

Amherst Finance Committee Meeting Minutes Approved 1/25/2018
Thursday, January 18, 2018
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

Attendance: Tim Neale, Sharon Povinelli, Janice Ratner (Vice Chair), Marylou Theilman (Chair).
Absent: Joseph Jayne, Bernie Kubiak, Anurag Sharma

Others in Attendance: Sonia Aldrich, Co-Finance Director; Julie Federman, Health Director; Nancy Pagano, Director Senior Center; Helen MacMellon, Senior Center; Steve Connor, Veterans Services; Barbara Bilz, Director LSSE; Donna Roy, Operations Manager, LSSE

The meeting was called to order by the chair at 7:06 pm.

FY19 Budget Discussion

This was the first of winter/spring meetings with appropriate Town officials and department heads to discuss the various functional areas of the FY19 budget. For details, reference is made to the *Town Manager's Proposed FY19 Municipal Budget*, introduced on January 11, 2018.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Overall, Community Services budgets decreased \$112,378 (-6.0%) due primarily to the Director's voluntary transition to a 0.80 FTE Health Director, savings from the retirement of the longtime Program Director in the Senior Center, funding changes in Social Services, and departmental re-organization in Leisure Services and Supplemental Education.

Specific accomplishments and FY19 proposals and challenges (outlined in the Manager's report) were presented by Federman for Health Services, Pagano and MacMellon for Senior Services, Connor for Veterans Services, and Bilz and Roy for LSSE. Noteworthy:

Public Health – the Board of Health now oversees the two “living” buildings in town (Hitchcock Center and a building at Hampshire College), monitoring their self-contained water systems for quality. At present, a few members of the Board have expertise in such monitoring, and discussion ensued as to how future monitoring might occur, particularly when and if that expertise is lessened due to a change in Board membership. New for FY19 will be oversight of the ramifications of legal use of marijuana in the Town, and cooperation/coordination with the soon-to-be opened Musante Health Center.

Social Services – Most of the services once again will be funded through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), except for a fund to cover emergency services such as for rent or utilities assistance for some citizens of the Town. The FY19 budget includes \$20,000 for that fund. Also, after a thorough review by the Town Manager and other Town officials, the Town will bid a contract to provide for some of the services possible due to a one-time \$60,000 allocation of funds by the Spring 2017 Town Meeting. It is expected that these services will target outreach to the Latino community for assistance with food resources. Discussion ensued, and Federman stated that the contract and services continually will be reviewed so as to address possible expansion to meet the potential needs of other communities in town.

Senior Center – Noteworthy is that the number of seniors (60+ in age) in town continues to grow: 35% projected growth from 2010 to 2020, and a projected total number of seniors in 2020 exceeding 5000. Interestingly, the 2017 breakdown of seniors by age category is as follows:

90+	229
80-89	685

70-79 1371

60-69 2193

For the Senior Center, such growth continues to present challenges for services most helpful and appropriate for such a population. Expanding beyond what was included in the written Town Manager's report, Pagano noted that the Senior Center reaches out to seniors from other countries through the Center for New Americans. Once a week the Center holds a free Farmers' Market which is attended by elders originating from many countries. UMass students volunteer to do the translating. Finally, the Friends of the Senior Center continues to provide many of the operational funds for the Center, supplementing funds provided through taxation.

Veterans Services – Budget is level funded. Needs relative to State Chapter 115 benefits are down slightly and services relative to VA funds due to service disability have increased.

LSSE – The budget reflects some of the operational changes due to the retirement of the long-time director, with key challenges for the year being an assessment of new resident and non-resident fees, and a feasibility study that examines rebranding of the department. Although revenues for Cherry Hill Golf Course increased 17% from the same period last year, budget challenges necessitate a FY19 review of golf operations and overall usage of this year-round recreational asset.

News affecting the Budget

None

Committee and Liaison Reports

Ratner reported that the Library Trustees will be voting on a revised FY19 budget that reflects new financial guidelines of a 3.5% increase in Town appropriation. Theilman reported that another Four-Board meeting will discuss the assessment funding for the regional schools on January 27.

Minutes of previous meetings

Minutes of the meeting on 10-19-17 were approved 4-0, with 3 members absent.

Minutes of the meeting on 11-16-17 were approved 4-0, with 3 members absent.

Minutes of the meeting on 01-09-18 were approved 4-0, with 3 members absent.

Topics not reasonably anticipated by chair 48 hours in advance of Meeting

None

Next Meeting

Thursday, January 25, 2018 to discuss the GENERAL GOVERNMENT section of the FY19 Municipal budget.

The meeting adjourned at 9:57 pm.

Timothy A. Neale, acting clerk

Pertinent Documents:

Town Manager's Proposed FY19 Municipal Budget, January 11, 2018.