



INFORMAL MEETING OF JUNE 24, 2019

Informal Meeting of the City Council was held in the City Council Chamber, Room 219, City Hall, on Monday evening, June 24, 2019.

CALL TO ORDER

Council President Scott Joseph Graves called the meeting to order at 6:00 o'clock p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Eleven (11) Councillors were present including President Scott Joseph Graves and Councillors Nathan Boudreau, James Boone, Craig Cormier, Ronald Cormier, Edward Gravel, Karen Hardern, Christine Johnson, James Johnson, Elizabeth Kazinskas, and James Walsh.

Also in attendance and participating was Mayor Mark Hawke.

President Graves announced that the Informal session was called to review the **Mayor's FY2020 Budget Recommendations**.

Mayor

Administrative Assistant – The position will be filled in the new fiscal year. The position will continue to apply for and administer grants.

Assessors

Clerk/Assistant Salary & Wages – Full-time position salary split between Assessors and Golf Commission.

Temp Projects Salary & Wages – In-house measure and listings.

City Treasurer

Department Head Salary & Wages – Maintain Budgeted amount until hiring process is completed.

Personnel (Human Resources)

Department Head Salary & Wages – 4% increase budgeted to address School Department personnel responsibilities (included in the proposed FY2020 Compensation Schedule).

Elections & Registrations

New ballot scanners are needed to replace twenty-year old AccuVote ballot scanners, which are failing due to age and lack of replacement parts. Included in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Conservation Commission

Conservation Agent Salary & Wages – Full-time Agent salary split with Planning Board (Planning Agent),

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Cable Commission – WGET fully-funded through Cable TV Access Fees.

Police Department

Parking Meter Maintenance – Meter revenues are used to pay for beat officer patrols in the Downtown area and to enforce metered parking. The Mayor added that the DPW is also funded from parking meter revenues to provide for Downtown cleanup.

Professional Services – For various equipment/maintenance no longer under warranty.

New Police Vehicles – Replacing 2 marked cruisers and 1 unmarked cruiser.

Building Repairs – Line item “zeroed out” by the Mayor. Monty Tech will provide most services (masonry) to erect new communications/radio building on Glazier Hill.

Fire Department

Overtime – Overtime necessary to fill shifts as the Department has a problem retaining firefighters. The City is required to hire candidates from the Statewide Civil Service list. Those living elsewhere tend to leave after opportunities arise in their own communities or for better-paying positions. The Mayor said that firefighters feel that Civil Service protection is vital, even though they have protections through their Union contract. Firefighter turnover has not affected Ambulance personnel.

Energy & Utilities – Energy savings not realized overall. Fire HQ same energy costs after gas conversion. No savings at South Gardner Station, since no energy-related efficiencies were performed. Plans to use a DPW bay for storage of a piece of apparatus stored in South Gardner.

New Fire Vehicles – Mayor reduced budget request to \$0. \$100,000 was committed from Free Cash to match the City’s share of a Federal grant to replace Engine 3. \$75,272 balance sought for Car 2 replacement (“may be considered next FY through Free Cash”).

Ambulance Department

Professional Services – \$300,000 budgeted – City splits revenues with Wood’s Ambulance for calls that require Advanced Life Support (ALS). Payments are made to Wood’s from this account. Budgeted amount based on prior year actual calls.

Dispatchers

The Mayor has no plans to pursue inter-municipal agreements with other communities for shared (regional) dispatching services, although the State Police are looking into another call center. EOPS provided the City with \$500,000-\$600,000 in grant funds to regionalize with Athol, but Athol withdrew from the Agreement.

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Building Department

Shared services with Hubbardston – The City is currently paid \$2,000 per month for building inspection services. The Building Commissioner provides one-half day per week, on average. Negotiations are underway for renewal of the Agreement.

Assistant Building Inspector Salary & Wages – Funds two Local Inspectors. Second position to perform multi-family house inspections. The position was recently filled, having been vacant for the past year.

Animal Control

Shared services agreement with Ashburnham, Hubbardston, and Westminster generates approximately \$80,000 in annual revenues.

Civil Enforcement

Professional Services - \$8,500 for Kelly and Ryan for collection services.

Survey Department

Department Head Salary & Wages – Salary divided among Survey (General Fund) at 50%; Water and Sewer, 25% each.

Health Department

Professional Services – For nuisance properties – tall grass, etc. Department responds to resident calls for vacant and other properties. Liens are attached to the properties to recover the City's costs.

Greenwood Memorial Pool

Water Park is not operating at present and the diving board pedestal needs to be replaced.

The Pool building has been shuttered for years and the Mayor noted that it is estimated to cost \$711,000 to demolish the building. It was also mentioned that bricks are loosening and may pose a safety hazard. The Building Commissioner will look into this.

Municipal Recreation

Department Head Salary & Wages – Salary is split between City and School Department. Dan Forte, the Athletic Director, serves as both the Municipal Recreation Director and the School Department's Athletic Director.

Debt Service

Inside Debt, Principal and Interest – All budgeted debt has been authorized. Any unnecessary debt authorizations will be presented to the Council for rescission.



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Contributory Retirement

Contributory Retirement Assessment – 80% of appropriation committed to unfunded pension liability. The City's target date is 2032 to be fully-funded.

Employee Benefits

Health Insurance – The Mayor advised that the health insurance costs have remained stagnant for the last 3 to 4 years.

The meeting concluded at 7:00 p.m.

Accepted by the City Council: *August 5, 2019*