

IPSWICH SELECT BOARD
Meeting of Monday, January 25, 2021

The Select Board participated in this meeting remotely utilizing Zoom in accordance with the Governor's March 12, 2020 Order suspending provisions of Open Meeting Law and to promote public health and social distancing.

Board Members present: Linda Alexson, Chair; Dr. Tammy Jones, Vice Chair; Kerry Mackin; Nishan Mootafian; William Whitmore

Also present: Anthony Marino, Town Manager

With a quorum present, Ms. Alexson called the meeting to order.

Welcome/Announcements

The Select Board will meet on January 26 at 7:00 PM to continue reviewing department budgets for FY22.

The Public Safety Facility Committee will meet on January 26 at 7:00 PM.

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) will meet on January 28 at 7:00 PM to discuss the Essex Pastures development.

The Planning Board will meet on January 28 at 7:00 PM.

The film *See Me: A Global Concert* was recently released, and features Yoyo Ma playing the cello on Crane Beach.

Citizen Queries

None.

FY22 Budget Review and Select Board Vote

FIRE

Fire Chief Andy Theriault presented the proposed FY22 Fire Department budget. The budget is level-funded from FY21 except for increases negotiated in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), and a 2% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for non-union employees.

92% of the department has received their first dose of the Moderna vaccine for COVID-19, and will receive their second dose on February 7. No major side effects have been reported.

In FY21, the department responded to 1,851 calls, down about 300 calls from FY20. There were 100 less medical calls, 100 less public assistance calls, and motor vehicle accident calls dropped by 50%.

Mr. Whitmore asked if there was any cost savings due to a decreased call volume, such as gas or overtime. Chief Theriault responded that there were minor savings on vehicle-associated costs, but no savings in the personnel budget.

POLICE

Police Chief Paul Nikas presented the proposed FY22 Police Department budget. The personnel budget is level-funded from FY21, except for increases negotiated in the CBAs, and a 2% COLA for non-union employees. \$35,000 was removed from the budget, which would have paid for an additional cruiser. Chief Nikas removed this expense as vehicles previously purchased in FY21 had arrived late, and he felt it was unnecessary to purchase another vehicle so soon. The \$35,000 was moved to fund cuts previously made due to COVID.

The department saw a 1% increase in calls during FY21, particularly for domestic violence, larceny, and identity theft.

Ms. Alexson asked where vehicles rotated out of the police fleet go. Chief Nikas responded that some are transitioned to lower-use Town vehicles, and others are either traded at dealerships or auctioned off at MuniBid.com.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Lt. Jon Hubbard presented the proposed FY22 Emergency Management budget. The budget is level-funded from FY21, except for a \$200 service increase for the current satellite phone. This phone serves as a worse-case-scenario, last line of communication in the event that phone lines, cell phone towers, and the internet fail.

HARBORS

Chief Nikas presented the proposed FY22 Harbors budget. The budget decreased from FY21 due to the completion of projects such as the resealing windows on the main cabin of the harbor patrol boat, and the purchase of a new boat trailer. \$5,500 was added into the budget to install a removable dock at the end of Peatfield Street for kayaks and canoes. The project was previously budgeted for FY21, but was delayed due to COVID.

SHELLFISH

Chief Nikas presented the proposed FY22 Shellfish budget. The budget includes \$15,000 allocated for the green crab trapping program.

Dr. Jones asked if the funds were sufficient to eradicate the green crab population. Chief Nikas responded that even if the program was budgeted at \$25,000, the crabs could not be fully eradicated. He did add that because of the current program, positive impacts are seen on the quality of clams, clam beds, and marshes.

CIVILIAN DISPATCH

Chief Nikas presented the FY22 Civilian Dispatch budget. The budget is level-funded with the exception of contractual increases, and seeking to fill a currently vacant position that exists in the contract.

Dr. Jones asked for an update on the regionalization of police dispatch. Chief Nikas responded that the State 911 system hopes to conduct a feasibility study over the next year to determine the prudence of taking Ipswich into their service. Mr. Marino added that a vote will be taken on participating in the feasibility study on the February 8 agenda.

ANIMAL CONTROL

Chief Nikas presented the FY22 Animal Control budget. The budget is level-funded with the exception of an Animal Control Officer salary increase. Chief Nikas noted that COVID-19 presented unprecedented trouble in staffing the volunteer animal shelter, citing a dog hoarding incident in which several dogs were voluntarily surrendered. The Ipswich Humane Group worked to place the dogs in foster homes, and all have since been adopted.

Ms. Alexson asked what the *Other Pay* line item refers to. Chief Nikas responded that it is a weekly fee paid to the Animal Control Officer for being on-call 24/7, versus paying an additional part-time officer to respond during traditional off-duty hours.

- *Vote: Dr. Jones moved to approve the Public Safety budgets, reserving the right to amend the vote at a later time as discussions move forward. Ms. Mackin seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

PLANNING BOARD

Ethan Parsons (Director of Planning & Economic Development) presented the FY22 Planning budget. The budget is level-funded, with the exception of salary increases.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Mr. Parsons presented the FY22 Conservation Commission budget. He noted that although the General Fund expenses appear to have increased, they have not; the administrative assistant was previously paid out of two separate accounts, but the position will be fully funded by the General Fund in FY22.

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Mr. Parsons presented the FY22 Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) budget. The budget is level-funded, with the exception of one salary increase.

Ms. Alexson asked if there were any increased legal funds necessary to pay for special counsel to the ZBA. Mr. Marino responded that special counsel is paid out of the Town Manager budget.

HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Mr. Parsons presented the FY22 Historical Commission budget. The budget includes funding for a new informational plaque, which will be installed at the end of the Riverwalk extension.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Colleen Fermon (Director of Public Health) presented the FY22 Public Health budget. The budget includes a 2% increase for non-union employee salaries, and an increase for the administrative assistant in accordance with the union contract. Ms. Fermon noted that the biggest change is the part-time Health Inspector's increase from 5.4 hours to 8 hours per week.

Ms. Alexson asked if increases should be expected as COVID-19 vaccination programs become available. Ms. Fermon responded that expenses can be expected, but that funding would be available through the CARES Act. She noted that additional funding will also be needed for ongoing contact tracing and case management.

Dr. Jones asked if 5.5 hours per week for a Public Health Nurse was sufficient for the work being done during the pandemic. Ms. Fermon responded that although the Public Health Nurse is only contracted for 5.5 hours per week, she has been working about 25 hours per week, funded by the CARES Act.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Jim Bone (Building Inspector) presented the FY22 Code Enforcement budget. The budget is level-funded with the exception of contractual increases, and a salary increase for the Assistant Building Inspector. The salary was previously set at \$56,000, which is significantly below market value. In FY22, the salary will increase by 6%.

- *Vote: Mr. Whitmore moved to approve the Planning and Community Development budgets, reserving the right to amend the vote at a later time as discussions move forward. Ms. Mackin seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call*

ASSESSING

Mary Lou Ireland (Chief Assessor) presented the FY22 Assessors budget. The budget reflects an increase for education credits required for staff to maintain their assessing licenses.

TREASURER/COLLECTOR

Kevin Merz (Treasurer/Collector) presented the FY22 Treasurer/Collector budget. The budget reflects contractual increases and a 2% increase for non-union personnel. Mr. Merz noted that in 2005 the department's expense budget was \$28,345, and it has been decreased by \$15,000 over the last 17 years.

IT

Jay Wassouf (IT Director) presented the FY22 IT budget. The budget includes a 2% salary increase for non-union staff, a \$1,800 increase in maintenance contracts, a \$2,000 increase for hardware replacement, and a \$2,000 for consultation funding in case outside support is needed.

TOWN CLERK, ELECTIONS & REGISTRARS

Amy Akell (Town Clerk) presented the FY22 Town Clerk budget. The budget reflects contractual increases. The *Temporary Part Time* line item was decreased by \$14,000 for FY22, as Ms. Akell believes that the funds allocated should be sufficient for covering local elections in May 2022, two Town Meetings, and one special election.

ACCOUNTING & FINANCE

Sarah Johnson (Finance Director) presented the FY22 Accounting and Finance budgets. Training funding has decreased. Ms. Johnson also noted that the Accounting staff has been working extensively to manage CARES funds and reimbursements.

- *Vote: Mr. Mootafian moved to approve the General Government budgets, reserving the right to amend the vote at a later time as discussions move forward. Mr. Whitmore seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

New Business

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE

Ms. Mackin stated that she has drafted an Environmental Protection Policy for an Environmental Protection Committee that she would like to see formed, with the purpose of advising the Strategic Planning Working Group.

Dr. Jones asked if the proposed committee would be different than the current Climate Resiliency Committee. Ms. Mackin responded that the proposed committee would work across all Boards and Departments to ensure that environmental damage is minimized during Town projects, versus focusing on climate change.

Ms. Alexson suggested that the policy be discussed on an upcoming agenda.

OTHER

A reschedule of the Annual Town Meeting to Saturday, May 15 from Tuesday, May 11 will be discussed and voted on at the next Select Board meeting. Local Elections will continue as scheduled on Tuesday, May 18.

Colleen Fermon (Director of Public Health) was named Employee of the Year.

The Human Resources Department has received the MIIA Wellness Award for creating a gym in Town Hall available to employees and retirees.

Old Business

None.

- *Vote: Ms. Mackin moved to adjourn. Dr. Jones seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

*Respectfully submitted by Eileen G. Page
06.02.21*