

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
March 2, 2023

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in special session on Thursday, March 2, 2023, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Present: Denise Banister and William Sayre

Absent: David Mathers

Also present: Dan Banister (Highway), Nick Caccamo (Town Administrator), Nick Dines (Mill River Greenway), Sharon Strzegowski (Collector), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant), Melissa Wilson (Senior Center Director)

1. Budget introduction – Town Administrator gave an introduction to the budget. He presented two parallel budgets, one with level-funded labor lines, and the other the same budget but with pay raises as requested, as many departments were requesting increases for their staff. He went through the calculations for the FY24 levy limit, arriving at \$7,034,449, and the FY24 levy ceiling is \$8,977,339. Free cash and stabilization are in the process of being certified. The current preliminary budget, without labor increases, is 6% over last year's. Free cash may be needed to balance the budget, or may not.
2. Senior Center budget –Senior Center Director Melissa Wilson presented the proposed budget for the Senior Center. She asked for a \$2 increase for all staff members. She noted that when a previous office assistant left and they searched for a replacement, applicants were not interested at the low starting rate, \$15.93 per hour, and the search had to be reopened. For her own salary, she asked for the same \$2 increase, from \$21.79 per hour to 23.79. According to the wage classification study, some Senior Center directors were at \$36 or 37, the lowest three were \$29, 31, and 32, so she felt her request was very modest. General expenses are level funded. A Board member commented that given the number of town residents over 60, the Senior Center is doing a wonderful job and the money is well spent.
3. Collector budget – Town Collector Sharon Strzegowski presented her proposed budget. The yearly cost for the new software has been added, and the salary line has been increased to reflect the salary at which she was hired. She also rounded up the deputy collector line. In the future the deputy collector line can be reduced, since with the new software she will cover work that he has done. She recommended looking into a postage machine, to save money on postage.
4. Highway budget – Highway Superintendent presented his budget. He asked for a 10% increase in the expense lines, the first increase in years. Blacktop and salt have gone up over 20%. His salary line should be increased to the amount in his contract. He would like to give his full-time crew members \$1 an hour raise, and there is money in the salary line. They are working with 40 year old trucks and equipment that doesn't work any more. Board members were in favor of both requests, increases for the workers and getting the needed equipment. It was noted that equipment requests tend to be postponed year after year. There was discussion about whether to use ARPA funds, buy with free cash, or put on the capital plan at Town Meeting.

5. Mill River Greenway – The Board had sent a letter in September to the MassDOT District 1 Director about releasing the money in the transportation bond bill for the Mill River Greenway Connector, and in October she responded with a letter saying the bond funds were being released. Nick Dines of the Mill River Greenway Committee presented a draft letter to follow up. The letter describes concerns about cost, the work being done with VHB on design, other possible grants, and possible phasing of the work into three pieces, South Main Street, the pedestrian bridge, and the switchback. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to sign the letter dated March 2 to Francisca Heming regarding the Mill River Greenway project, South Main Street to the Mass Central Rail Trail, and the 2020 Transportation Bond Bill funding.

6. Budgets – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reviewed the preliminary budget, starting with the budget lines under direct control of the Select Board. The Procurement Officer training line will go away because he will have finished the training. He is looking to increase his expense line by \$500 for GIS software. Committee expense lines will stay the same and he suggested at some point considering lumping them together. The vehicle fuel line is probably not enough but the Reserve Fund should cover it. The hourly rate for legal expenses has increased but the line should be adequate. The bulk of the budget is labor, so there is little room for cutting back. There was discussion about document storage off-site and in the Cloud. (A suggestion was made to move the server to a different location in the Town Office Building and to research off-site backup.) Utilities continue to increase. Computer services may change with a new consultant agreement. Building Repairs might be reduced but the Board felt it was important to keep it where it is. Some debt has been paid off. New debt is the borrowing for the Public Safety Complex and for the new fire rescue truck. Some pieces are still missing, such as the school budgets. The budget is largely level funded. Overall the budget looks like a 6% increase. He talked about the need for compensating employees fairly, including so that they would not look elsewhere. There is a good amount of free cash, which could be used for vehicle purchases or for balancing the budget. There was a concern about the police sometimes not being available to respond to calls. Overall the town is fiscally strong.

6. Upcoming meetings – March 9 at 1:00 p.m., March 9 at 6:00 p.m. with Finance, March 16 budget meeting at 9:00 or 10:00 a.m., March 23 at 9:00 a.m. for the regular meeting, and possibly March 30 budget meeting.

Documents used

Draft budget

Budget requests from Senior Center, Collector, and Highway

Letters to and from MassDOT District 1

Adjourned at 11:36 a.m.

Approved:

Clerk