

Amherst Finance Committee Meeting Minutes Approved 3/1/2018
Thursday, February 8, 2018
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

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

Absent: Bernie Kubiak

Others in Attendance: Sonia Aldrich, Co-Finance Director; Scott Livingstone, Chief of Police; W. Tim Nelson, Fire Chief; Lindsay Stromgren, Asst. Fire Chief; Jeffery Olmstead, Asst. Fire Chief

The meeting was called to order by the chair at 7:05 pm.

1. Budget Topics:

Public Safety:

Overview by Aldrich: The small increase in the overall budget for Public Safety reflects unsettled contracts and built in STEPS for Police and Fire.

Police Facility Presented by Livingstone: The building is twenty-five years old and in great shape. They have replaced kitchen cabinets, appliances and furniture. Also switched from carpet to tile floors. The roof needs replacement. Solar is suggested since there is high southern exposure.

Police Presented by Livingstone: Department in relatively good shape. Advised that the budget would be level funded except for COLA increases. Proceeded with the understanding that they could put in for add-ons even though the requests would most likely be denied. As such, they requested a 2% increase to cover one additional officer, OT and court costs. They are budgeted at 48 officers. Two covered by grants (1 for Domestic Violence and one for Community Outreach). Sector based policing philosophy is showing positive results. Call volumes are significantly down; arrest of minors and underage drinking are down. Officers are also responding to increase calls related to homelessness and mental health. Two current issues are managing the related aspects of having the only Wet Shelter in Western Massachusetts and the upcoming opening of marijuana retail stores. Also, we did not receive funding for 95K Department of Justice Grant which was being used for our neighbor liaison officer. Livingstone was told verbally that this was in connection to Town Meeting voting to have Amherst be a Sanctuary City.

Animal Welfare Presented by Livingstone: Budget is level funded with COLAs. Amherst is opening up the Animal Shelter to Hadley. We already let Northampton use ours. Our fees seem to be in line with other similar facilities. Carol Hepburn, the Animal Welfare Officer, is working hard to get an outdoor dog park opened on the newest of the old landfills.

Communications Center Presented by Livingstone: We currently have 12 dispatchers. The department is budgeted for level funding. Currently working on feasibility of regionalization dispatch model.

Regional Lockup Assessment Presented by Livingstone: Assessed at 1\$ per person (population).

Public Safety:

Fire/EMS Presented by Nelson, Stromgren and Olmstead: Current strengths of department are the UMASS and TOA partnership, our School Safety Program (which remains a model for the State) and good retention of our State Grants. Challenges remain the stressed workforce, increased call volumes and machinery replacement. Hadley's use of our services at this point remains an unknown. Our contract with them runs out June 30th. In light of the Carlson Group Staffing Study, the Town Manager has put on his request list to add two additional positions should funds become available.

2. News affecting the Budget: No change since the Governor's budget was announced which represented a \$36,400 gain for us.

3. Committee and Liaison Reports: None

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting: None

5. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the chair 48 hours in advance of Meeting: Brief discussion of our role as Finance Committee Members

6. Next Meeting and Budget Topics:

Thursday, February 15, 2018

FACILITIES/PLANNING/CONSERVATION /INSPECTION SERVICES

Facilities Maintenance

Conservation

Planning

Inspection Services

MUNICIPAL Budget Update

The meeting adjourned at 9:20

Sharon Povinelli, acting clerk

Documents used: TOA Proposed Budget Fiscal Year 2019

Public Safety pages 49-59