



Finance Committee
December 7, 2021 2:00 PM
Virtual Meeting
Minutes

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting was conducted via remote means.

1. Call to order

Members participating remotely: Andrew Steinberg, Chair; Cathy Schoen, Vice Chair; Pat De Angelis; Lynn Griesemer; Dorothy Pam; non-voting members: Robert Hegner; Bernard Kubiak; Matt Holloway

Members absent: None

Others participating remotely: Finance Director Sean Mangano; Comptroller Sonia Aldrich; Clerk of the Council Athena O'Keeffe; Minute Taker W. Kaizen; Implementation Team Members: Mike Curtin, Emergency Dispatcher; Fire Chief Tim Nelson; Director of Human Resources Donna-Rae Kenneally; Administrative Assistant Jennifer Moyston; Russ Vernon-Jones; Brianna Owen; Elisha Walker

Steinberg declared the presence of a quorum, called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm, confirmed all participants can hear and be heard, and announced audio and video recording.

2. Public comment

None

3. Council Budget Guidelines for FY23, revise draft if necessary

Members discussed highlights from previous night's Town Council meeting discussion and review of the draft guidelines. The major takeaways from comments at this meeting were:

- to have more redundancy and better explanations or cross references within sections
- to make the document more direct, shorter and more succinct – identifying key points. This included think about future formats that might separate background information for companion documents and focus on specific recommendations.
- to include an abstract or other way to highlight recommendation
- to make the message on limitations of resources (money) needs to be clearer
- to strengthen wording on potential sources of revenue to recommend action rather than words such as “explore”. This includes looking at increasing fees and executing strong partnership agreements with Amherst College and UMass to support the Town

Griesemer said that Councilor comments also asked the council to strengthen the paragraph about the ladder truck and to double amount of money for climate action from for a capital sustainability fund

from \$100,000 to \$200,000, which, she said, are more specific instructions than the document typically contains.

Members discussed how the town manager's goals relate to this document, including climate action and augmenting revenue. And recommended that the Guidelines document use the same wording as used in goals. For example, Climate Action vs sustainability.

Members decided not to do a collective edit at this meeting; Steinberg will send the document to members for edits and comments to be sent back to him. He will then assemble for revised draft.

4. Consideration of financial consequences of Reorganization Plan: Community Responders

Mangano reported on questions submitted in advance of the meeting by Committee members. After a short introductory discussion by members of the Community Safety Working Group on CRESS responders, the first focused question was the decision to have the team be in-house rather than contracted, or partially contracted. The memo on reorganization specified and the CWSG group recommended a new in-house department for responders. Kubiak asked whether the town should or had considered outside vendors; Mangano said that there is a DPH grant that will help with the process of finding mental health responders as well as existing ARPA funds; members discussed hybrid options. The implementation team discussed the strengths of in-house for relationships, retention, and building team skills. Moyston said that LEAP reports are now available on the CSWG webpage with further discussion of such issues.

Members discussed CRESS staffing and job descriptions/salary ranges: The plan is 8 responders – with a 2-person team per shift. There are currently no plans for the police department budget to have staffing reductions; the Town is aiming for 24/7 CRESS response with new staff; Officer Curtin discussed which calls would have CRESS response vs. regular police response; members discussed the relationship between EMS and CRESS responders, including the likelihood of them working together; Chief Nelson said CRESS will be useless against student-related noise complaints and noise complaints in general since they do not have the power to enforce or issue fines; he also said sending a CRESS staffer with EMS makes sense—his department has already been doing this work; Steinberg reminded members that co-response adds costs; members discussed how noise complaint response might work.

Kenneally discussed CRESS salary ranges, which are based on job descriptions developed by CSWG and skills identified in the job descriptions, including some with required licenses for social work or mental health.

Members discussed ways of finding people to staff CRESS including collaborating with local community colleges to develop programs that could provide CRESS staffers. Several noted that it may be difficult to find the people we are looking for in the innovative department. Other social service agencies are facing a tough job market, with shortages of applicants. The advice was to consider going slowly if needed to ensure we get the types of people we are aiming for and to allow time to train, mentor, and learn/evolve on the job.

Members also discussed the Town Manager's ability to oversee the new positions necessitated by both CRESS and DEI, particularly the fact that they will add two new staff members who will directly report to him. The TM is already stretched to work with multiple direct reports. The response was that this was discussed internally and the TM strong preference for now is direct reports to ensure visibility and initial start-up.

5. Consideration of financial consequences of Reorganization Plan: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office

The initial memo from the TM presented to the Council and Committee detailed the first full year costs and included information about grants and ARPA funds support for the current year and next year budget. Mangano presented a spreadsheet documenting the timing, sources and forecasting of/for both CRESS and DEI funding over multiple year with a focus on the municipal budget line. He noted that by FY24 and beyond the Town will face increasing deficits (costs compared to allocated revenues) without new sources of revenues or other adjustments.

Members discussed the financial implications of the spreadsheet, including how these programs will be sustainable over time; the spreadsheet document show keeping CRESS staff to 10 over time and adding DEI plus new Fire/EMS positions. Mangano noted that we are in effect adding 15 new positions. The initial look suggest deficits exceeding \$500,000 after 4 years. Members responded to the spreadsheeting by expressing their concerns regarding how these positions will be funded over the long term; Mangano responded that there is no current plan for how to keep paying for them beyond increased state aid or using reserves or increasing revenues.

Member discussed with Mangano using reserves for these positions, cautioning that there is also a plan to use reserves in initial years of the large building projects to smooth out debt services costs. There was then a brief discussion of potential revenue sources, including increasing fees.

Members discussed how the follow-up statement and report from Fince to TSO needs to express support for these programs but also note the potential financial challenges they pose; Several suggested wording and tone and that the report recognize and thank the creative work by CSWG and effort to involve LEAP to help craft the program. Schoen will draft report on behalf of the Committee.

DEI: Mangano and Kenneally said the issues related to developing job description and salaries for the two DEI positions were similar to those with CRESS; Kenneally said she would work directly with the DEI director on ADA compliance and other accessibility issues; Mangano said that funding for the previous Economic Director position was re-allocated to DEI; members and staff discussed whether or how DEI might ultimately be combined with HR; Kubiak asked how the loss of the half-time town hall admin position in favor of the DEI positions would affect the Town Manager and other staff's work loads Kubiak added that we could and should view the new DEI director position as a potential economic development position. The person could work to attract and support minority and women business and stress our commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity.

6. Review new version of revised Financial Policies and Objectives

Not discussed separately from the above agenda item

7. Work Plan recommendation and Transfer Memo for next Finance Committee

Members addressed issues beyond the regular budget cycle that they want to inform the next Finance Committee about, including:

- the water rate structure
- parking
- cannabis impact fees
- rental registration programs and fees
- doing a debt exclusion override for the school

Members and staff also discussed making a calendar for the next Finance Committee and making a document that lays out all the different town organizations/groups that contribute to the budgeting process

8. Next meetings

None scheduled pending seating of new council

9. Matters not anticipated 48 hours in advance

None

10. Adjourn

Steinberg declared the meeting adjourned at 4:55 pm

Minutes prepared by W. Kaizen

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented:

12-07-2021 Finance Committee Agenda. P

Packet from the 11/13/21 Finance committee meeting included the two TM November 12 memos with recommended Re-organization plans for CRESS and DEI. These included full year cost estimates and details about staffing.