



TOWN OF TEWKSBURY

TOWN HALL
1009 MAIN ST

TEWKSBURY, MASSACHUSETTS 01876

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Robert Kocsmiersky, Chair
Richard Levasseur, Vice Chair
Jason Christian, Clerk
David Aznavoorian
Susan Bishop
Thomas L. Cooke
Stephanie Klinkenberg-Ramirez

Finance Committee

February 13, 2023 – Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order

A meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order by Mr. Rob Kocsmiersky, Chair at 7:01 PM on Monday, February 13, 2023. Also present at the meeting were Committee members Mr. Richard Levasseur – Vice Chair, Mr. Jason Christian – Clerk, Mr. David Aznavoorian, Ms. Susan Bishop, Mr. Thomas Cooke and Ms. Stephanie Klinkenberg- Ramirez.

Also participating in the meeting were Town Manager Mr. Richard Montouri, RECC Executive Director Kevin Lessard, Police Chief Ryan Columbus, Fire Chief Joseph Kearns and Deputy Fire Chief Paul Guttadauro.

2. Budget Reviews

- Regional Communications Center
 - RECC Executive Director Kevin Lessard presented the Fiscal Year 2024 RECC budget. Total budget increases including salaries, operating and unclassified totaled \$1,191,733. There were cost-of-living increases included in the budget along with the one dollar per hour dispatcher increase leases and contracts showed a significant increase due to software warranties along with several other items. At this time Tyngsboro is considering joining the RECC but no decisions have been made at this point. The breakdown of assessments were 47% Dracut and 53% Tewksbury.

Committee Member Mr. David Aznavoorian had a question regarding increased costs and repairs and maintenance. Maintenance is covered on a part-time basis by the town at four hours per week and there were some plumbing issues in the building that needed to be repaired. Committee Member Mr. Richard Levasseur had a question on leases and contracts. Some contracts are currently signed and others will be reviewed with respect to possible cost savings. Committee Member Mr. Thomas Cooke had a question regarding how much money the

town had received and state grants. The answer is \$1,279,353. Mr. Cooke also asked about what tasks the town managed versus the state. Massachusetts pays Middlesex Retirement through the center, the town handles accounting and human resources related issues. The Town is currently not sharing these costs with the town of Dracut but this is being discussed. Committee Member Mr. Thomas Cooke also requested a matrix of all the calls that came into the center Mr. Kevin Lessard would provide a breakdown that showed every detail since the center opened to the finance committee. There was a discussion around staff burnout and the fact that we had to utilize Fire and Police Personnel to stand in at \$65 per hour. The town asked the state to cover the overtime and they did reimburse the town. It is important to note That when the center opened Dracut did not supply any dispatchers. Several other questions from Mr. Cooke were answered regarding shift coverage. Committee Member Mr. Rob Kocsmiersky asked how many open positions currently exist at the center, the answer is 2. Mr. Kocsmiersky also asked if attrition contributed to overtime, the answer to this question was yes.

- Police Department

- Police Chief Ryan Columbus presented the Police Department budget request for Fiscal Year 2024. The total budget including salaries operating and capital outlay request is \$8,783,381.

Committee Member Mr. David Aznavoorian had questions regarding several line items in the budget and asked what the departments biggest challenge was. The chief responded that the biggest challenge for the department was transient call volume for example Walmart and Home Depot theft calls along with overdose deaths being a chief concern. Mr. Aznavoorian also had a question regarding mental health and drug abuse. The chief responded that Tewksbury has been very proactive in seeking out drug dealers and noted that other communities are not as proactive. Mr. Aznavoorian also had a question regarding staffing. The chief responded that the department is in good shape, there are currently seven recruits in the Academy and one additional higher will get the department to a total of 67.

Committee Member Mr. Jason Christian had a question regarding retirements and how many can be expected within the next 12 to 18 months. Chief Columbus answered that three were retiring the summer and replacements are already set for those officers and he expects two additional retirements next year.

Committee Member Mr. Richard Levasseur had a question about the K-9 costs. The answer was the grant that we had is running out and the financial responsibility now falls to the town. Mr. Levasseur also asked how the department was doing with respect to their accreditation. The Chief responded that they were about halfway through their full certification and pointed out that the certification was reviewed just today by an outside organization and

passed. Certification leads towards accreditation, accreditation means that you have the best practices in the department.

Committee Member Mr. Thomas Cooke had questions about how much we are spending for services rendered to the Tewksbury State Hospital. Chief Columbus responded that we spent \$96,000 for State Hospital coverage and we received a \$100,000 reimbursement from the State. Mr. Cooke also requested how much would be to replace the existing radio infrastructure for the department. Chief Columbus answered that the cost would be \$100,000 to make sure the schools were transmitting properly to the police department. There was also a discussion around additional diagnostic testing for all first responders that Blue Cross Blue Shield does not cover.

Committee Member Mr. Rob Kocsmiersky had questions around supply needs. The chief responded that ammunition is a critical supply the department needs and the cost is increasing.

The Committee Members also reviewed additional materials that were supplied by the Chief including incident response type and overdose data.

- Fire Department

- Fire Chief Joseph Kearns presented the budget request for Fiscal Year 2024. The total Salaries and Operating requests for the year is \$6,647,730. This includes contracted salary adjustments. The department will also be looking at replacing damaged gear.

Finance Committee Member Mr. David Aznavoorian had several questions centering around improving radio equipment for the department and state of the vehicle fleet. Committee Member Mr. Jason Christian had a question regarding increase in pay for the department's administrative assistant. Town Manager Mr. Richard Montouri determined that all town upgrades would wait until the next fiscal year when contracts are due. Committee Member Mr. Rob Kocsmiersky had several questions regarding the condition of the South Street and North Street fire stations. Mr. Kocsmiersky also had a question about finding grants. The Chief responded that Deputy Chief Paul Guttadauro is always actively pursuing grants. Committee Member Mr. Thomas Cooke had a question about replacement of fire hoses.

The Committee Members also reviewed additional materials that were supplied by the Chief including incident response types and breakdowns with respect to what hospitals ambulances transported people to.

- Community Events
 - Town Manager Mr. Richard Montouri presented the Community Events budget request for Fiscal Year 2024. He noted that the events in this budget include Fall Events, Memorial Day Parade, Fireworks, Holiday Lighting, Royalties for music and Police and Fire overtime to cover these events

Committee Members commented on how successful these events were in the past and how they keep growing.

- Select Board
 - Town Manager Mr. Richard Montouri presented the requested budget for Fiscal Year 2024 for the Select Board. The total salaries and operating budget requests for fiscal year 2024 is \$182,115.

There was a discussion amongst the Finance Committee and Town Manager regarding the need to mail out town warrants and how we could possibly save money on that item because the warrants are expensive to print and mail. It was suggested that possibly mailing out postcards to all residents that warrants are available at town hall and at town meeting. The emphasis was to minimize cost to the town.

- Town Manager
 - Town Manager Mr. Richard Montouri presented the requested budget for Fiscal Year 2024 for the Town Manager's office. The total budget request including salaries and operating totals \$641,909.

Committee Members had no questions regarding this budget at this time.

- Town Manager Unclassified
 - Town Manager Mr. Richard Montouri presented the requested budget for Fiscal Year 2024 for the Town Manager's Unclassified Budget. The total budget request totals \$23,256,904.

Committee Member Mr. Rob Kocsmiersky had questions centering around insurance costs for the Ella Fleming school and insurance for vacated school properties. Town Manager Mr. Richard Montouri noted that the Ella Fleming school was covered for historic purposes and that any vacant buildings would only be covered for liability insurance.

- Solid Waste Budget
 - Town Manager Mr. Richard Montouri presented the requested budget for Fiscal Year 2024 for the Solid Waste budget. The total budget request for Fiscal Year 2024 is \$3,438,814. Mr. Montouri noted that solid waste collection costs have skyrocketed and there is a 3% increase in the contract along with the fuel costs

adjustment. The town may look into charging for bulk pickup of items in the future.

Committee Member Mr. Thomas Cooke had a question around the revolving fund from the solar farm. It was noted that these revenues go directly to the solid waste budget. Finance Committee members had questions and general discussions regarding where all our recycled materials go for separation, etc. As it stands right now recycling goes to Billerica for separation aluminum goes to market for resale and plastics go to Vietnam. There was a discussion about alternatives including composting bins that are available to residents for organic recycling. Yard waste is difficult because some residents have over 100 bags of yard waste.

- **Street Light Budget**
 - Town Manager Mr. Richard Montouri presented the requested budget for Fiscal Year 2024 for the Street Light budget. The total budget request unchanged from last year at \$72,750.

Committee Members had no questions regarding this budget at this time.

3. Town Manager

No finance director report.

No Transfer requests

4. Finance Committee member representation on other committees

- **Elementary School Building Committee**
 - Finance Committee Member Mr. Thomas Cooke discussed details regarding the new Center School. Right now, there is an issue with regular vehicles parked in electric vehicle charging spots, the police will begin ticketing which should stop the practice. The contractor is working through several final punch items including the gym floor and some painting there is still the need to reconcile the cost of project as there was errors in building code issues that should not be covered by the town. The town holds a retainer which will be released when things are finalized the Massachusetts School Building Association will determine the percentage of costs that they will cover for the school. We are hoping for 57% but we need to meet all the “green points” to get this level of reimbursement

5. Ratify Payment of Recording Secretary Timesheet

None

6. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The February 6, 2023 meeting minutes were submitted for review and approval.

MOTION: A motion was made by Committee Member Mr. David Aznavoorian to approve the meeting minutes of February 6, 2023 seconded by Committee Member Mr. Jason Christian

Motion Carried 7-0

7. Adjourn

MOTION: A motion was made by Committee Member Mr. Jason Christian to adjourn at 9:09 PM seconded by Committee Member Mr. David Aznavoorian

Motion Carried 7-0

Documents Presented and/or Discussed:

- Regional Communications Center budget spreadsheet and supporting documentation
- Police Department budget spreadsheet and supporting documentation
- Fire Department budget spreadsheet and supporting documentation
- Community Events budget spreadsheet.
- Select Board budget spreadsheet
- Town Manager budget spreadsheet
- Town Manager Unclassified budget spreadsheet
- Solid Waste budget spreadsheet
- Street Light budget spreadsheet
- Minutes from the February 6, 2023 Finance Committee meeting

Approved at the Finance Committee meeting held on 2/27/23