



**Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, November 16, 2023**  
**Zoom Video/Audio Conference – 7:00 pm**

*Pursuant to Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2021, Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022, Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022 and Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023; Scituate Advisory Committee Members held the November 16, 2023 meeting via Zoom Video and/or Audio (Dial-in for those with only phone access). All participants participated remotely.*

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

**Committee Members Not in Attendance:**

Jamie Gilmore; Conor Doherty

**Also in Attendance:** Nancy Holt, Finance Director/Town Accountant; Seth Pfeiffer, SCTV Director

Ms. Russo called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

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

**Ms. Seidel made a motion to accept the minutes as amended of the November 9, 2023 meeting which was seconded by Mr. McGuiggin. The minutes were voted unanimously in favor (6-0) by roll call vote; Ms. Russo-yes; Ms. Ferguson-yes; Mr. McGuiggin-yes, Ms. Seidel-yes, Mr. DiCosimo-yes, Mr. Kelly-yes and Ms. Metro-yes.**

*Mr. DiCosimo joined the meeting.*

*FY25 Departmental Budget Reviews (full FY25 budget available at [final fy25 budget website.pdf \(scituatema.gov\)](#))*

*Assessors (Dept 141) – \$286,463 – Joe DiVito, Director of Assessing*

Mr. DiVito noted that the revaluation was completed in FY24 despite having a vacancy of the assessing specialist for several months. He noted they completed 1,400 inspections in house and

a sub-contractor inspected the condominiums, There were 1,500 full measure and list inspections as well as countless other resulting from building permits. He noted that five year contract with PK & Associates expires this year and he is estimating the next five year contract at \$15,000/year but it still has to go through an RFP process for procurement.

He noted that 2/3rds of the budget was payroll that is contractually obligated and the majority of the balance is the technical services for the consultant to assist with valuations and the mapping vendor. He hopes to have the Assessors' maps online within the next month. He noted that 3,000 measure and lists inspections are being required by the Department of Revenue and he plans to do 1,000 of them in-house and the others will be done by the consultant at \$35 each.

Mr. Kelly asked for an explanation of the Nearmap software mentioned by Mr. DiVito. Mr. DiVito stated it is similar to Google maps. The company uses flyovers done three times a year to be able to plan their inspections. It is not a substitute for onsite inspections but it allows them to look for anomalies and focus on neighborhoods. He stated it is very useful for seeing progressions and for measuring. He noted many departments have access to this software.

Ms. Russo if there had ever been a split rate for residential and commercial in Scituate and Mr. DiVito said no since commercial is only 4% of the town. Ms. Russo asked about the function of the Board of Assessors. Mr. DiVito stated the members had the same statutory requirements as him for fair and equitable valuation and they are very thorough in their examination of abatement applications and also proactive with looking for local option exemptions to be brought forward to voters. Mr. Kelly asked if the members are elected or appointed and Mr. DiVito responded that they are elected.

*Commission on Disabilities (Dept 549) – \$5,000 – Athena Brodsky, Commission on Disabilities Member & Treasurer*

Ms. Brodsky stated the Commission is requesting \$5,000 for FY25. She informed members that the Commission will be hosting another Awareness Event next year on March 9<sup>th</sup> with the Norwell Commission on Disabilities. She noted the Commission purchased another beach chair and a transport chair for the Library to provide more access to residents. She noted that they successfully lobbied the Select Board to increase the handicapped parking fine to \$300. The Commission also provided letters of support for the Pier 44 redevelopment program and the new Jenkins playground. She stated the Commission has a student intern that volunteers and attends their meetings and brings another perspective. She also noted that the Commission provides feedback on projects as requested and ensuring that handicapped parking spots are left accessible as striped.

Mr. Kelly asked if Ms. Brodsky thought there were any priority projects which had not yet been addressed. Ms. Brodsky replied that making sure that locations are bathrooms are accessible. She noted that access is reasonable but not equal. She noted that Scituate does a good job trying to make things accessible to everyone.

*Library (Dept 610) – \$1,231,449 – Jessi Finnie, Library Director (hand-out to be appended to minutes)*

Ms. Finnie noted that library visits had increased 15% from the previous fiscal year and

circulation and visits were 30% more since they moved into the new library. She noted that computer usage had also increased by 20%. The Library hosted 300 events with over 10,000 attendees with generous support of the Friends of the library. She noted that new programs came at the expense of the loss of other programs. She noted that the generator had been installed and the CPA project for Thoreau's Green had also been completed. She explained her goals included the children's room sensory play piece was almost complete and funding came from the Library Foundation. She stated there was a goal to improve the study areas including wi-fi access and printing. She informed members of the new staff she has identified as necessary to maintain services. She also noted that there had been a turnover of 14 staff in a two year period. She noted that the priority is the five service points and those will always be their priority and the programming and collection management come second. She noted the ability to use substitute workers has helped but does not solve the staffing issue.

She stated some of their office equipment was at lease end and they will be looking for replacements. She said the repair and maintenance line is a need as the facility is aging. She noted a request of \$10,000 additional book and media to meet the requirements for books and media from the Commonwealth which is \$175,000 and she was appreciative of efforts to close the gap.

Ms. Russo asked if Scituate Library was open more hours than our neighbors and Ms. Finnie replied yes as they are open 64 hours per week. Ms. Russo asked if they Library of Things was being used and Ms. Finnie said that people loved it. Mr. Kelly asked if the Library was moving to a move self service model. Ms. Finnie replied that they have self service areas for check-out but they still have to assist folks unfamiliar with the system or have questions about finding specific items. Ms. Finnie said they were considering reducing hours to help alleviate the stress on staff members.

*Town Clerk (Dept 161) – \$290,371 - Kathy Gardner, Town Clerk*

Ms. Gardner noted that there was a new Assistant Town Clerk, Paul Ohrenberger and he was doing well. She noted that the next election is in March 2024 for the presidential primary. She stated the major budget components for her are tied to the additional primaries and the presidential election. She stated the prior presidential election had an 86% turnout. She noted a big challenge are those voters that sign up for mail-in ballots and then try to vote in person instead. She stated she brings in additional staff to process the 8,000 vote by mail applications and that aligns with her goals for training election workers. She is also going to be working on public service announcements relevant to voting and elections on how to properly complete ballots and exercise your right to vote; especially students and seniors. She noted it will be her fifth presidential election in that office and she praised her excellent election workers.

Ms. Russo asked about the additional hours requested. Ms. Gardner responded it would be to increase the 20 hour part-timer to 25 hours per week. Ms. Metro asked if the attendance at the annual town meeting was really 184 and Ms. Gardner confirmed yes. Ms. Metro noted that there is a lot of work being done for these town meetings for only a few attendees. Ms. Ferguson noted it could be indicative of citizens comfortable with the way things were going in the town.

*Widow's Walk (Golf) Enterprise (Dept 661) – \$1,505,000 – Ian Kelley, Golf Course Director*

Mr. Kelley stated that FY23 was the best year yet at \$1.874M which beat FY21 by \$130,000. He said now that the clubhouse is established people are bringing their friends and membership numbers are increasing. He stated despite the rain this season, the course is \$2,000 ahead of last year at the same time due to weekday play and the course is in good shape. Ms. Russo asked about the course superintendent search. Mr. Kelley stated the outside course management contract ends in December 2023 and the management will be brought in-house. He said he had 20 applicants for the position of course superintendent and he is conducting interviews currently and hopes to hire in the next few weeks. Ms. Russo asked if the restaurant lessee was doing well and Mr. Kelley said yes noting the success of the outdoor eating area that was only open 8 weeks. He noted they can have an outdoor event while still hosting a golf tournament inside.

Mr. Kelly noted that the greens fees are a bargain. Mr. Kelley responded that there is balance if you raise fees you may drive local golfers away. He said once the irrigation is addressed then an increase in rates could be discussed. He noted Hingham is \$24 more for an 18 hole round. He wants to make sure that it remains affordable to residents.

Mr. DiCosimo asked about the recruitment for groundskeeping staff. Mr. Kelley stated that most of the staff is willing to remain working for the town. He said the real search is for the course superintendent. Mr. DiCosimo asked the irrigation project and Mr. Kelley said it was delayed as it was a rainy year but a bid should be issued over the winter so the course would no longer be dependent on the weather. Mr. McGuiggin informed Mr. Kelley that all the feedback he had received was favorable and he was doing a good job at the course and now it is showing a profit.

*Council on Aging (Dept 541) – \$323,639 – Linda Kelley, Council on Aging Director*

Ms. Kelley stated the users of the senior center had been growing and they were happy. She stated that there were 1,800 visitors in FY22 and now they were up to 2,100 and those numbers do not capture at least 10% of the patrons. She said daily visits can vary based on program and lunch options. The normal lunch count is 48 per day but they did serve 75 visitors for Thanksgiving lunch. She noted the start of the Social Day Program this year for individuals with early stage memory loss or dementia. They currently have a wait list for the program. She stated the senior center has over 100 volunteers and they added 25 new programs in 2023. She said exercise, fitness, lifelong learning and history classes. She noted they have a successful rotating art exhibit on the first floor and will be adding an exhibit on the second floor. She informed members she completed a strategic plan with others and as part of their national accreditation application. She stated there are three vans in the transportation fleet and using their own drivers to provide more efficient trips which service about 200 users.

She stated that staffing is stretched to the limit especially with vacancies. She noted the limitations of the social worker and the need for more consistent case management and technical expertise. She stated there are requests for evening activities or week-end activities. She noted the communication with patrons is very important and the new staff person would assist in that function. She said there are several programs they would like to expand and additional grants they would like to pursue if there was additional assistance. She also noted the request for an Assistant Director that could fill in the gaps, assist the Director and communications. She noted that she is working with the new Media Manager.

Ms. Russo asked about the size of the over 65 population. Ms. Kelley responded it had increased from 32% to 37% which is about 6,600. She stated that the over 55 population is also welcomed into the building. Mr. DiCosimo asked about the current vacancies and Ms. Kelley stated she has one part-time Social Day program position open. She said she is now looking for a part-time media director, a part-time social worker and a full-time assistant director and the Formula grant may be able to assist. Mr. Kelly asked if other senior centers are open on evening and week-ends and Ms. Kelley responded not many. She noted the GATRA on-demand service has helped supplement their services and it is available on the week-end. Mr. DiCosimo asked what percentage of the programs and services at the senior center relies on volunteers and Ms. Kelley responded that the front desk and food services are the main areas in addition to program volunteers. Ms. Metro asked about the senior tax work-off applicants that are not placed and Ms. Kelley responded that she could not use all of them and other departments are helpful in taking applicants. The current program is 100 hours per year for \$1,500.

*Board of Health (Dept 510) – \$346,945 - Drew Scheele, Board of Health Director*

Mr. Scheele stated his budget is level funded except for contractual salary increases. He informed members that Scituate, Hingham and Cohasset have a Public Health Excellence grant through which they are able to hire an additional licensed full-time social worker who works with the three towns. He stated they also hired a public health nurse to supplement the three towns as well as interviewing for another full-time social worker. Mr. Scheele said the host agency for the grant is Cohasset. Ms. Metro asked for the period of the grant. Mr. Scheele said it is a three year grant with an option to go to 10 years. Ms. Russo asked how the hours were apportioned and Mr. Scheele said it is based on need. Ms. Russo asked if the new social worker could be of assistance to the Council on Aging and Mr. Scheele responded in the affirmative.

*Recreation (Dept 630) – \$160,888 – Nick Lombardo, Recreation Director*

Mr. Lombardo thanked his staff for all their good work for the department. He noted the new programs added for 2023 including Family Track Races, Foraging for Mushrooms, summer recreation basketball league, women's basketball league, open gym and kids first aid classes. He noted the 90' baseball field at Central Field is now just about done. He stated the tennis court project is moving into design and they have submitted a CPA application for pickle ball courts. He said they have four days of pickle ball that fill up within minutes.

Ms. Russo asked if there were issues retaining and recruiting lifeguards. Mr. Lombardo said they had 26 this year but normally they use 35-40. He said they plan to increase rates in the upcoming season from \$2.50-\$5.00 per hour to compete with DCR and private clubs. Ms. Russo why they don't have coverage on Labor Day and Mr. Lombardo said they do at Peggotty but many of the lifeguard have returned to school by then. Ms. Ferguson asked if there was a statute requiring lifeguards and Mr. Lombardo said it is up to the town's jurisdiction and it makes the beaches safer for patrons. Ms. Metro asked what programs are offered at the Scituate Harbor Community Building and Mr. Lombardo said seven or eight programs but he stated that he believes that there is space at the Recreation Department for them. Ms. Metro asked why the revenue projection was less than the FY23 actuals and Ms. Holt responded that it was a conservative estimate as the beach sticker sales spiked during COVID. Ms. Ferguson asked about the changes voted in beach sticker rates. Mr. Lombardo stated that the non-resident stickers will no longer be able to be used on the week-ends but there would be daily weekday

passes for Monday to Friday with a cap of 25 per day for all beaches. The points of sale are still being discussed. The stickers are only required from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Mr. DiCosimo asked what the last price increase in the beach stickers occurred and Mr. Lombardo stated that he had heard anecdotally it was 20 years.

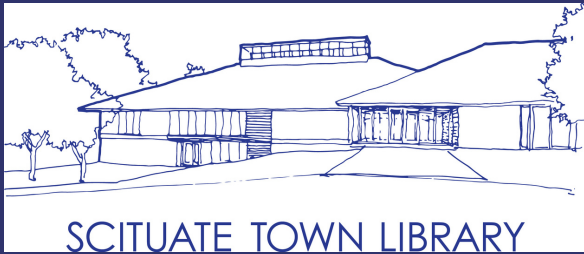
*Other Business*

Mr. Kelly provided an update from the Hatherly School Building Committee. He stated a consolidated school to replace Cushing & Hatherly would be brought forward. He stated the next submission to the MSBA would be in December. He noted the HVAC options were discussed including a geothermal option that has lots of incentives. Mr. DiCosimo asked about the fate of the Cushing School and Mr. Kelly stated that the MSBA will not reimburse for a second building demolition. Ms. Holt stated the Select Board would be taking up a possible recommendation to the Hatherly School Building Committee on the fate of Cushing. Mr. DiCosimo expressed a desire for fields at that site and that the need still exists for fields.

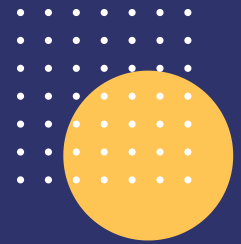
**Mr. Kelly made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Ms. Metro at 9:03 p.m.; the Committee voted unanimously in favor (7-0) by roll call vote; Ms. Russo-yes; Ms. Ferguson-yes; Mr. McGuiggin-yes, Ms. Seidel-yes, Mr. DiCosimo-yes, Mr. Kelly-yes and Ms. Metro-yes.**

Respectfully Submitted,

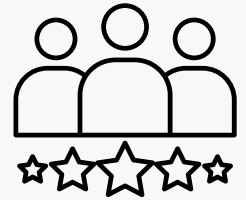
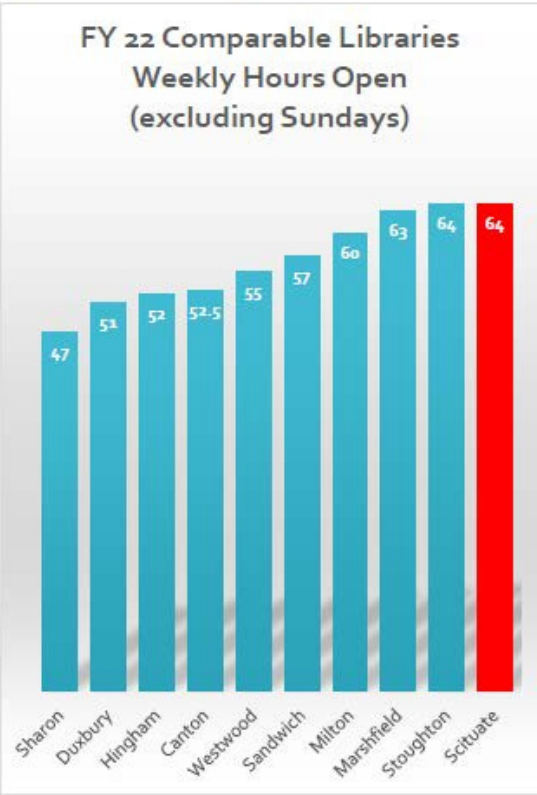
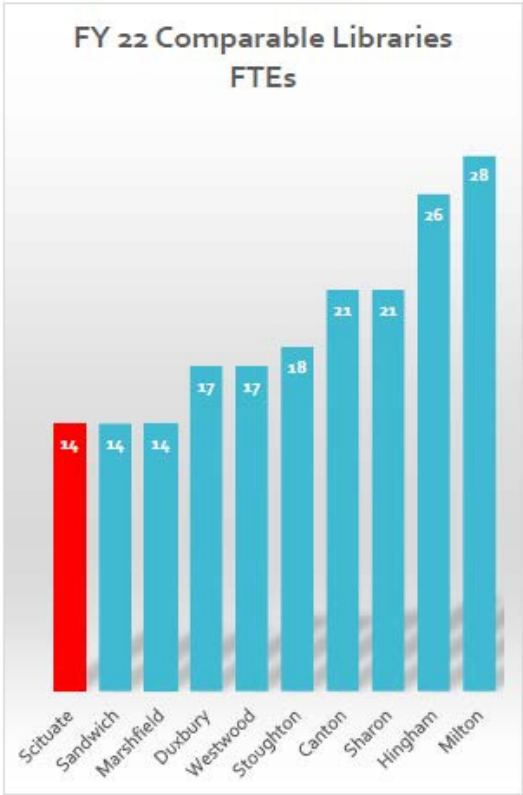
Nancy Holt  
Recorder



# FY25 NEW STAFF REQUEST



*\*The last time the library added new staff was 2007 during a Town override.*



Libraries comparable in circulation, size of town-served, and visitors were selected to compare staff and hours. Compared to its peers, Scituate is open the most hours with the least staffing. **No new staff have been added to the Library since 2007, during the last Town override.**



**Since the library opened its expanded and renovated facility in 2017, items borrowed has increased by 30%, and visits have also increased by 30%.** The Library has also expanded its programming during that time, and has the added responsibility of managing five meeting and three study rooms for the community's use.

## 1st Year in New Library vs. Present Year

