



## CARVER FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 13, 2023, MEETING

Present: Chairman Alan Germain, Vice Chair Elizabeth Sulger, Ron Clarke, Bill Cullum, Walter Cole, Tony Macrina, and Patrick Meagher.

Also Present: Sue Moquin, Bob Fennessey, and Recording Secretary Ashley Swartz.  
Joint Meeting with Capital Outlay.

The Committee Chairman reasonably anticipates the following matters will be discussed and possible votes will be taken at this meeting.

Mr. Germain opened the meeting at 6:39 PM – Ms. Sulger opened the Capital Outlay Committee.

Pledge of Allegiance

Public comment - none

### **Budget – COA, Town Clerk, Recreation & Veterans**

#### ***Connie Kelley of the COA***

Mr. Germain began saying he believes they are slightly underfunded – however we are under a “crunch” this year. He asked if there was anything missing or anything that could be removed without hurting the COA. Connie explained she was conservative, and any increases are known entities that are not “padding” the budget. This proposed budget would maintain the COA “as is” without any expansion. She said the existing program schedule is included in this budget. Mr. Germain noted a comment made previously by Mr. Clarke and lifting some of the burden for them – he noted there wasn’t a lot of fluff in this budget. Ms. Sulger asked some clarifying questions about what budget they were looking at. Mr. Fennessey said they should look at the spreadsheet from January 28. The new one is YTD – which shows where they are headed. Since the Saturday meeting, no changes have been made – there was a \$500 requested for the board of directors who have been running quarterly programs (using their own funds). In the numbers they are reviewing today, that is not included. ARPA money is being used for a new refrigerator. Mr. Fennessey clarified that this is a budget would not be touched.

Motion to approve the COA budget to be recommended to the Select Board made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Meagher.

Mr. Clarke asked if there was money for the COA and Mr. Fennessey explained that right now, they are looking at where cuts can be made before helping “bare bones budgets”. He advised adding anything to anyone’s budgets at this point – saying it could send the wrong message to other departments. Mr. Germain said he would entertain an amendment to give more money to



the COA – Mr. Clarke was concerned that their operating budget wasn't covered in its entirety, unlike other town departments. Mr. Clarke made a motion to amend the budget with an additional \$5,000, for a total budget of \$208,119.32 seconded by Ms. Sulger. The motion was approved unanimously 7-0-0. Mr. Clarke argued that the point could be made that there is a need to cover the operating budget.

### ***Cara of the Town Clerk Office***

Cara began noting she doesn't see anywhere she can make cuts and the increases are out of her control (supply increases). They received \$9,000 for the State Primaries. Cara said they usually run lean. The election budget for the Presidential Primaries is an additional cost that cannot be excluded or cut from the budget. Mr. Clarke asked about election workers – Cara explained that there will be a new process, but she has a core group she is able to rely on as well as High Schoolers looking for community service hours. Mr. Germain was curious about the operating account – asking about the shortfalls – Cara said some of the funds could co-mingle, like postage. It was suggested to put one budget for postage and break out two sub-categories (clerk related vs election) – which would allow her to report back to the state for reimbursement. Mr. Macrina asked if the election budget was reimbursed 100% - it is not. She further explained she would like to have a little more, she did her best to adequately plan for increases.

Mr. Clarke asked if there was no deficit, where additional budget would go. Cara said she would like codification of the by-laws (this has been left undone due to expiration of contract) – this is something most towns do (electronic views of by-laws). Mr. Germain added that this would be beneficial because the by-laws don't always get updated in a timely manner. There is a legal review, consultation, and report where the by-laws are weak or may not meet the state standard. The cost would be roughly \$15,000 a year – but they could use ARPA funds under infrastructure and technology. This would get us to where we were “prior to the expiration”. Mr. Germain continued with how beneficial this would be – due to the ambiguity of most by-laws. Mr. Germain said if ARPA can't fund this, to let the Finance Committee know so they could revisit. This process reviews as far back as 2015 – but were incomplete. Cara would have to supply 2017 and forward. There was further discussion about the additional precinct – which would require additional equipment (which could be rented if needed). Motion to recommend the Town Clerk budget to the Select Board the budget of \$162,152.84 and Election Registration Budget \$35,035, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

### ***Emily Slavin of the Recreation Department***

Mr. Germain first stated that this was a severely underfunded department. Emily said that they make repairs to fields and playgrounds – and if the pickleball courts are passed, they will maintain that property as well – if it doesn't come from their budget it will have to come from the revolving budget. They requested an increase, due in part to the required software fee that has recently increased. There is a wish list. League fees are \$15 a head which will have to increase – which goes into a separate O&M fund. Emily had stated that checks had been written out of her personal account (and Mary's) and waited for reimbursement. Sue was able to assist this year with some of those items. Mr. Germain added that the sales tax cannot be reimbursed. Emily said she stands by her small increases – as they are necessary to maintain the department. Mr. Germain noted that if this becomes a “real department of the town” the categories should be much more definitive. Emily said further discussion needs to happen before becoming a real department – including a rec space. They store things all over the place and need an activities



space. Motion to recommend the budget of \$56,070 to the Select Board made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0. Sue explained that the Recreation Department sends invoices to the Finance Department to pay – and that is why there is an “other” category. Mr. Germain asked that we define what the categories fall into that – bucket of money and note on bills to Sue how the money is being sent.

#### ***Mark Pineo and Lisa Erickson of the Veterans***

Mr. Germain asked about the “Respect Fund” – which has been requested. Mr. Fennessey said there is \$4,800 in the Emergency Services Fund and there is \$4,800 for the “Respect/Recognition Account”. They would like the budget to be \$350,275 – with an additional line item for the \$4,800 as Respect/Recognition Account that is not present in the budget request. Mr. Germain stated he always wanted this to be funded in the budget as a respect, recognition account. It’s the least we can do.

Mr. Fennessey said the reimbursement is \$300,000 but is “way over” the actuals – which is 75% reimbursable. The veteran’s department is requesting to reduce that to \$250,000. The total budgets would be \$250,000 and \$95,475. Motion to recommend the budget of \$350,275 (additional \$4,800 account – and reducing the original proposed budget by \$50,000) made by Mr. Clarke, seconded by Ms. Sulger, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

#### **Capital Budget Review FY23 With Police Department**

Chief of Police – Marc Duphily

Ms. Sulger asked if there were any changes to the budget proposed on Saturday. There are some capital projects – police vehicles, safety vests and new hires. They cannot cut back on the vests which half can be covered by a grant. They could cut back three new vehicles to two. There is a need for admin and marked vehicles. There is one vehicle per officer and runs for a long time – even purchasing some vehicles used from other towns. Some of the cars need to be replaced – with limited availability of used cars. Mr. Clarke noted that when the program of one car per officer was implemented, the cost to maintain the vehicles went down significantly. Mr. Macrina asked if headcount is being added, does that mean vehicles are added, but the Chief said that did not happen this year. Vehicles get replaced after 7 years or 150,000 miles – but they have gone beyond those standards many times in the past. Mr. Cotter asked about the maintenance contracts for the emergency management system – the next three to five years may need to be replaced. Capital Outlay adjourned at 7:58 PM.

Increases include contractual raises and increases to the personnel due to nearing retirements. The police department cannot operate under 13 officers – it increases liability and decreases performance. One person will complete the academy in June, and they are looking for a second person. They are still following the civil service process – and is a long, drawn-out process. Lateral transfers are not allowed right now (due to civil service) so they have to send people to the academy and get trained. They have a total of two officers in the academy – one of which was hurt in the process - and hopefully add one more. They are working on a good contract to attract officers to Carver. He advised that if cuts must be made, they cannot cut officers because of the pending retirements in 2025. Coming out of civil service will give them a pool of candidates that is currently not accessible to us. They are hoping to have a question on the ballot to be taken out of civil service that will not be brought to Legislature. Mr. Germain said the officers are facing unfunded mandates like body cameras. The Chief explained that the new hires



are to plan for these retirements – which is why they are in the academy now. For the first time ever, there is a more realistic overtime budget. He suggested that would be a budget they could cut from if needed – but it is unpredictable like snowplows. The number could be shaved from \$320,000 to \$290,000 and dispatch overtime budget could be shaved from \$62,000 to \$52,000. Police reform has created some unintended side-effects and things have been added like body cameras, accreditation has been added, a sergeant position, and training. They should have 1.9 officers per 1000 residents (which is roughly 22 officers needed for Carver). Mr. Germain added that new developments being added will require more officers. He asked about weapons, gear and ammo (\$25,922 which was the tasers and the cameras) versus the ammo line item - is a number that is not part of the budget (but in the Capital budget) – and needs to be removed from the budget report. This is repeated from the body cameras (computer/software/subscriptions) and tasers (other purchased services). This reduces the budget \$25,922 for the 2014 Article plus \$30,000 out of overtime (for the Chief to divvy up as he sees fit). Mr. Germain explained the taser lease program. Motion to recommend the budget of \$3,067,136 (including the deductions of \$25,922 and \$30,000 in overtime) to the Select Board, made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

#### **Town Administrator and Finance Director updates and Committee discussion**

Mr. Fennessey had a meeting with all the department heads, including the issues and the need to look at the budgets to see where they can find reductions on their requests. There is occasionally some cushion in these budgets and requested removing these. Some departments have already brought their ideas to him. He gave them until mid-week this week – anticipating a more dramatic reduction he thought. He noted that people were willing to make changes to benefit the town and still function their departments adequately. He said things like this happen all the time due to policy and fund use and they are going to try their best to get a balanced budget going into town meeting without major cuts. He also wanted to thank the school for their cuts and for still preserving their personnel. They cut their capital outlay requests by about fifty percent. He added that this could be a two- or three-year plan to get fully funded. Mr. Fennessey said they have a “defined revenue number that they are going with”. Mr. Germain explained that if the library and town hall can be bonded in its entirety, it would free up roughly \$1.3M that has been set aside. Sue is still waiting to hear from bond council. An engineer is going to evaluate the roof to see how much the work will cost. Ms. Sulger asked about the old warrant article (brought up during the police discussion) and it appears the others were zeroed out and the police was an oversight. He will review the budget in its entirety to make sure there is nothing else lingering. Mr. Germain asked about moving items “above the line” and totals about \$8M. He believes most of the funds are school generated and then the budget is split between the school and town. Mr. Germain asked if they could get an itemized list from the school to ensure the split is fair. Mr. Meagher added that this would be done during the end of the year report – health insurance costs, retirement costs, etc. Sue said a subcommittee should be formed to evaluate what should and shouldn’t be on the sheet. Mr. Fennessey added that the issue regarding the one third split – was Article 7 from 2019 to dictate where the pilot money went. The financial policy also spells out the “one-third” policy, but it has not happened. It was also noted that the pilot program is being put into the levy and it shouldn’t be – because it will never come out and we will get stuck with the bill. Mr. Germain suggested there be some “deep cleaning” to see how funds were set up and where the differences are. Mr. Germain was also asked to dig into the Net Solar Metering Account that has over \$800,000. There has been activity so he’s curious what that money is for

and if they can use it. On June 30<sup>th</sup> the \$200,000 that has been rolling over year to year from the CDBG program can be moved back to general fund and used towards a project.

**Approve minutes of meeting: 02-06-2023**

Motion to approve the minutes as written made by Mr. Clarke, seconded by Ms. Sulger approved unanimously 7-0-0.

**Committee member comments.**

**Next meeting date: TBD (but likely to occur next two weeks)**

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Clarke, seconded by Mr. Meagher, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

**Adjournment 9:07 PM.**

**Minutes submitted by Ashley Swartz.**

Voted and Approved