

CHARLEMONT TOWN HALL

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting – By Teleconference

March 17, 2021

Present: Finance Committee - Rich Filoramo, Amy Wales, Lynn Hathaway, Jay Healy

Also present: Marguerite Willis, Elizabeth Van Iderstine, Sarah Reynolds, Dennis Annear, Bob Handsaker, Cheryl Handsaker

1. The meeting was called to order at 3:31 p.m. by the Chair, Rich Filoramo.
2. The minutes of the March 3, 2021 meeting were reviewed and approved.
3. Dennis Annear joined the meeting to discuss the Fire Department budget. Protective Gear increased due to outfitting full gear for all ten firefighters. Only good for ten years. Has a grant application pending to cover some of the cost. As for fire vehicles, he said they're getting old, ranging in age from 14 -26 years. Marguerite asked about the status of Car #1, used by the Chief. He said the majority of the Vehicle Maintenance budget was spent to keep the Brush Truck on the road, and not on Car #1. Rich asked about the increase in Supplies. Jay Healy asked if some of the supplies could be covered by Covid relief monies. Past years' costs have already been taken care of with CARES funds, but Rich suggested that for FY22, perhaps the additional costs associated with new Covid guidelines could be itemized out, so that if State/Federal money becomes available, they could be appropriately applied. Marguerite asked about the License/Dues, and if Rowe is paying half. Dennis said "no", each Town has to pay its own fees, so both Rowe and Charlemont pay the fees.
4. Marguerite mentioned that in the newspaper is an article about Ashfield looking at having a full-time Fire Chief, and she feels that within three years many towns including us, may be required to also be looking into this.
5. Broadband discussion: a spreadsheet was reviewed. Amy Wales said it shows the budget being balanced at a take-rate of 40%. Revenue generated because of a higher take-rate could be used only by Broadband, to use for replacement and other operating costs. A stabilization account could be set up, or not. Jay asked if the take-rate is high, is it possible for the customers' fees to be lowered, and Amy replied that is a possibility. Marguerite asked if the take-rate is lower than expected, and Broadband ends up with a deficit, how is that covered? Will the Town have to kick in money? Amy replied that there are two ways to cover: The Enterprise Account could cover the loss in subsequent years, or the Town could pay from its General Fund at recap. Amy said the assumption is that the Enterprise will pay for its own expenses. Jay asked if there are plans for a campaign to get people to sign up? Marguerite replied that beautiful brochures were printed and are available at Avery's, and there was a call-out and information session. But she also said it's hard to figure out the best way to reach everyone. Cheryl Handsaker joined the meeting and said the brochures are rather pricey, but that there is information on the website about signing up. She also would like a cheaper bulletin to perhaps be mailed out with the next tax bills. Lynn said that is possible as long as she gets them to her in time (March 27). Ron suggested going back to information being made available at the Transfer Station. Cheryl agreed to have a bulletin printed for the tax bills and handouts.
6. Sarah Reynolds presented a handout she worked on with Gordan concerning the costs of purchasing highway trucks every five years, rather than keeping them beyond their warranties.

She pointed out that at trade-in time, it's possible to remove the truck body from the chassis, and use it on the new truck, which would change the actual trade-in value, as well as the new truck price. She also said that the average trade-value for a truck in good condition is about 70%, but could go as low as 50%. The cost on the sheet does not include interest, only the principle. We now need to figure the maintenance expense for the trucks once the warranties have expired. It was suggested that for planning purposes we should use a 50% trade-in value rate. Marguerite mentioned we also need to look at insurance costs, which would be higher on newer vehicles. Sarah said she will continue working on this and getting more information.

7. Next meeting issues: Marguerite mentioned we need to discuss personnel needs. The current workload "is not sustainable". We do not currently have an Animal Control Officer, and if we don't hire one, the \$1,800 budget line will increase to \$4,000 if we join the Regional Dog Officer. It was agreed that at the next meeting we'll discuss personnel needs.
8. The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ronald Smith

Documents viewed:

FY 2022 Budget Worksheet, Draft 4

Broadband Pro-Forma Operating Budget

Worksheet on Highway Trucks Costs

This document is a draft until approved by the Finance Committee.