



Topsfield Finance Committee
Minutes to the Meetings
Meeting was held via Zoom Video Conference
February 1, 2021

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Topsfield Board of Selectman was conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the Topsfield website, at www.topsfieldma.gov.

I. Call to Order: Chair Che Elwell called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM with Karen Dow, Karen Duval, Jon Guido, Mike Hartmann, and David Larson present. Eric Menzer was absent. Also present: Catherine Gabriel, Town Accountant; Kevin Harutunian, Town Administrator; Dick Gandt, Select Board Member; Jen Collins-Brown, Fire Chief; Connor Brown, Fire Lieutenant; Neal Hovey, Police Chief. Members of the public present: one. All votes at the meeting were taken by roll call, as this was a meeting via remote participation.

II. Department Presentations:

- a. Fire Department:** Chief Collins-Brown recognized the members of the Topsfield Fire Department, both full-time and call, for putting themselves in harm's way and continuing to provide service during the pandemic. The department has successfully pursued grant funding for safety and training materials, and an extractor machine to properly clean turnout gear of PFAS. The budget reflects settled contracts; would like a \$10k increase in call firefighter wages due to a 15% increase in the number of runs. The "other" budget is level, with shifts between some line items. Over-guidelines requests are \$10k for 3 sets of turn-out gear to maintain the proper replacement cycle, and \$10k for training to send a new full-time firefighter to the academy. Ambulance revenue is at \$220k so far for the year; considering how to set aside some of that revenue and apply it to equipment replacement. Fire station HVAC needs may be covered by Green Communities funding. Roof replacement is on the capital plan, as leaks in the rubber roofing are rotting the cork underneath.
- b. Police Department:** Chief Neal Hovey has taken a fresh look and produced a zero-based budget. He acknowledges help from executive assistant Katherine Jackson, Catherine Gabriel and Kevin Harutunian. Some budget categories have

been consolidated, and shifts have been made in both “wages” and “other” to put costs in the right line items. The salary & wage lines reflect agreements. The clerical line has been zeroed out due to a resignation, and the duties have been transferred to the executive assistant. There is an over-guidelines request to add 4 hours/week for the exec. asst. due to the extra work. “Other” is level-funded as per guidelines. A discussion was held on the merits of leasing vs. purchasing police vehicles. A smaller group will dig into details on actual spending in prior years vs. the FY22 proposed budget.

The FinCom is very appreciative of the efforts of the Town’s public safety personnel, especially in this difficult year.

III. Approval of Minutes: J. Guido made a motion to approve the minutes from 1/26/21, seconded by K. Duval, voted in favor 6-0. 1/11 minutes will be voted next week.

IV. Liaison Reports:

- **K. Duval:** Masconomet waiting for State Net School Spending numbers for each town; this feeds into the assessment for each town. Hoping that Masconomet will produce an analysis of how changing the budget apportionment formula to a rolling average of the past 5 years would affect each town.
- **Library Capital (K. Harutunian):** fire panel and security cameras requested. FY21 operating budget covering the cost of an engineering study of water in the basement.

V. Review of Model: Mike reports no changes.

VI. Next meetings: 2/9: Highway/Parks & Cemetery, Board of Health, Treasurer, perhaps others.

VII. Adjourn: A motion was made by Karen Dow to adjourn at 9:18 PM, seconded by Karen Duval and voted in favor 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Dow

Attachments: none