CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Guerin called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of February 1, 2022 were moved and seconded. Approved unanimously with the exception of one Abstain from Mr. Chaprales who was not present for the February 1, 2022 Meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE/STATEMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

1. FY ‘23 Budget Update

Mr. Dunham talked about budget information in the packet. These included the one-page summary, page related to the Cherry Sheet, and the page with yellow highlights that reflects changes from the Cherry Sheet. We won’t see the House version of the budget until mid-April and the final numbers are usually determined well after Town Meeting. If there is a problem, we would have to schedule another Town Meeting. The budget sheet changes include a slight reduction for Upper Cape. The estimated balance is now just under $300,000. Charter school enrollments have gone down, but the assessment is up 11%. It is wise to go with the numbers given. There has been a slight increase in charter reimbursement that reflects a commitment from the State to reimburse 100%, but they are nowhere near that number. We are still waiting for numbers for insurance.

Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chairman
None.

Fire Department Overtime Funding – Fire Chief John Burke

Chief Burke presented his overall budget and addressed the overtime funding request. Mr. Dunham said that they are looking for $250,000 for overtime, but $100,000 will come out of the ambulance fund. Included in the packet is a letter from the consultant preliminarily delineating how they came to the $250,000 number. Chief Burke reported that the budget request is level funded from the previous year. Salaries might change due to negotiation. He then addressed factors contributing to the overtime request. The current appropriation is not sufficient to cover ten people on shift, which is the recommended number. Problems arise when people are absent due to illness or negotiated time off, which increases by one day a year. Additionally, staff receive reimbursement for recertification education, and this comes out of overtime. Discussion followed about whether it was financially better to hire new staff or pay overtime. Chief Burke said it would be optimal to have 15 on a shift, but benefits increase the expense. However, if the Town keeps the current model, there will still be some overtime every year; he and the consultants are trying to be creative in their approach.

Additionally, Chief Burke talked about call statistics and type of calls received. There are three primary facilities from which most of the calls come – Stoneman Center, Cape Heritage, and Spaulding. Covid has resulted in increased transports, and they have been of a more critical nature. The department does not recall staff until a third ambulance is needed; on average calls last from 90 minutes to two hours. The Department does file for insurance reimbursement, but if there is none, the taxpayer is not charged. Cost recovery has improved because the Department participates in the Medicare CPC reimbursement program (see slides in the
agenda packet). Other cost savings approaches initiated include using in-house training; retaining staff; increasing the numbers of staff who are EMTs, but not paramedics (lower salaries); having the captain oversee shift activity; extending the residency requirement to 60 miles; and being more careful of expenditures so more funds are available to offset the overtime amount. Additionally, the Department has been able to use strategies that reduce amounts needed for capital expenditures. The Insurance Services Organization (ISO), which rates fire departments on a variety of measures has issued an improved rating for Sandwich; residents and business owners should notify their insurance carriers of the change once it becomes official. The final report from the consultant will be ready in April. Mr. Guerin credited the Chief and team for their creativity in approaching the problem.

Public Roads and Infrastructure Funds – DPW Director, Paul Tilton

Mr. Tilton is requesting $650,000 to be added to the highway operating budget for maintaining infrastructure of 150 miles of roads, drainage projects, sidewalks and parking lots. Construction costs are outpacing the amount available; federal costs have risen 28% over the past ten years and costs for hot mix and asphalt procured locally through the County has gone up 38%. Chapter 90 funding has not increased. He gave some examples of projects that have been done, such as seven drainage projects and work on Quaker Meetinghouse Road, but these have been expensive. Despite recommendations to add funds to the operating budget, historically, costs have been covered through road bonds and debt exclusions; even with the most recent road bond we are falling behind. The average amount from the road bonds over the years is $450,000 but that is less than what is needed and not guaranteed. The most recent $6 million road bond addressed 52 roads and 33 drainage projects; there was also a commitment to increase the paving operating budget. Putting money into the operating budget would provide a consistent amount with which to properly plan. The pavement report suggested a need for $2.6 million to do what is needed to bring bad roads up to proper condition and extend the life of the good roads; the $650,000 will help with that as well as with buying equipment, such as annual replacement of a truck. Priorities for projects are a result of the engineer, highway staff, highway inspector and consulting expert identifying which roads are most important; the condition of the roads is based on drainage. The Department is also conducting studies to look at the impact of climate change on the roads. Mr. Guerin commented that, as proposed, the capital expenditures for trucks and equipment would come out of the $650,000 and he wondered why the capital items couldn’t stay with the capital committee and the entire amount to be added to the operating budget be used for roads. He would like to see how much would be attributed to capital expenses. Mr. Dunham said that the Massachusetts Municipal Association has identified Chapter 90 as a priority. Mr. Tilton discussed other issues, such as type of road surfaces and why the DPW controls all the gas for Town vehicles. The consultant’s report will be available after it is finalized and will be updated annually.

Mr. McCormick commented on the DPW budget and the Fuel Line item and feels that this line item should be broken out amongst town departments. Mr. McCormick also commented on the breakout of expenses between the New Town Hall Project and the DPW budget and feels that expenses that were incurred in the DPW Budget should have been made in the New Town Hall Project expenditures.

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion on Upcoming Meeting Schedule

There is no meeting next week. The next meeting will be March 1st and will cover the golf course and school capital budget. March 8th will be Upper Cape Tech and police dispatch. There was a question about funding the school capital; Mr. Dunham said he had hoped that some could be funded through the sinking fund, but he received numbers this afternoon that are higher than expected, so might have to use the ESSER funds.

Other Matters Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chairman

None.
NEW BUSINESS

Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chairman

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Crossman moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Mr. Anderson. Approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Note: Finance Committee meetings are recorded and available for viewing in their entirety on the Sandwich Community Television website: https://sandwichcommunitytv.org

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

Susan James

Supporting Documents:
Minutes (4 pages)
Fire Department Budget Documents (23 pages)
Fire Department Report (26 pages)
DPW Presentation (23 pages)
DPW Draft Pavement Management (20 pages)
Budget (8 pages)
Meeting Schedule (1 page)

All Finance Committee Meetings are broadcast on Sandwich Community Television and are available for viewing on their website.