

IPSWICH SELECT BOARD
Meeting of Tuesday, January 19, 2021

The Select Board participated in this meeting remotely utilizing Zoom in accordance with the Governor's March 12 Order suspending provisions of Open Meeting Law and to promote public health and social distancing.

Board Members present: Linda Alexson, Chair; Dr. Tammy Jones, Vice Chair; Kerry Mackin; Nishan Mootafian; William Whitmore

Also present: Finance Committee; School Committee; Anthony Marino, Town Manager; Eileen Page, Recording Secretary

With a quorum present, Ms. Alexson called the meeting to order.

Welcome/Announcements

Not recorded.

Citizen Queries

Amy Cinqueres (20 Stagehill Road) asked for an update on parking and traffic issues at Down River Ice Cream. Mr. Marino responded that he has reached out to administration at Essex Town Hall and data gathering. The matter will be discussed at a future Select Board meeting.

FY22 Budget Overview Presentation

GENERAL FUND REVENUE ESTIMATES

The maximum levy proposed for FY22 is \$43,356,774. The Cherry Sheet projects level-funding in aid from the state government. Education Stabilization numbers will be available once the School Committee has finalized their budget. The Town budget anticipates taking \$190,000 from the Stabilization Fund and having a warrant article at Town Meeting to put that amount back from Free Cash. The Department of Revenue is currently running behind schedule in certifying Free Cash.

Budget objectives for FY22 include maintaining existing service levels, meeting mandated contractual costs, funding the 5% increase in Solid Waste and Recycling costs, and using conservative revenue estimates with no increase in state aid from FY21 levels.

COVID-19 impacts on the FY22 budget include a lack of increase in State Aid from the FY20 and FY21 numbers; the level-funding of Chapter 70 and Unrestricted Government Aid (UGA), and the decrease in local receipts by about \$400,000, accounting for a reduction in meals tax, vehicle excise tax assessments, and the Trustees PILOT program. The workload on Town departments has increased, and the Town is currently planning to potentially fund a vaccine distribution site within Ipswich. State or federal funding may be available to assist in this endeavor.

GENERAL FUND EXPENSES

General Government and Finance is appropriated at \$1,852,389, or 9.11% of the budget. Planning is appropriated at \$600,967, or 2.95% of the budget. Public Safety is appropriated at \$5,669,052, or 27.87% of the budget. Public Works is appropriated at \$4814,108, or 23.67% of the budget. Community and Cultural Development is appropriated at \$1,567,510, or 7.71% of the budget. Benefits and other expenses are appropriated at \$5,837,992, or 28.7% of the budget. The total budget is \$20,342,018.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

FY22 budget highlights include a \$10,000 increase in legal spending to cover Special Legal Counsel for 40B projects; a 6% increase in health insurance costs; the combination of the Facilities and Purchasing Departments, creating one full-time position and eliminating a part-time administrative assistant position; moving telephone and cell phone expenses to the IT department budget; accommodating Union contractual increases and allocating a 2% increase for non-union personnel; approximately \$134,000 in student expenses for 28 Ipswich residents to attend Whittier Technical Vocational School, and \$190,000 from the Stabilization Fund to fund the budget overall.

BUDGET CHALLENGES

FY22 budget challenges include the annual increase in health and property insurance, retirement, and trash removal services; fully funding the Facilities department to include preventative maintenances funds, and a dedicated maintenance employee so as to avoid subcontracting small projects; and funding an additional full-time police officer dedicated to parking and traffic enforcement. The traffic enforcement position is not proposed in FY22, but will be raised again in the future.

FY22 Capital Budget

The five-year projection for General Funding is \$3,291,996, with \$1,257,823 spent in FY22. The five-year projection for Leasing is \$277,324, with \$277,324 spent in FY22. The five-year projection for the Green Communities Grant is \$870,900, with \$228,000 spent in FY22. The Facilities Capital Funding numbers will be available soon.

Strategic Planning Working Group Discussion

Ms. Alexson noted that the outline presented in the report of cost, timing, and tax implications are estimates, with the exception of water and wastewater projects and the Public Safety Facility project that are already underway. The working group plans to meet again to finalize the report.

Dr. Jones noted to residents that not all of the projects will be started right away, and it should be considered that many projects will briefly overlap in production.

Ms. Mackin stated that the Town should also consider a plan to decrease carbon emissions by 100% by 2040.

Mr. Whitmore stated that when the conversation of one elementary school versus two elementary schools was previously raised, the community lacked both a united consensus of the Tri-Boards, and an assessment of all projects that needed to be done. He stated that when the conversation is broached again, it will be important to consider what the Town can afford, and not rely on any funds that may be available from MSBA. He believes it is unlikely that MSBA will fund a second study.

Rob Donahue (12 High Street) asked that the Tri-Boards take a vote to support beginning construction of the Public Safety Building in the fall of 2021. Ms. Alexson responded that a vote of that nature would need to be posted on the agenda, and no such posting was made.

Bob Weatherall (Public Safety Facilities Committee, Chair) stated that construction of the Public Safety Building should be prioritized in 2022.

Approval of Minutes

I. January 4, 2021

- *Vote: Dr. Jones moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Mootafian seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

Town Manager Report

COVID-19

Town Hall is currently open by appointment only. This decision was made considering the increased case counts and also after it was found that residents from other towns were doing business in Town Hall instead of their own communities, and some people were refusing to wear masks.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Police Chief Paul Nikas is test-driving a Tesla. The vehicle could be purchased using funding from the Green Communities Grant, rebates from the state, and \$40,000 Town Meeting allotment for an administrative vehicle. This would be the first electric vehicle in the police fleet.

WIND 2

An Executive Session will take place on February 8 to provide the Select Board with an update on the ongoing lawsuit regarding the broken wind turbine.

New Business

Ms. Alexson had previously distributed a draft of a letter to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) opposing the Essex Pastures development. She proposed adding a sentence at the end of the third to last paragraph reading: “We would like to request that the developer voluntarily comply with this program as a good-faith effort towards helping the town manage its water resources in the best interest of the entire community.”

- *Vote: Dr. Jones moved to accept the addition and for Ms. Alexson to sign the letter and send it to the ZBA. Mr. Whitmore seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

Old Business

None.

Miscellaneous and Correspondence

Dr. Jones asked what the process would be for purchasing 2021 Crane Beach stickers. Mr. Marino responded that residents can schedule a walk-in appointment at Town Hall, or purchase stickers online.

- *Vote: Ms. Mackin moved to adjourn. Mr. Whitmore Seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

*Respectfully submitted by Eileen G. Page
02.02.2021*