



CARVER FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 24, 2021, MEETING

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

Capital Outlay Members Present: Chairwoman Elizabeth Sulger, Andy Cardarelli, James Hoffman and Marie Zweigman.

Also Present: Sue Moquin and Recording Secretary Ashley Swartz.

Mr. Germain opened the meeting at 7:01 P.M. with the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Germain then asked if there were any public comments and heard none.

Meeting will be recorded by Area 58,

Town Administrator,

Finance Director update: Capital Outlay Discussion with Capital Outlay Committee.

Transfer request from the reserve fund: O&M Purchase of used vehicle. Looking to purchase a vehicle (2021 F350) \$56,495 used with limited miles. Through municipal purchasing group – can't get any 2022 models and 2023 prices are rising. Would be outfitted with a plow (taken out of O&M Operating) this money is just for the purchase of the dump truck.

Mr. Macrina asked what the savings are purchasing this model rather than the original request – Dave said it was about a \$50,000 savings.

Mr. Meagher reiterated that this was done through procurement laws. Dave said they are taking the proper steps and all paperwork will be done. He received a vehicle history report and the only issue that was noted was a replaced windshield. This will be purchased from Land Rover in Hanover. This was traded in after 6 months of use. Nothing shows that it is too good to be true.

Mr. Holmes said there was enough in the reserve account (confirmed by Mr. Germain). Mr. Holmes asked Sue if these funds could be reallocated next year – she confirmed it was. He pointed out it could be used for the exact same purpose next year – which was when

Mr. Germain stated that Mrs. Sulger husband works as a mechanic for Land Rover and suggested the vehicle to Mrs. Sulger because he was aware that DPW was looking for a new vehicle. The price was advertised at \$61,000 and the team went to inspect it in person. He explained this so there was transparency around the situation. He also reminded everyone that these types of opportunities (regarding vehicles) don't come around often, and it was signed off – despite these funds not typically being used to acquire vehicles. Finance director, interim town administrator

has signed off on the transfer request. Mr. Clarke if we were in good shape regarding short falls in the operating budget. It was confirmed that we are in good standing (per Sue).

Ms. Sulger noted her husband gets no kick back for this purchase. Mr. Germain noted that Mrs. Sulger was concerned about the situation but needed to be explained so this doesn't become a concern in the future.

Mr. Clarke made a motion to approve the transfer, seconded by Mr. Holmes. Transfer account 01423093905870

Approved 7-0-1 with Mrs. Sulger abstaining. Please see attached document for Transfer details.

Budget Discussion: Recreation, EMS

Chief of EMS – Mike Ryan

Noted that the EMS department in Carver operate very differently than a lot of towns – they are separate from the Fire Department and cover full time with part time employees. Every shift has at least one paramedic and one EMT. The staffing model allows them to avoid additional costs (benefits). There are 45 employees (23 Paramedics and 22 EMTs) available for calls. There are several tools and protocols in place to speed up the

Community EMS program to assist residents with services they couldn't otherwise provide – Reduced call volume (25% drop) after 2020. Bring in more revenue than spending. Call volume is back up and are looking at a 12% increase in overall call volume. 1158 transported in 2021 and 1500+ calls. Requested increases will be for staffing and equipment.

Mr. Germain asked what was in the “Other Professional Services”. These include medical billing companies, uniform supplies, signage, or lettering – essentially anything that must be contracted out. Mr. Germain explained the shift away from “Other Professional Services” – he is looking for more defined line items, so it doesn't carry across each department. Mr. Macrina asked about the excess – asking if it is called an “Ambulance Fund”. It was explained that these funds do go into a fund and once it has accrued, they will purchase an ambulance. He explained that items are paid back if money is borrowed from the town, and they will use the “Ambulance Fund” in these cases. Mr. Germain added that EMS is self-sufficient. Mike discussed some equipment that had been purchased

Ms. Sulger asked about the loss of the VNA contract. She noted the line item had been readded for 2023 and asked if there was a service being readded. She is asking because the board of health has the same line item, so she was asking if this was double counted. Mr. Germain thinks this is a separate line (Board of Health was Covid reporting). Mr. Clarke asked if the location of the current EMS was adequate down the line. Chief Ryan noted that the only issue he foresees is ambulances being on pickup truck chasses making them longer and unable to fit in the present garage. The issue is in terms of garage space. Mr. Germain asked if the old fire station could be adequate – Chief Ryan said there needs to be separate sleeping quarters for men and women which is something to consider when moving buildings. Mr. Meagher asked about the facilities and the North Carver project – he asked how that project affects the utilization of the current facilities. Chief Ryan said temporarily they can use the firehouse bay and put into a rotation (month to month). Mr. Clarke asked about the opioid crisis and responses for these events. The Chief responded saying it has dropped off but has not gone away. He thinks this could be due to Narcan home use. He noted the numbers are down and staying down and said it is partially because of EMS involvement. Ms. Sulger asked about the Narcan – these are paid through the

operating supplies and provides one-time doses and is carried by members of the staff to avoid having to wait for an ambulance. This is all paid for and don't receive any free from the hospital(s).

Motion to recommend EMS budget made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 8-0-0.

Mary Ross from Recreation – first point of discussion was “Other Professional Services”. Mr. Germain noted that Recreation was not operating on a large budget and asked if there was more that was needed. Mrs. Ross said there were 14 events planned and was explaining the difficulty of finding a venue for indoor activities and designate as a Recreation space. She said that is the biggest “wish list” item. They are in the process of purchasing a portable ice-skating rink. She plans on putting this on the baseball field (since they have the lights). She said it was difficult Mr. Germain said they should use the firehouse in the time being – while a plan is formulated. Mr. Holmes said that the amount of money in the revolving fund is a testament to how they operate. He said \$46,000 in this fund is not enough for a facility. Mr. Holmes said it's getting tougher to run these programs (run effectively with staffing needs and locations available). Mrs. Ross added Recreation is not an actual department yet. She thinks they should investigate taking over the town sports (one at a time). People already must come to Recreation for the field access but thinks

Mr. Macrina said there has been a lot of inconsistency in terms of accessing the fields. He explained that not having a centralized department would help allocating funds that come into the proper care for the fields (i.e., High School renting fields to AAU teams then not allocating these funds to the field maintenance).

Mr. Hoffman noted that the Recreation department has grown (from just swimming to all these activities). There was a plan but now it's time to take that next step. Mrs. Ross said they price events accordingly to get the events to sell out (a lot cheaper than surrounding towns). We don't want youth sports to go away it is just tough to find volunteers. Mrs. Ross said she was very thankful to have a fire department and police department who is willing to help (even when not asked) – she said it was one of the most gratifying things. Mr. Germain said something to take away is “taking the next step” – and couldn't agree more with the success of the program. He also said nothing will pull a town together faster (coming out of Covid) then Recreation. He said he would like to see Recreation do something that they can allocate funds to. Ms. Sulger asked no money was being taken from free cash (noting the jump from year to year). Mr. Germain asked Mary to find another project they could help fund. Mr. Holmes added that this was about priorities and reallocate based on priorities (right now, being Recreation). Mr. Cardarelli, represented from the school committee on Capital Outlay, and said if the fields are not in good condition, they need to get in contact with school committee members. He asked Mrs. Ross when the last time was when she requested a space at the schools. She said it was December (except for using it next week). He suggested she have another discussion with Scott Knief now that the mask mandates are being lifted in the school buildings. He also wanted to mention regular meeting space – he said new buildings should also be used as community spaces (fire station and police station). Mrs. Ross said there were some events that were multiple nights, and it would be beneficial to have their own space. Ideally, they would want a building for Recreation. \$47,620 is the requested budget and she will move “Other Professional Services” to a more transparent listing. There are four free events each year (one each season) and they request either a food or

cash donation for Shane Gives Thanks. Mr. Germain reiterated the importance of focusing more on Recreation.

Ms. Sulger made a motion to recommend the Recreation budget, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 8-0-0.

Tabled Budget Discussion, Planning

Tom Bott, Interim Town Planner. Mr. Holmes had a question regarding the permitting software. Mr. Germain said Bob Fennessy investigated the contract, and they are “on the hook” for three (3) more years. Mr. Holmes said his concern was whether the software would be used (e-Permitting). Tom said this was not adequately rolled out and looked to Falmouth to see how they are working with the software. Mr. Bott said (based on the opinions of those using it) the software isn’t applicable to the volume of permits that are being requested. Mr. Germain relayed the message from Paul Boucher (building inspector) and the software doesn’t interface with their “checklist” of items that need to be addressed when issuing a permit – requiring the other steps to still be done manually (and not through the platform). Mr. Bott said an initial part of the funding is through the Covid funding. Mr. Clarke asked if Mr. Bott had a chance to sit down with the vendor face to face to discuss concerns with the software. Mr. Clarke said if we are on the hook for it, it may be worth talking to the vendor to see if there are solutions to the concerns. Mr. Macrina also suggested talking to Legal about whether the vendor misrepresented the software. He said he could have a conversation with the vendor and said he has received comments about this not being properly rolled out and it is not particularly useful for their needs. Mr. Germain re-read the email from the building commissioner. Mr. Germain’s concern was there could be money spent in the future on updates, upgrades, and additional modules driving the cost even more.

Motion to recommend the Planning Board budget made by Mrs. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clark, approved unanimously 8-0-0.

Other Budget Recommendations

Motion to recommend the Zoning board budget made by Mrs. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clark, approved unanimously 8-0-0.

Motion to recommend the Conservation Commission board budget made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clark, approved 7-0-1, with Mr. Germain abstaining.

Tabled – Computer Tech

Mr. Germain said they need to really investigate the Computer Tech budget. Mr. Macrina noted that the last discussion they didn’t appear to be prepared and asked if there was a way to prepare them for the questions that would be asked of them.

Capital Outlay Budget

Presented by Elizabeth Sulger. She noted the different departments and their approved, recommended budgets. She highlighted the needs for each department and the different adjustments that were being made and the grants coming in to cover items within each department.

Mr. Germain asked why the school buses were replaced so frequently. Mr. Clarke argued there may be state requirements in terms of mileage, but Mr. Meagher spoke to it comes down to safety

regulations. Mr. Cardarelli said it was cheaper in the long run to have their own system. DOT inspections are done on busses three (3) times a year. Mr. Germain questioned if we should “be in the bus business anymore”. Mr. Meagher said most bus drivers live in town and have driven in town a long time – the kids know them, and they know the kids – you won’t get this by outsourcing. Mr. Cardarelli said the first comment they get from parents is, “you won’t fire the bus drivers, will you?” Mr. Germain admitted he never viewed this from that perspective and conceded it made sense. Mr. Meagher continued by explaining that Carver has one of the lowest costs per student despite owning their busses. Mr. Cole shared that the woman who drives his granddaughter also drove his daughter and they trust her completely – saying the bus driver would come to the door if there was ever an issue – and said he didn’t think that would be the case by outsourcing.

The school budget was passed around – which included their requests for improvements and additions.

Total requests \$1,704,600 which contains a surplus and would like 3 of these projects on the bond. \$1.6M going to the library HVAC, \$800,000 for the Town Hall exterior, and town wide radio system coming in at \$653K.

Mr. Germain said bonding is up to town meeting. Ms. Sulger said there is \$500,000 plus in surplus. Mr. Germain added that 3 of the fire engines are coming off bond in the next few years. Mr. Clarke asked if they would receive additional information before approving. They need to wait for FD Sue Moquin and ITA Bob Fennessy. Ms. Sulger said the town-wide radios need to be allocated for using the funds if they are not bonded since they are in year two. Mr. Germain said the joint meeting with the Select Board should be the time where the bonding is discussed. He suggested Mr. Cardarelli and Ms. Zweigman joined on March 8 to discuss the bond. Mr. Holmes asked what happens if the bond is not approved (i.e., the town-wide radios). He stated that if the due diligence is done, there may be money available for these items. Mr. Holmes remembers Bond Council said it didn’t make sense to bond money for anything under \$5 million according to our previous Finance Director, Bond Council never met with the Finance Committee directly. The conversation resulted in whether the bond was needed or if the money should be reallocated within the budget – he said the citizens don’t want to keep paying higher and higher taxes. Mr. Clarke suggested a bond analysis and other members agreed. The conversation continued about the tax dollars and what the needs really are, how long things could be put off, and having a proper cost analysis. Mr. Macrina questioned the need to pay for a cost analysis and Mr. Germain said it is rules of the state and part of the procurement process. Mr. Holmes expressed that he cannot vote to approve the budget without knowing the specifics of the bond and the backup plan if they cannot bond these items. Mr. Macrina asked about the ability to pay without the bond – the money only covers the radio towers and would eliminate the HVAC and siding. Mr. Germain noted all the other projects that are upcoming – which will be impacted if any of these items cannot be bonded, the entire Capital plan would have to be discarded. Mr. Germain added that he understood where Mr. Holmes was coming from but didn’t know how they could pull this off. Mr. Holmes said they may have to phase the items across a few years and how it’s not about saying no, but saying not right now, to operate within a budget. He added that we are justifying the bond for the HVAC by adding other projects (radios and siding). Mr. Cardarelli and Mr. Clarke stated that the bond stabilization fund pays off the bonds – which have paid for several projects and do not reflect in the citizens’ tax dollars. Ms. Sulger said she would get an analysis for the next joint meeting.

Next Meetings: February 28th, March 7th, and March 8th @ 6PM.

Motion to adjourn Mr. Clarke, seconded by Mr. Meagher, unanimously approved 8-0-0.

Adjourned 9:48 PM

Minutes submitted by Ashley Swartz.

Voted & Approved