



**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Working Session
Town Hall Offices
461 Boston Street, Topsfield
Minutes of Monday, December 18, 2017
4:00 PM**

Board members present included Chairman Boyd Jackson, Clerk Mark Lyons, and Selectman Richard Gandt. Selectmen Laura Powers and John K. Spencer were not in attendance. From the Selectmen's staff, Town Administrator Kellie Hebert and Administrative Assistant and Recording Secretary Susan Winslow were in attendance.

Council on Aging Director Paula Burke, Building Inspector Glenn Clohecy, Fire Chief Jenifer Collins-Brown, Accountant Catherine Gabriel and Treasurer/Collector Barbara Michalowski were in attendance.

Also in attendance were residents David Larson and Libby Wilson.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Boyd Jackson called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Jackson made the following announcements:

- Please be informed that the meeting is being recorded by the Board's Recording Clerk with a device for her record-keeping. Is there anyone else present who wishes to record the meeting?

Selectman Gandt responded that he would be making an audio and video recording of the meeting with his personal camera.

Town Administrator Kellie Hebert asked Selectman Gandt whether he planned to post his recording online. Selectman Gandt responded that he will be posting it on YouTube. A discussion ensued regarding the protocol of a Selectman posting a private recording of a public meeting online, and how this relates to Public Records Law. This will be discussed at a future Board of Selectmen Meeting as an agenda item.

- Chairman Jackson announced that the Board would not be meeting in Executive Session.

NEW BUSINESS – BUDGET CONSULTATIONS

Inspectional Services

Building Inspector Glenn Clohecy appeared before the Board to present a level-funded budget that is within the Finance Committee Guidelines.

Selectman Gandt questioned the computation of longevity. Town Administrator Hebert informed the Board that Longevity is in the Personnel Bylaws and calculated on the number of years of employment.

Mr. Clohecy informed the Board that the Inspectional Services Department has issued 453 permits and taken in revenue of \$123,537.75 to date since July 1, 2017. The Board thanked Mr. Clohecy for the work of the Inspectional Services Department.

Town Clerk

Town Clerk M. Beth Willis appeared before the Board to present a level-funded budget with three explanations:

- There will be 3 Elections in FY19 at a cost of \$3,418.
- Request for FOIADirect Software to assist with the high volume of Public Records Requests received in the Town Clerk's Office. The cost of this will be \$4,500 to purchase the software and an annual subscription of \$2,000.
- Request for 12 hour part-time, non-benefitted position at a cost of \$17,191.

Ms. Willis explained that since the Public Records Law took effect in January, 2017, the Town Clerk's office has received 111 Public Records Requests. Each of these Public Records Requests contains multiple document requests, with an average of two hours of employee time required for each request. Ms. Willis informed the Board that as Records Access Officer, it is her responsibility to record the requests, respond in a timely manner to each request, as required by law.

A discussion ensued on the critical need for the FOIADirect Software in assisting with the process of recording, cataloging and responding to Public Records Requests, including multiple requests for the same documents. This software is currently in use in twenty-six Massachusetts towns. Town Administrator Hebert added that the high volume of Public Records Requests, almost half of which have been sent by one individual, are placing a significant burden on personnel, time and finances, as the maximum amount that can be charged for a request is \$25.00. The Town Clerk informed the Board that the average time required for each Public Records request is two hours, which is not recovered even when the maximum amount of \$25.00 is charged.

The Board thanked Town Clerk Willis for the effort she is making to comply with this new Law while continuing the work of her office.

Council on Aging

Council on Aging Director appeared before the Board to present a level funded budget with two Essential Unfunded items:

- Maintenance Fee for the tracking software of \$790.
- Additional postage to cover the cost of mailing newsletters: \$450.

Director Paula Burke distributed COA activity calendars for the months of December, January and February and informed the Board that the operation of the COA includes far more than the outings listed on the calendars. She informed the Board that participants pay for the outings and explained that the printing of the calendars is covered by a grant. Selectman Gandt urged residents to view the calendars online to save postage and asked Ms. Burke if there was a way to save money on the mailing of the calendars and if there was any way to save more money in her budget. In response, Ms. Burke asked the Selectmen to remember that they are serving over 2,000 Seniors in Town on a very tight budget assisted by grant funds. She thanked the Friends of the Council on Aging for their continued support.

The Board directed Ms. Burke to include the cost of the rental of programming space at Trinity Church at the bottom of worksheet B2.

Treasurer/Collector

Treasurer/Collector Barbara Michalowski appeared before the Board to present a level funded budget. She explained that the GASBY Audit (Governmental Accounting Standards Board) is done every other year, and there will be no GASBY Audit in FY19, so this item will not appear in the FY19 Budget. She reported the following:

- Postage is a large item in her budget due to the mailing of tax bills and auto excise tax bills.
- The Department has a success rate in recovering payment for over 85% of returned checks. The Town charges a \$25.00 fee on all returned checks to cover both the \$15.00 fee levied by the bank on the Town for a returned check and the expense/time/man-power required to follow up with a certified letter on each returned check.
- 30 – 40% of Town residents pay their bills online and many deliver payment directly to Town Hall.
- The Department budget is very tight, and the most difficult line item is office supplies.
- Insurance costs are trending upwards, and the Town may see a 10% increase in the future. Town Administrator Hebert informed the Board that this item will be discussed in more detail in January, 2018.
- Debt: Ms. Michalowski and Accountant Catherine Gabriel gave the Board a brief overview on FY19 Debt. Town Administrator Hebert informed the Board that this will be discussed more thoroughly when the Capital Debt presentation is made at a future date.

Town Accountant

Town Accountant Catherine Gabriel presented the Board with a level funded budget within the Finance Committee guidelines. Ms. Gabriel informed the Board that Auditor Dick Hingston will be providing auditing activities valued at about \$3,000.

The Board directed the Town Administrator and the Town Accountant to provide the budget documents in a more readable format, three hole punched for the budget book.

Clerk Lyons made a motion to adjourn at 5:56 pm. Seconded by Selectman Gandt, so voted 3-0.

Respectfully submitted
Susan Winslow
Recording Secretary

Documents

1. Agenda
2. Document, "Board of Selectmen Departmental Budgets Fiscal Year 2019 Budget"

These Minutes were accepted as written at the January 8, 2018 Board of Selectmen Meeting.

Pursuant to the 'Open Meeting Law,' G.L. 30A, § 18-25, the approval of these minutes by the Board constitutes a certification of the date, time and place of the meeting, the members present and absent, and the actions taken at the meeting. Any other description of statements made by any person, or the summary of the discussion of any matter, is included for the purpose of context only, and no certification, express or implied, is made by the Board as to the completeness or accuracy of such statements.