budget is salaries which are consistent to the prior year. He also noted the equipment portion of the project which is the annual replacement and upgrades of equipment. He noted the new reality of ZOOM and their support of this communication tool requires additional equipment. The continuing technologies for virtual meetings will require additional investment in technology and equipment. Ms. Seidel asked if the PEG Access account was the same level in other towns. Mr. Pfeiffer said that it was difference in Scituate based on their agreement with Comcast. The franchise fee on Comcast bills comes to the town for this programming. Mr. Gilmore asked about the impact of opening up competition to Comcast. Mr. Pfeiffer said at the five year mark in the contract, they would start negotiations for a new contract. He said that he thought that Comcast would likely not take that favorably but he felt the broadband project is too far out in the future to cause an impact. Mr. Kelly asked about the silver disks on poles for AT & T for 5G and Mr. Pfeiffer said he could not answer that question at this time. Mr. Kelly asked if there were any plans to broadcast the Scituate athletic events. Mr. Pfeiffer said they stream the majority of them live on Facebook and later they would be re-broadcast in television. Mr. Boudreau noted the valuable work by Mr. Pfeiffer to allow public access in meetings during the pandemic by exploring new technologies.

Review of Liaisons to Other Committees/Boards

Mr. Gilmore asked Ms. Russo to be a co-liaison to the Community Preservation Committee. He asked if anyone was interested in Economic Development Commission or the Public Building Commission. Ms. Ferguson said she would be willing to be liaison to either committee. Mr. Gilmore requested Ms. Ferguson be the liaison to the Economic Development Commission. Mr. Gilmore said the Public Building Commission would be held for the new member of the Committee when appointed.

The members discussed the process by which a new member would be appointed by the Moderator and how those candidates would be presented to the Moderator. Mr. Gilmore stated that providing a list to the Moderator to accelerate the process of getting a replacement and that he would like to meet with prospective members to ensure they understand the work and effort required as a member of the Advisory Committee.

Dept. 911 – Plymouth County Retirement

Mr. Kelly said he does not think it is appropriate to vote on this budget without having the Plymouth County Retirement Board present to them first. Mr. Gilmore asked Ms. Holt to extend an invitation to the Plymouth County Retirement Board and asked Mr. Kelly to provide a list of requested information so they can be prepared to address the members' questions.

Dept. 145 – Treasurer Collector

Ms. Avitabile noted that she had collected 18 tax titles in FY21 and 22 tax titles in FY22 and foreclosed on one property. She informed members that she is working with taxpayers experiencing difficulties with payment plans, the assistance from the Assessors for relief and the

Council on Aging. She noted that they sold out of out of town beach stickers last year in 45 minutes and this year the sales would be done online. She discussed the new permit system for multiple departments that had been implemented that allows her office to sign off on permits relevant to whether taxes and charges are current on a property. She said the new system assisted in communications between departments and generated additional revenue. She noted the low interest rates currently and her research into new banks with municipal programs. She said the budget was level funded and stated she was fully staffed in response to Mr. Gilmore's question.

Dept. 158 – Tax Foreclosures

Ms. Avitabile stated this budget covered the cost of the tax title attorney to resolve the tax liens. She informed members that she had foreclosed on a condemned home which was auctioned today and that would be a teardown and will come back on the tax rolls in the future.

Dept. 720 – Debt Service

Ms. Avitabile stated the goal is to keep the debt service level from year to year and that this budget is just for general fund debt and each enterprise budget carries its own debt budget. She informed the members that the credit rating of AA+ was maintained. Mr. Kelly asked about the portion that is School debt and Ms. Holt responded.

Dept. 911 – Plymouth County Retirement

Mr. Gilmore asked if members wanted to wait until Plymouth County Retirement came before them. Mr. Kelly asked the current OPEB liability to which Pam responded it was \$113M. Ms. Avitabile stated that the audits of the Plymouth County Retirement system are available on their website and the system is currently 67% funded and on track to be fully funded by 2029. She said that the system had bought a new building in Plymouth at 16 Industrial Park Rd and that this was the first year that the deductions met operating costs. She noted the budget was increasing at 8% which was what the Town had previously been informed would be the expected rate of increase. Mr. Kelly said he would like to hear more about their investments and their performance in relation to other public investment funds. Ms. Avitabile also stated that due to extra transfers, there is currently \$1.9M in the OPEB Liability trust fund.

Dept. 914 – Contributory Group Insurance

Ms. Avitabile noted there had been some high claims in the past couple of years and the current estimated increase is 7%. She expects an update in early February as to the actual percentage increase. She noted that 18 retirees are being enrolled into Medicare plans through a program with MIIA which will provide a 2% decrease on the active plan renewal. She stated the Select Board voted to cover any increased costs for these retirees due to the migration.

Dept. 916 – Federal Taxes

Ms. Avitabile explained the increase is normally forecast at 4% to cover cost of living increases and step raises.

Review of Agenda for 1/20/22 meeting

There were no changes to the agenda.

Other Business

Mr. Gilmore advised the members that the School Superintendent had asked to change the date of their meeting from February 24, 2022, school vacation week, to another date. Ms. Holt said that the February 17th date was available. Mr. Kelly said the meeting of February 10th only had a capital plan. Mr. Gilmore asked Ms. Holt to see if the School Department could meet on February 10th and perhaps South Shore Regional School Department. Mr. Gilmore suggested that Plymouth County Retirement appear on February 24th.

Mr. Kelly made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Mr. Gilmore at 8:56 p.m.; the Committee voted unanimously in favor (7-0) by roll call vote; Mr. Gilmore-yes, Ms. Seidel-yes, Ms. Russo-yes, Mr. Kelly-yes, Mr. McGuiggin-yes, Ms. Ferguson-yes and Ms. Metro-yes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Holt
Recorder