

TOWN OF SCITUATE
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Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 14, 2021
Zoom Video/Audio Conference -- 7:00 pm

Meeting conducted pursuant to the March 12, 2020 modifications to the Open Meeting Law made by Governor Baker pursuant to the state of emergency due to COVID-19.

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

Also in Attendance: Finance Director; Nancy Holt, SCTV Director; Seth Pfeiffer, SCTV Staff; Briana Trifiro, Recording Secretary; Alicia Anthony, DPW Director; Kevin Cafferty, Engineering Supervisor; Sean McCarthy, Highway & Public Grounds Supervisor; Michael. Breen, Sewer Supervisor; William Branton, Treasurer Collector; Pamela Avitabile, Water Supervisor; Sean Anderson

Committee Members Not In Attendance: none

Jerry Kelly called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. which was seconded by Missy Seidel and voted all in favor (9-0) by roll call vote; UNANIMOUS.

Jerry Kelly informed the board that the meeting minutes from the January 7, 2021 meeting will be available to approve at the next meeting.

FY22 Budget Presentation:

- **Treasurer Collector/Pamela Avitabile, Treasurer Collector**
 - **Tax Foreclosure (158)**

- **Federal Taxes (916)**

- **Debt Service (720)**

Ms. Avitabile started off by saying that the town continues to borrow money for improvement to buildings and schools. Borrowed for Senior Center. Borrowed for the Sea Wall, and the Town was able to keep AA+ rating, borrowed \$3

Million, at an interest of 1.3%, and a 20 year bond. Being able to keep AA+ rating with Jim and Nancy working with her and striving for a AAA rating.

- **Pension Assessment (911)**

Plymouth County The funding schedule currently calls for an 89.6% funding by the end of 2029.

61% funded now. Semiannual payments of assessment in July, saves the town \$109,143

- **Contributory Group Insurance (914)**

OPEB

Health insurance is estimated 8% increase over last year, will have real number by early February. Mr. Westort asked if you paid different percentages, family plan , single, etc as to the amount that the town pays, to which Ms. Avitabile said that retirees are 50/50 and this is Collective bargaining. She also mentioned that there are also a lot more people going on the towns insurance and spouses lose jobs.

- **Department of Public Works**

- **Engineering (411) Sean McCarthy, Engineering Supervisor**

Mr. McCarthy started off by saying that we all had struggles but he feels his department still managed to get a lot done. He shared that they made repairs to the cobble berm at Egypt Beach and Manhill Road. Two culverts were installed, one on Gilsdon Road and one on Bailey's Causeway, both of these allowing the marshes to flush more quickly during high tides and storms. A water main contract that went out for design is ready to bid next month. The department is continuing to work with FEMA on getting First, Second and Third cliffs, North Scituate Beach and Minot moving along.

Mr. Kelly asked Mr. McCarthy what he meant when he spoke about being under an alternatives analysis and environmental assessment for the repairs at Third Cliff. Mr. McCarthy responded saying that when they had twelve review agencies out to look at this and were told come changes could be made at Third Cliff. When a move happens it has an effect on the environment; birds, fish, waves, etc. The environmentalists look at this as well as the best way for it to take the impact of waves more effectively. This has added time to the repair. Mr. Kelly asked what part of the projects the Engineering Department was most involved in. Both Mr. McCarthy and Mr. Cafferty explained that the Department was is involved with a bit of everything; planning, building and road openings, which all involve construction and administration involvement.

Mr. Heineman then asked if we were fully reimbursed for NEMO and the old storms. Ms. Holt said that we are not fully made whole in those for the foreshore damages. She also said that we also don't have any market expenses. All of the design engineering is being done now and then construction can move forward

and reimbursement will begin. Ms. Holt said that the first project that has gone out is for Colburn.

- **Administration (421) Kevin Cafferty, DPW Director**

Mr. Kelly started off by saying that this was a hard area as there is Mr. McCarthy on the design and oversight, Mr. Cafferty on everything and then the people who are the implementers, and asked Mr. Cafferty how he wanted to handle it. Mr. Cafferty agreed that as DPW Director he is involved in everything and the way the department handles things works very well. Mr. Kelly asked Mr. Cafferty what UDF, Unidirectional Flushing, was. Mr. Cafferty described this as something the department put a lot of thought into. He said that it's a very particular plan that tells which hydrants should be opened up and which gates valves to shut off in a certain run of water line so that an extremely high flow can be run through that line to scour it. He said that this is all figured out on a computer program and gets great results. Mr. Cafferty explained that Scituate has a lot of old streets that back in the old planning regulations hydrants weren't mandatory at the end of. The distance between was regulated but after that would be a dead end pipe so there would be no way to flush them. Sediment build up becomes a problem this way. Mr. Cafferty said that this project is due to go out to bid in a week or two.

Mr. Kelly asked if the board had any questions. Mr. Heineman asked how much over Chapter 90 should the town go. Mr. Cafferty responded that the road money is all perspective as it depends on what people are looking for. The department has been leery about doing anything in the North Scituate area as it could need to be ripped up in the near future for sewer lines. He said that they've done some of the roads that really needed it and have tried to do the sidewalks at the same time, and this sidewalk reconstruction costs just as much as probably the entire road. Mr. Cafferty ended in saying that it really comes down to what people want and what people need.

Mr. Westort asked where the Cedar Point Project came in relative to what it was thought it would be. Mr. Cafferty said that this project came in under as they hit it at just the right time as COVID was starting to hit. Mr. Westort asked if there has been any backlash to which Mr. Cafferty responded that there really hasn't been other than questions on change orders as these would be on the town's dime. Mr. Westort then asked what the betterment was estimated to be. Mr. Cafferty responded saying that it would be calculated at the end.

- **Highway (422) Michael Breen, Highway & Public Grounds Supervisor**

Mr. Cafferty asked Chairperson Kelly if he could start off and then hand it over to Mr. Breen. Mr. Cafferty started by saying that the department has been doing a great job with the roads despite the challenges due to COVID. He said that the only major increases with the highway budget is money that was allocated in all the budgets for OSHA compliance. Mr. Westort asked about how the town would

pay for all of the issues if things were found. Mr. Cafferty said that these things would be taken as priority and the town can only spend what they have been funded with. Ms. Seidel then asked if this is being done because other towns have been inspected. Mr. Cafferty said that this is the smart thing to do but that Governor Baker signed something in a couple of years ago saying that towns, cities and municipalities are now subject to OSHA rules and regulations. They now have The Department of Labor and Safety out inspecting towns, which is new. Ms. Russo asked if the open Reqs that the department has will be more difficult to fill with the way COVID has us operating. Mr. Cafferty responded that in the Highway Department they are only down one person right now, as they've been hiring as it goes. Mr. Kelly brought up that Mr. Cafferty spoke a lot about over wash, saying that there were ten incidents last year. He went on to say that it appears as the third biggest item on his budget is contracting with third parties to help with clearing the over wash and asked if that was the Rental Equipment Facilities line. Mr. Breen responded that it could be, depending on when the storm is, but that would be one of the line items they'd use for that. Mr. Cafferty then said that it could also be because Mike hires guys to come out and help with some of the patchwork, which is expensive. Mr. Kelly brought attention to the big line item that Mr. Breen has for Repair and Maintenance of Property and Equipment and then asked how he was doing maintaining his equipment. Mr. Breen said that they are replacing a truck this year and are down a sweeper but they were coming up on the capitol. He's hopeful they've cut down on that line item now not having to rent sweepers and other pieces of equipment. He also mentioned that parts are usually very expensive when things need to be repaired.

- **Snow & Ice (423) Michael Breen, Highway & Public Grounds Supervisor**

Mr. Kelly started off by saying that the budget looks pretty good here. Mr. Cafferty said they've already been out for icing 6 – 7 times this season plus the one storm. He then said the unfortunate thing is when they get the call, even knowing that it's going to warm up that day, they can't tell the police that people should wait to drive until then.

- **Public Grounds (429) Michael Breen, Highway & Public Grounds Supervisor**

Mr. Cafferty started off once again by saying how great these guys have been, doing a great job this year with limited staff. He said that the rental equipment went up about \$33,000, which includes pocket park maintenance, tree maintenance and cleaning up Beaver Dam storage area. He said they have also increased some of the technical services for OSHA compliance. Mr. Cafferty said that they added \$19,800 for landscaping supplies which was for the purchase of special wood chips. He said that they were caught off guard when they heard that one of the school playgrounds was out of spec because it didn't have this type of

chip in it. This is becoming a regular basis so they added the money so that they could put these in all the playgrounds. Mr. Breen then said there was also an increase for larger trees that had to be taken down and extra money was put in for a crane.

- **Enterprise**

- **Transfer Station (433) Sean McCarthy, Engineering Supervisor**

Mr. Cafferty started off by saying this crew does a great job. He said that the biggest challenge they've had is the change in the recycling market, continuing to bring costs up. They are trying to maintain bag prices and costs down through this however. Mr. McCarthy said that the four guys that run the Transfer Station have done a great job through COVID. He then said that it's a balancing act to try and keep the bag and sticker fees the same. He said that recycling tonnage fees have increased with residents disposing of items normally left at redemption area in their recycling. They have been informed that rebates can be given for good cardboard so residents have been asked to separate that to try to minimize costs going out and offset what leaves the Transfer Station. Mr. Kelly said that he remembers when there were six employees there and asked if it could be operated with four. Mr. Cafferty said that they do and Mr. McCarthy even spends some of his weekend time there.

Ms. Ferguson asked if less transfer stickers are being bought as she has noticed more garbage cans out in the streets in her neighborhood alone. Mr. McCarthy said he just pulled those numbers today, he said as of this week, they're about 100 less than last year. The sticker sales were delayed this year due to residents having a harder time getting out with COVID restrictions. He went on to say that the numbers are pretty normal to date. Mr. Cafferty spoke up saying that the department plans to look in to which of the pickup companies recycle as it would be a lot cheaper if things could be dumped in one truck and feels this makes a big difference. Mr. Westort said that the companies actually charge customers extra to recycle. Mr. Cafferty said he'd like to see recycling mandatory. He reminded the board that The Transfer Station's budget is not only for the place itself. Ms. Ferguson said that her business's pickup company doesn't have enough dumpsters in the area to give her a separate one for recycling. Mr. Heineman followed up to Ms. Ferguson's comment asking if he is correct in thinking that this is just a wash but more of a the sales of the stickers and not having residents use outside services. Ms. Russo asked if residents weren't required to recycle and Mr. McCarthy said yes, there is waste ban but not all follow this and they're wasting space in the town bags that they're paying for.

- **Sewer Enterprise (440) William Branton, Sewer Supervisor**

Mr. McCarthy started off saying that Will has been doing a great job. The department had to work in two crews to keep the operators separated for COVID reasons. These operators have to be licensed to run the plant so Mr. McCarthy

cannot just hire anyone. He then said that this staff has had to take extra precautions as they say that COVID could be in sewerage and they're working with it all day. Will has been doing a lot other activity. They've been going after inflow and infiltration working the Oceanside Drive basin area doing a lot of smoke testing, and the Cedar Point area. Mr. McCarthy stated that it was amazing what they had found at Cedar Point, saying that there were pipes that just emptied under houses and weren't connected to anything, while others were broken and taking in sea water. He said all of those homes, with the exception of one, now have new services.

Mr. Kelly brought up Mr. McCarthy's statement about Cohasset being an issue to wheel the North Scituate sewerage over to Hull, he thought this was due to the shellfish beds. Mr. McCarthy responded to this saying that they could have a whole separate meeting discussing this. He stated that they have their own problems that he couldn't answer for them. Mr. Kelly asked if there were any expectations of wheel that sewerage into Hull. Mr. McCarthy said that as of the last meeting with Town Administrator, Jim Boudreau, he gave standing working orders to stop pushing the I&I to see if enough infiltration to get out without needing the other towns. He added on that Mr. Branton and his staff took apart pumps wipes twice today to pull flushable wipes out of them and clear the impellers. Mr. Gilmore asked why this is a new thing we hear about in the last few years. Mr. McCarthy answered this with the fact that there is more marketing of these items, and saying that in past years it was more adult diapers that were clogging up the pipes everywhere. He said that when wipes are marketed as flushable, it doesn't mean that after they're flushed you're done with them. He then informed the board that Will and Board of Selectpersons, Andrew Goodrich made a video that shows what happens to the pipes when you get down from houses that was posted to the town's website.

Mr. Branton spoke saying that COVID has had the department seeing a change in behavior of the residents of Scituate, including increased use of flushable wipes, more water use, and The Sewer Department is who sees all of this waste. He then went on to say that a lot of the department's equipment is at its useful lifespan. He said he was very proud of his staff that puts themselves in these areas of work every day, especially given the added risk of exposure during these times. Mr. Branton went on to say that this pandemic, resources have been stretched thin, delivery schedules have been stretched out, and now they are having to hustle to get all of the new equipment installed because they've been waiting for it all longer than they should have. He said they are quickly catching up over these winter months as well as sorting out some issues as some equipment is seeing some issues around the world. Will also state that he's pleased to be able to say that they have plenty of support from their Engineering Department and other Town Hall Staff. Mr. McCarthy said that the facility is always open for tours, when COVID restrictions aren't in place, as it surprises a lot of people how big it is, how deep it is, and the amount of equipment that is there, making the concerns

for safety more visible. Ms. Russo then brought up the sewer connection fees that were forecasted for \$350,000 for FY22 and the actual for FY20 was \$680,000, asking what the cause of this continuing to go down is. Mr. McCarthy responded saying that a lot of times to get the connection fees you have to tie new people in and they were up near their upper limit of what they're permitted to do because of the inflow of infiltration. This had them restricting who and what could tie in unless they had a right to connection.

Mr. Kelly said that he thinks it's a phasing, as you see sewer connection fees declining, you'll see sewage usage fees increasing because people have been brought on in prior years. Ms. Metro asked to talk about the pollution permit, NPDES Permit that expired at the end of 2017, and asked how long they think they'll be able to keep going. Mr. McCarthy responded that they have to keep going. Ms. Metro went into further details and asked if authorities would just keep allowing them to get a continuance. Mr. Branton informed Ms. Metro that they are in continuous communication with their regulators and at this point he'd probably anticipate another two years until a formal discussion about a draft permit process is started. He then said that EPA and DEP are a little backed logged at the moment as COVID has caused a lot of delays on their end as well. Mr. Branton stated that they are continuing to operate under their existing permit and meet those regulations on a daily basis. Ms. Metro asked if any large increases were anticipated in order to get the permit two years from now. Mr. McCarthy responded to that question stating that they hope not. He said that the biggest thing they had was the copper issue and they have since figured out a way to take care of that. From here, they may come back and say there is another level of treatment needed and then requirements to meet that level would be needed. That all just depends what the state comes up with. Ms. Metro then asked if we should assume the state was going to give additional time. Mr. McCarthy responded that they may give a time limit but at this time it isn't a huge concern, although it could become one at any time but hoping not. Mr. Branton chimed in saying that this is something the department is diligently planning for but hoping for a capital plan for facilities plan for the Sewer Department. This would help them identify and issues that they may want to make a priority. Mr. Heineman asked if there is a policy where the Board of Select People requires themselves to look at the sewer rates on an annual basis or similar. He stated he understands that there is an inclination to not raise the sewer rates but obviously they need to be raised on a regular basis. Mr. Heineman asked if a regular reminder for the board was a thing. Mr. McCarthy responded to that jokingly saying that Ms. Holt is lets everyone know and discusses rates with them anytime they're not doing well. Ms. Holt then said that they have been trying to write this in to their policies so that it would be a normal annual course. Mr. Kelly brought up the expenses on equipment parts, where \$129,000 was requested, and \$50,000 less was approved, which is less than the prior year. Next, Mr. Kelly stated that on Chemical and Lab Supplies, \$200,000 and was approved for \$148,000. Lastly, he asked what is

going on. Mr. Branton responded saying that these were very much projections for looking ahead if they were to continue to experience the worst case that has been being experienced over the last year. Continuing to say that they were very worried that they wanted to project for the potential for a new normal where if their equipment continues to suffer breakdowns from rags and other debris entering their facility at these same high rates, that that would lead to higher equipment replacement costs. The department was also very worried about chemical consumption and electrical use and ways to address or reduce the loss of efficiencies. The thought was to do this through the use of automated valves and actuators or through new equipment. He then went on to say that these requests were to support a vision that would bring them to this in a more aggressive way. Mr. Kelly then stated that he did talk to Mr. Boudreau about the allocation of the indirects and he feels this is a realistic assessment. There were no further questions from the committee.

○ **Water Enterprise (450) Sean Anderson, Water Supervisor**

Mr. McCarthy started off by saying that The Water Department had a really trying year with COVID, there was high water usage, a drought and this was all really taxing on the staff. He went on to say that a lot of people were set with the pandemic just working in the yard, putting sod down, and watering. There were residents who put in expensive landscaping and then told the department they'd rather be fined when asked to stop watering during the drought. It was tough on all of the staff of the Water Enterprise. He stated that their budget has a couple of larger items that they saw an increase cost in. Mr. McCarthy then went further saying that they put \$75,000 into the electricity budget and an additional \$7,000 in to the natural gas budget. Reasons for these costs is because the department is putting a new weld treatment facility online off Tack Factory Pond Road and that will be the new green sand filter building that will be filtering all of the iron and manganese out of the well before it goes in to the town's system. He said that they are expecting that to be a significant energy user because it will be filtering all of the water that they'll be taking up. Mr. McCarthy informed the board that they had some funds for OSHA compliance and OSHA training that was enough to sum it up for the budget. He said that during the pandemic it has been scary as there are only so many people up there to make the water and there were some employees that got sick and it's all been a tricky situation but they're getting through and moving forward. There are two new projects that are going to bid. One will be opening up in about two weeks and the other about three weeks behind that. The department will be doing a lot of replacement lines. One being 1.45 miles on Old Oak and Bucket Road. Mr. McCarthy then said that they're also going to handle a lot of the dead ends that they've been talking about in the past. He then passed it over to Mr. Anderson who started off by saying he felt fortunate to have such a good staff working for him in distribution, treatment and also the administration. He went on to say that his department, especially

distribution is very much in the public, going in to people's homes and still try to distance themselves. They also had a number of shares with COVID so far but they've managed to continue. Mr. Anderson said that its tough with the treatment staff and that they're basically down to one employee who is licensed to operate beside him or his assistant. This individual is his Chief Operator and fortunately he's already gone through COVID and made it out on the other side. He said he has been in communication with the others and they are all doing well. Mr. Anderson stated that he felt Mr. McCarthy wrapped up the budget for his department pretty good and then added that he did the best prediction that he could with the electricity increase. He said he didn't want to use the water treatment plant for a baseline because that would use way too much electricity so he took the biggest other facility, multiplied it by 1.5, and then multiplied that by a year's worth. He said that he also added some usage for Well 18B which they're currently working on residuals management to get back online, which is where the \$75,000 comes from. Mr. Kelly then said to Mr. Anderson that he talks about working with the owner's project manager on pilot testing existing and new technologies for The Surface Water Treatment Plant and asked what he was talking about there. Mr. McCarthy responded to this by stating that they put an RFP out looking for a new plant and a new plant location. He then said that one of the things they did was about two years ago now, was allocate money for designing a new treatment plant. What they do is set ups tests in the water on how to treat it in the best possible way. This also tells them how they'd need to do this in a new plant. Mr. McCarthy then said that he'd like to bring up to the committee that they've been doing a lot of work to The Dolan Well fiield, including some pump testing, and have had some great results. He said that they had looked at a potential opportunity to get 300,000 gallons a day which he thinks is actually 280,000, which is conservative estimate from the geologist. Mr. McCarthy said that that would be a significant amount of water that the department could add and use, especially during the summer months to help keep the water flows up and hopefully less drought resilient. Mr. Kelly asked how much that comes out to per day. Mr. McCarthy said he believes the gentleman said 280,000 which is a significant amount of water per year, 105 million gallons to be exact. The raising of the reservoir was also looked at and would add 24 to 30 million gallons of water making that well a big boost, going on to add that this would be something to look in to in the future but seems promising so far. Mr. Westort asked what seemed promising, was it raising the reservoir. Mr. McCarthy responded to Mr. Westort saying that they're continuously going for permitting raising the reservoir. He said that this has to go through conservation, MDP, and everything else. He said then that they're pushing forward on both projects; the reservoir and the well. The well would be a new source that requires a lot of permitting and they're looking at the best combo that can be done but in an ideal world they'd both be online and really increase the town's water supply to be more resilient if a well were to go down, collapse, or have mechanical

issues. Mr. Westort then asked about the budget regarding installation. He stated that in FY19 on proposed budget for revenue it was about \$410,000 and in FY20 it was \$434,000 and now it's down to budgeting for \$250,000. Next asking if he thinks there are a lot less project going to be completed or are a lot of them slow because of COVID. Mr. Gilmore chimed in, telling Mr. Westort to look at the use charges, as they are new hookups. Mr. Westort said that this is what he is asking about, saying its gone down \$160,000, and wanted to know what exactly this is due to. Mr. McCarthy said that they have hooked people up with the toll brothers and subdivisions and Mr. Anderson estimated that value based on what they know of for future developments. Mr. Westort then mentioned the water liens committee interest, asking if that is people that are going to hook up and paying ahead of time. Ms. Holt spoke up saying that the water liens are the people that have not paid their water bills, and their water usage gets added to their real estate tax bill the following year. The committed interest reflects the interest that they owed at the time and it gets leaned. Both Mr. Westort and Ms. Holt agreed that these seem to be going down, to which Ms. Holt said that means that people are paying on time. Mr. Westort had one last question on the raising of the water rates in general; asking if this is the Select People who influence this. Mr. McCarthy said that is correct as they are the water commissioners. Mr. Westort further inquired asking if they asked the Water Enterprise for advice, to which Mr. McCarthy responded that this is done in the same way they worked with the Sewer. A water study will be posted online soon and has a lot of capital plans including what they should be doing to improve the system. Increased fines for watering during droughts are being put in to place.

Other Business:

- Mr. Kelly informed the board that we are a good way through a good portion of the presentations going on to say that at next week's January 21st meeting, the petition articles will be reviewed for both Annual Town Meeting and Special Town Meeting. He said that The Community Planning and Development has been postponed a week because of a planning board conflict. The board will play catch up and do the December 17th departments that were postponed due to the snowstorm; Finance Director (10) Accountant, I.T., Veterans Beautification, Historical, and Planning. Mr. Kelly said that the COA needs to get that back on the agenda. Nancy said that January 28th may be too early but we will see. Liaison, Ms. Russo said that she had a report from The Capital Committee and they voted just last night to approve the entire capital plan. Requests totaled \$21,775,132, to which The Town Administrator approved \$15,132,000 in projects. The committee voted them all. Ms. Russo also wanted to share with The Advisory Committee that they're down two people now as two have given their resignations, leaving only five committee members left to operate at this point.
- Jennifer Kuhn, 20 Kerry Richfield Lane, Scituate, MA, stated that she was also listening to The Capital Planning Meeting and it was a record of minimal time to approve everything, saying she was a little bit shocked at. She then said she was looking for their minutes and hasn't found any for the past two years for any of their meetings online. She

was told to reach out to that committee directly and she said she would.

Mr. Kelly made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m. which was seconded by Jamie Gilmore and voted all in favor (9-0) by roll call vote; UNANIMOUS.