



CARVER FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES OF MARCH 2, 2023, MEETING

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

Also Present: Sue Moquin, Bob Fennessey, and Recording Secretary Ashley Swartz.

Absent: Patrick Meagher.

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 6:30 PM – Ms. Sulger opened the Capital Outlay Committee.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Public comment – hearing none

Mr. Germain made a note that the budget in front of them today is the final budget that will be voted on. He also made a comment to refute claims made by the public about being short in the budget. He explained the process is to get budgets and plan for inflation, then fine tune that based on what is actually needed.

Budget discussion/Capital requests: Fire Department

Chief Weston provided a packet of information for the budget including Capital. No changes have been made to the budget he originally submitted (what they have has already been discussed). Ms. Sulger began with discussion of revision of the by-law – which would move the threshold from \$10,000 to \$20,000 – pushing some requests of the Chief's into the operating budget. Chief Weston said if that moved into operation, he would like to see the line item moved for the next fiscal year. This would impact on the new hire training equipment (\$15,000 - \$20,000 budget) which is a yearly request. Mr. Germain commented that he believed this was a good idea and should consider going to \$25,000 and move on to operating since this is a yearly expense (Capital is for one-time purchases, not annual upgrades, and expenses). He continued by stating he was upset about the fact that projects were being moved year after year, and there will come a time when our equipment has expired. Mr. Cotter asked about the brush breaker. The Chief said nothing was moved – but he said he was advocating for four capital items: SABA bottles, brush breaker rehab, the new hires, and a replacement of a command car. They could move the command car out one year if necessary. The Chief agreed with Mr. Germain regarding the burden of pushing things down the road due to lack of funds. The brush breaker can be

moved but another one will be on the roadmap in the upcoming years. He expressed the timelines for equipment (like the command car being a year out). Mr. Fennessey said the list they have are articles that still have funding in them but are allocated to anticipated projects. Free cash is much lower than expected so they could supplement the capital plan if they move certain items and see how much they can put into the capital plan. Mr. Germain noted that if the Library and Town Hall are bonded, they could put money back into the capital to put the ten-year plan on track. He said bonding this money would get two big projects done and free up money to go back into the capital plan – bonding projects like real estate don't depreciate as quickly. To bond these projects, it must be brought to Town Meeting – the rate at the moment is 4%. Mr. Clarke asked Capital Outlay if they are looking to recommend the bond, Mr. Cotter said they are seriously looking into the option. Mr. Cotter asked the Chief about some articles regarding energy efficiencies. Mr. Fennessey said these are grants and can likely be moved back into the capital plan. This reallocation would be part of the Town Meeting vote. Ms. Sulger asked about fire station 2 and 3 improvements. The project is still in progress for the HVAC systems. The Chief said that he would like to have conversations with the Finance Department regarding these articles – since some are still being used. Sue noted that the \$85,000 and \$250,000 is usable. This money can be used for this year if voted on the Town Warrant. The \$250,000 is for the Health Insurance Reserve – it hasn't been used in seven years – and was there in case of a rate increase to the operating budget. Sue made some suggestions of how she can display the budget for a clearer picture. Everyone agreed that this would help make decisions. Mr. Fennessey clarified there was \$1.6M in the two big projects that could be put back into Capital Outlay if bonded. Capital Outlay decided that the New Hire expenses will be moved to the operating budget. The Chief reiterated that concessions can be made for the Fire Department. Mr. Clarke made a motion to approve the budget of \$818,261 for the Fire Department budget, seconded by Ms. Sulger, approved unanimously 6-0-0.

Budget discussion/Capital requests: O&M Department

John Woods, Deputy Direct of Operations and Maintenance. Mr. Germain noted there have been no changes to the operating budget since their last meeting. (\$1,924,110). Mr. Clarke said they were looking at the department head salary – which encompasses multiple people. Mr. Fennessey said he held a department head meeting a few weeks ago (regarding potential deficit) and said every department went through with a fine-toothed comb to find reductions – he wanted to thank everyone for making cuts where they could (despite they were all refunded due to incoming revenue). John noted how well the departments work together and loves “coming to work”. There was further discussion of how the budget is “level funded”. Mr. Cotter asked about the Engineering budget being doubled – this is for testing and for the landfill. Mr. Germain explained that this was an alternating budget that was DEP mandated. Sue clarified that this is for the Board of Health. Ms. Sulger noted that there are three-line items that are under \$20,000 that could be moved. It was pointed out that these were one-time charges. Mr. Cotter said that this would formally be under an “equipment” line in the operating budget – which can be a yearly expense, but the equipment can change. Mr. Germain said they should look to define what is a Capital Outlay item and an “equipment” line item. Mr. Fennessey said there isn't a lot of play so what they could leave, they should leave. John added there was an equipment maintenance line item. There was some clarification about Capital vs Operating budget – as it relates to the possible new by-law for Capital Outlay. Motion to recommend the budget of

\$1,924,110 for O&M made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 6-0-0.

Budget discussion/Capital requests: EMS Department

Mike Ryan, Chief of EMS. No changes since the last meeting and it was noted they are self-funded. Mr. Macrina asked if there was ever a surplus – they have but it has been reinvested in things like new ambulances. Mike explained there have been some increased expenses so far this year compared to last – they are projected to bring in more than last year so it should cover Operating and Salary. Mr. Clarke asked if he periodically goes to the Select Board to raise their billing rates – Mike says he usually does this in the summer. Ms. Sulger asked if there was an impact due to the shutdown in Brockton. Mike said they don't really go to Brockton but they're seeing some trickledown of hospitals being fuller than usual. Motion to recommend the EMS budget of \$953,485 made by Mr. Clarke, seconded by Ms. Sulger, approved unanimously 6-0-0. Capital Outlay made a motion to recommend the \$30,000 for replacement car there.

Budget discussion: North Carver Water District

This is an enterprise fund and is not in the operating budget. Mr. Germain asked what was in the checking account - \$707,000 – a portion is reserved for the Plymouth Street project that has been completed (\$154,000) that will be moved back to capital or general budget. \$543,000 - \$220,000 for the filters is being returned, which leaves \$323,000. Mike Palimeri, Water Commissioner – 120 people that pay a water meter rate. They have taken in \$340,000 so far this year. The plant has not been maintained for ten years like it should have been, the membranes should have been replaced three or four years ago. They are currently reviewing other maintenance issues. They don't have a tank, pressure, chlorination, and other issues. Mr. Germain asked about the MOA for Middleboro to supply Carver with water. He asked if they should upgrade or go back on their own system – he wants to know the timeline of when they will need money. Mike said no one really has the whole picture of how North Carver Water District was created. Mike gave a quick recap about the creation of the NCWD in 2010 and why the bonds are still being paid off. Mr. Clarke added that they were told at that time – taxpayers wouldn't have to pay for this project. There was further discussion about what would be needed for the future of the water system. The usage of the plant can be expanded but only minimally – building a little more customer base but it will never be able to pay for itself. Mike said he would like to see the plant be maintained to the best they can. They are preparing now for when they can tie into the two wells on the Cole property. Mr. Clarke asked if anyone is looking at the cost effectiveness of ditching the NCWD and tying into Middleboro. Mike said they haven't been invited to do that. Mr. Macrina asked if we are currently getting water from Middleboro – we have since about June/July 2022 which is about 120 rate payers. There is a rate meter pit being put in Middleboro for Carver – which Carver has to pay for, but they don't know where that money is coming from. In the future, Middleboro will bill Carver and Carver will bill the residents. They also need to consider the water needs for the Urban Renewal Project. Mike pointed out that Middleboro is currently having difficulties providing water for their own residents. Mike said there are two wells that produce water – more water than the plant can treat. If they were to get water from Middleboro on a permanent basis, they could pipe the Cole wells to Middleboro and have them filter it. The NCWD cannot give the customers a pressurized water system which needs to be installed in the future. Mr. Clarke said they should look at what towns they can benefit from – but they should look at the cost value at the different investment options. Mike said municipal water should be

flushed twice a year and they have been doing it once a year. They have relied on Middleboro to flush it for us because they don't have the volume or pressure to do it. All the pipes are cast iron – and the chlorinated water from Middleboro is causing the water to be cloudy. He has talked to Small Water Systems – to flush the water – they would need a tank to transport well water to the system – which also comes at a cost. There was discussion about this issue being brought to the Select Board regarding a long-term solution. The Finance Committee will recommend a plan to the Select Board.

Budget amendment: Police

Mr. Germain explained that after some items were sorted out, they learned the \$30,000 taken out of the Police Department overtime budget can be put back. Motion to recommend the police budget of \$3,107,136 made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 6-0-0.

Town Administrator and Finance Director updates

Mr. Fennessey noted the Capital budget is not necessarily under “crunch time” right now because it is an article in the warrant but will check with Council to make sure. Mr. Cotter asked why projects have been funded and not started (from years ago) – Mr. Fennessey said that is the intent but there are some projects that take time to fund. He also said that those project budgets are typically voted on a “worst case scenario” budget and there is money left over that could be used for other projects.

Approval of minutes of meeting: February 13, 2023

Motion to table the minutes made by Mr. Clarke, seconded by Ms. Sulger, approved unanimously 6-0-0.

Committee member comments

Mr. Germain said the Net Solar Metering Account is “real money” after Sue investigated further (for Fisher Road and Silver Lake). Mr. Germain would like to find out the history and the restrictions on this and he asked me to look at some electric bills (streetlights, traffic lights and common lights for the town). The next largest users are Town Hall and the Police Station. His idea was if they take all the common grounds of the town and the Police Station (annually), Town Hall (annually) and the High School (annually) – they could take \$200,000 out of the solar credits to relieve the light bill for the common good. When the solar credit stops, they would just pick up the bill again. Mr. Germain asked Mr. Fennessey and Sue to investigate what could be done with this money. There was a vote taken at the Town Meeting in 2015/2016 on how to allocate the funds, so a Town Meeting vote would be needed to take to add what the money could be used for. The account would still grow, and they could pay some additional bills. Sue added that because it is its own revolving fund it needs to be voted on. There was further discussion about how the money can move and how to keep it out of the operating budget.

Next meeting date: Monday, March 6, 2023 at 6:30 PM.

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Clarke, seconded by Mr. Cullum, approved unanimously 6-0-0.

Adjournment 8:44 PM.

Minutes submitted by Ashley Swartz.

Voted and Approved