

Amherst Finance Committee Minutes
Thursday, February 14, 2013 7:00 PM
1st Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

ATTENDANCE:

Andrew Steinberg (Chair), Kay Moran (Vice-Chair), Janice Ratner, Bob Saul, Anurag Sharma, Douglas Slaughter, Marylou Theilman

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Sandy Pooler, Finance Director; Julie Federman, Health Director; Steven Connor, Veterans Service Officer; Linda Chalfant, Leisure Services and Supplemental Education (LSSE) Director; Amherst Media.

Meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m.

AGENDA AND DISCUSSION:

1. Fiscal Year 2014 budget development

a. COMMUNITY SERVICES (pages 96-111 and Appendices in Budget book)

Health (pp 96-98) - Julie Federman discussed the accomplishments of the Health Department including responding to complaints within 24 hours, mailing letters to landlords regarding upholstered furniture on porches, leafleting neighborhoods regarding landlord and tenant responsibilities, better containment of trash, and coordinating the Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods working group. This group is working to address issues around rental housing. A food safety educational initiative was funded by the FDA and a walking program was developed for seniors with a grant from Cooley Dickinson. Routine inspections of food establishments were reduced to 2 per year from 4 with ongoing monitoring for any increase in violations. The objectives listed on page 97 of the Budget book were mentioned.

Amherst shares a nursing position with Northampton as well as a health inspector position. This arrangement results in more hours, 20 per week, for a public health nurse at decreased cost. The Cambodian Outreach position was reduced to 12 hours in October 2012 and more recently to 3 hours due to lack of external funding. An intern does outreach through the Senior Center as most Cambodians needing help are seniors. (The schools have a full time Cambodian Outreach Coordinator.)

Senior Center (pp 99-102) - Nancy Pagano discussed the accomplishments of the Senior Center including the addition of a part time (15 hours/week) licensed social worker paid for with part of an increased formula grant, the successful parking sticker program (\$25/year) for seniors, and an increased number of seniors, 35, participating in the tax write off program. The formula grant also pays \$21,000 toward the administrative assistant position. Fund raising continues through the Friends of the Senior Center, which has already raised \$8800 since January 1. There will be a contribution form going out with the census forms and fundraising programs such as the Follies are being planned. The Friends were able to purchase a 7 passenger van for the Center. The Amherst Club contributed \$2500 toward an emergency fund and a donor has contributed \$10,000 to pay for a nurse, 2 days per week, 3 hours each day.

Highland Valley Elder Services has reduced the number of elders receiving hot meals. The \$1.19 Highland Valley pays per lunch goes toward the site director's wage and gas reimbursements to volunteers making home deliveries. Deliveries were doubled up to save

money. This also reduces the number of wellness checks. Cooley Dickinson has provided grant funding for an outreach clinic at Ann Whalen and Clark House.

The population of people 60 and over is increasing. People are living longer. They choose to stay in Amherst or move to Amherst. This also increases the number of people in Amherst living on a fixed income. The Senior Center is looking at ways to expand their space in tight economic times.

Veterans Services / Town Commemorations (pp 103-104) Steven Connor discussed the accomplishment of obtaining a \$35,000 state CIC grant to add Hadley and Middlefield to the current Central Hampshire Veterans Services District. The district is now composed of 10 contiguous cities and towns. The grant allows the district to hire another person, 10 hours/week, and helps with costs for one year, March 2013 to March 2014, after which all of the member towns will share the costs.

The number of veterans and dependents needing services is increasing. Every city and town must have veterans services and the staff must be fully trained. Beginning in August, 2012 the state reimburses cities and towns 100% for sheltering homeless veterans in their communities, even if the veteran is from another community. Previously, the sending community was responsible for payment without being able to manage the case and was reimbursed 75%. Benefits are still reimbursed at the 75% rate. A HUD VAS program helps veterans with emergency housing vouchers and social services. A Veterans-Justice partnership helps veterans who get into trouble with the law. The VALOR Act also supports those who have served. The University of Massachusetts has its own Veterans Service Office.

The budget for Veterans Services on p. 104 should list \$25,000 for Total Appropriation, an increase of 8.49% rather than \$90,000 and 44.1%. The numbers on the Cherry Sheet should also be checked, according to Connor. The District was set up using 2000 census figures. Using 2010 census figures, the numbers for Amherst increase and result in a structural deficit.

LSSE (pp 105-107) - Linda Chalfant discussed the accomplishments of LSSE including providing recreational programs that are accessible to as many as possible, partnering with the school department to provide 3 after school programs at the 3 elementary schools, operating the municipal pools, and involvement with the downtown Business Improvement District (BID) for special events. The enrollment in the afterschool programs has increased from 192 to 250 from 2011 to 2012. The licensed program provides enrichment activities, homework help and transportation. A 30 hour benefitted employee serves as the afterschool site coordinator for the program. The program is set up as a revolving fund, which has to be approved annually by Town Meeting. The department and the LSSE Commission attempt to get feedback from the community regarding the programs offered and their cost as they strive to increase participation and keep children active. This department also does fundraising and seeks grants.

For next year, the estimate for revenue from pool activity increases by \$25,000 and the amount of administrative reimbursement from the revolving fund decreases by \$25,000.

On p. 107, the Total Appropriation line should be grey.

LSSE – Municipal Pools (pp 108-109) The Outdoor Pools handout provided the

revenue numbers for the current year, FY13, and the next fiscal year, FY14. Current revenues are \$34,737. The majority of revenues are generated in May and June so the anticipated revenues of \$64,995 are expected to be reached by the end of FY 13 on June 30.

LSSE – Cherry Hill Golf Course (pp 110-111) The Cherry Hill Golf Course handout provided the revenue numbers for the current year, FY13, and the next fiscal year, FY14. Current revenues are \$101,025 compared to \$88,749 during the same period of FY12. Current expenditures are similar to the same period in FY12. As with the pools, most revenues are generated in the last few months of the fiscal year. The department will try to increase year round use of the Golf Course property including installing a Disc Golf Course. This year Winterfest was well attended and provided additional revenue for the course. The history of Cherry Hill was discussed.

b. GENERAL GOVERNMENT- Postponed
Select Board/Town Manager
Town Meeting/Finance Committee
Legal

2. New information affecting Budget, review financial projections - postponed
3. FY 13 Second Quarter Revenue and Expense Report, municipal budget - report distributed but not discussed.
4. Member reports - liaisons and committees - postponed
5. Minutes of previous meetings - The minutes of the February 7, 2013 meeting were approved unanimously.
6. Next Meeting and Agenda - Thursday, February 28. Agenda to be determined.
7. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting - none.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Janice Ratner, acting clerk

Handouts and Documents used at the meeting

Town of Amherst Proposed Budget Fiscal Year 2014
Friends of the Amherst Senior Center expenses and monies raised table
Growth in numbers of elders 60+ in Amherst graph
Veterans District Formula for Budget Allocation, updated October 2012
Budget Comparison for FY13 and FY14 with and without CIC Grant Funds
Outdoor Pools, Narrative Budget Summary - Budget Hearing FY14
Cherry Hill Golf Course, Narrative Budget Summary - Budget Hearing FY14
FY13 Municipal Budget/Actual Reports for Quarter Ending December 31, 2012 (January 28, 2013)