

TOWN OF IPSWICH  
Finance Committee  
Meeting of February 13th, 2020  
Town Hall, 25 Green Street

With a quorum present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:36.

Finance Committee members present: Janice Clements-Skelton, Walter Hartford, Michael Schaaf, Joseph Bourque, Jamie Fay, Rob White, Timothy Goodrich, Chris Doucette

**1. Citizens Queries – Janice Clements-Skelton**

- none

**2. Acceptance of Finance Committee Minutes – Janice Clements-Skelton**

- Motion to accept minutes from 2/4 and 2/6 made by Rob and seconded by Walter.  
→*Vote: Motion passed unanimously, 8-0*
- Motion to accept minutes from 9/24 made by Rob seconded by Michael Schaff.  
→*Vote: Motion passed unanimously, 8-0*

**FY21 Budget Reviews: Community & Cultural Services**

**3. COA/Adult Services – Sheila Taylor**

Sheila Taylor from the Council on Aging explained that the COA services people 60 and over. Services include transportation, outreach, and fun and games. Transportation is for trips to the grocery store, to get a haircut, go to a restaurant, and road trips. They also use CADA to help with medical appointments and this is a handicap accessible vehicle. It's not for Boston, but they will go anywhere in the North Shore. Outreach is provided by Beth Wright who is the Outreach Coordinator and she works 32 hours per week. She provides information and referrals, advocates for people, helps people apply for services, supports volunteer programs, runs support groups, and manages fuel, pet care, and emergency fund programs. Beth is also responsible for the TRIAD program, the Lockbox program, the Shine program, and the Car Fit program, amongst others. The Fun and Games program holds prepared activities every day that include fitness, health, card games, and social events. They also hold a mobile market, intergenerational programs, travel opportunities, art programs, language lessons, and they manage the senior tax work program. Some activities are paid, some are free. Sheila said anything someone needs, they find a way to make it happen. The department has 4.75 FTE's. Sheila is full-time, and one person shares responsibilities of Program Manager and Transportation Coordinator. The Outreach Coordinator works 32 hours, the Receptionist is one full time job that is shared by 2 people, and there are 3 Van Drivers that share one Full Time position.

Sheila then highlighted a few accomplishments. This is the second year of the 50+ Job Seekers Program. It is funded by the state and run by the MA Council on Aging, which helps people find jobs by having business leaders come in and talk about opportunities and help people with resumes. They also highlight a different topic each meeting and help people learn how to use LinkedIn. The Transportation Coordinator was hired last year, there was an increase in services provided by CADA by 165%. Walter asked how they are funded and if they are able to absorb the increased activities. Sheila said it is funded by the Assessment through MBTA. They are now doing online reserving and appointment making. They are also working with a company called Q-ride with works with Lyft, and CADA said they may be able to fund a portion of these rides. This would be used when people need a ride into Boston. Intergenerational programs are going well with the schools, and they are also working with the Y for fitness programs.

Challenges this past year were that they were busier than they ever imagined they would be. Sheila looked at the Town Census numbers, and the 60+ population has risen by 10% in just 8 years. Ipswich has one of the highest populations of seniors in the state. The department only has one Outreach Coordinator and she has been swamped. Just in this fiscal year there has been an increase in a need for help by 30%. The other challenge is CADA transportation. The use keeps on climbing, which is good, but things have been very busy. Sheila also said she joined the Community Development Team and one of the things they found is that people that are 62 and over are particularly burdened by housing costs. Sheila said she would like to point out that their budget is less than 1% of the town's budget, and they service 36% of the town's population.

Sheila then went over the operating goals. The Program Manager is paid partly through the Elder Affairs grant. The Transportation Coordinator is paid by the COBURN Charitable Fund, which usually funds upstarts but not for long. COBURN has paid for this position for 3 years now so Sheila would like to move the funding for this position into Elder Affairs. They currently pay for 4 hours of the Outreach Coordinator and the town pays for the other 28 hours, so that 4 hours will now need to be paid by the town as well. There is no increase in how much this person is working, it's just a difference in how she is paid. Janice asked since we went from 26% to 36% in 8 years, do we have any data going further back that will help us predict a trend for 2020. Sheila said you wouldn't be able to predict a trend by going back, but they know the baby boomers are coming up so there will definitely be an increase in the next 10 years. In 20 years, it will start to down swing again. Janice asked if we can assume from 2018 to 2020 will we be closer to 38 or 39%. Sarah said when the census comes back they will have a better idea. Janice said that kind of data is very valuable as they look at the capital projects the town has planned and consider how the town and tax payers can support these projects. Sheila said another change within personnel is the Senior Tax Work program, the change reflects that there is an increase in minimum wage from \$12 an hour to \$12.75 an hour. They have 15 people in this program and they are allowed to work a maximum of 100 hours. This money is earned toward their real estate tax. The increase under expenses is the MA Council on Aging dues which went up \$137. There are no capital needs at this point. Their two vans are pretty new and running well. Long term, Sheila said they have outgrown their space and the parking lot, and this limits them. Another long-term goal would be to increase transportation for people who need it, not just seniors. CADA might be able to partner with Ipswich on servicing people with disabilities. Sheila also said housing has become a very serious issue.

Tim thanked Sheila for the overview and asked her to talk more about the Outreach Coordinator. He also asked if Sheila thinks they need another person or more hours for this position. Sheila said they have definitely seen major increases and they don't like turning people away because they are busy. There are several people that are on the edge of not being able to live at home anymore and they don't have family around or the support system. Just to keep someone safe at home takes a lot of care and a lot of time. Beth spends a lot of time doing that. Sheila also said she worries about who they don't know about in this situation. Tim asked if they are actively reaching out to citizens that need help or do they have to wait for a referral. Sheila said they actively reach out to everyone in town by sending a newsletter to everyone 60 and up. Anyone who is 80 and up gets a birthday card yearly with a business card from Beth as well. When someone is a new referral for transportation they are also placed on Beth's list and she reaches out to them and checks on them. COBURN is a possible source but once the position is created through a grant it can only be funded for 3 years. Sheila said she does fully feel that they need to meet the needs of people in town however they can. There are currently 4,830 people in Ipswich that are 60 plus and only one person to do outreach. Tim asked how many are living on their own. Sheila said they surveyed it in 2010 but she doesn't have the exact number. Now it's probably 70% that live alone. Janice said if we have some sort of way to predict when the numbers will peak and then start to decline, it might make sense to use grant money to fund one of those positions if it's not a long-term position. Sheila said she thinks it will be more like a 15-year peak, not just 3 or 4 years. Jamie asked Sheila what she will be chasing with the COBURN grant. Sheila said besides the Transportation Coordinator position they also cover mileage reimbursement. They haven't decided what they will ask for but it will be some portion of additional outreach that they want to be funded. Jamie also asked if they collaborate with the Ipswich Housing Authority. Sheila said they have a representative on the Triad board so they talk about safety and housing. Beth works closely with housing if they have an issue, they might call Beth if they are worried about someone and Beth will also call them. It is informal but very valuable. Sheila said some of the housing available doesn't meet the needs of seniors. Jamie mentioned the need for a larger facility and asked if there are any towns that have a senior facility that is similar to what we would need. Sheila said Danvers has a great center and they have a daycare in the building as well, so that could be a money maker. Sheila also said we could provide people with meals and care. Newburyport also has a nice facility and has outdoor space too which allows for people to be active. Adult community education could also be a money maker. Sheila said ideally it wouldn't be on multiple levels because it is more isolating. They want it to be open so everyone knows each other and supports each other. Michael thanked Sheila for her work. He asked to explore the housing matter more and said that perhaps Sheila could drill down to understand the housing needs. There are two groups; elderly low-income home owners and elderly low-income renters. Different programs are needed to respond to the different groups. Michael said it sounds like they are really able to drill down to who these people are and that he could envision that for the homeowners they might collaborate with banks for a reverse mortgage program. Sheila said that is a little risky but it is an option. Michael said also keep in mind the town has several town owned parcels and asked if Sheila is familiar with them. Michael also said if the senior center serves primarily low-income people, the state has a block program that you can apply for. The senior center in Beverly used that, but it can be difficult to ascertain and manage if it's not primarily for low income seniors.

Janice asked if Sheila has had any conversations with the Ipswich Housing Trust Fund. They routinely have

developers put money into that fund. Sheila said that money is usually for rehab, like a new roof. It's not meant for daily expenses. Michael said it is for replacing or fixing repairs and then they have a note to lien on the property once it sells. Rob asked about the tax deferral programs and asked if the assessors are available to seniors, and do they do outreach? He said most affluent towns have a program that is better utilized than our town. Rob said that all of the capital needs are going to increase taxes so people will be needing more help. He asked Sheila if there are any programs she wants to start. First Sheila said the assessors do outreach, she doesn't know why the tax deferral programs are utilized more in other towns. Sheila said as far as new programs they are limited with space and funds. Adult education would be a great goal because it would incorporate programs that are for any age. Health and fitness programs are on the upswing, if they had more space and time she thinks more people would take part. Same with art classes. Rob asked about the 50+ Job Seekers Networking Group and he asked how many users they have and is there a website. Sheila said it averages about 25 people, typically between 50 and 59 years. There is a website that talks about the successes and it shares resources. It also promotes job fairs and positions. Michael asked the average and median age of the users at the Council on Aging. Sheila said they are going younger now, it is probably 75 to 80.

#### **4. ReCreation & Culture – Kerrie Bates**

Kerrie said the department has been in development and evolution for the last eight years. They want to emphasize the creative aspect of reinventing themselves and the community while at play. Services they provide is to oversee the Ipswich Visitor Centers which is open in the summer season for 4 months and is managed by volunteers. They also provide community events like dancing in the streets, theater, gym dance series, labyrinth walks, events on the beach, and provide funding for the school system for afterschool enrichment through grants.

Kerrie went over the accomplishments. They are very proud of the gallery at the Town Hall. They are also doing the Switch Rideable Artscape at Bialik park which will help to showcase local artists. This year illumination is expanding from 1 night to 2 nights and they are extending the programming up River Street. They are in the process of replacing and upgrading the bonfire fleet. Kerrie also said she works closely with the business community and there is a revitalization going on with the Ipswich Chamber of Commerce. They will be holding an event on March 26<sup>th</sup> at True North Brewery where they will showcase a film they have been working on with Ipswich Community Access Media. The short film is about the upsurge in the creative economy sector in the SoCho area. Kerrie said they are excited about connecting business owners.

Under goals, Kerrie talked about events promotions and being able to effectively reach different demographics. Kerrie also said there is a change in the budget because they are looking for part time help for events. Jamie asked Kerrie to go through the temporary part time workers what they currently have. Right now, they have Judy Sedgewick who does book keeping. She also works part time at the high school so she often works as a bridge to connect the two. She has worked a lot less hours than we need her to due to family issues. They also have someone that is a carpenter and electrician, and they occasionally hire Linda Platt who is an artist. She has an eye for detail. Kerrie said it's nice to have a wide variety of people who have different strengths. Jamie asked why there is such a large jump in the budget. Kerrie said she has been overextending herself and needs to be realistic about what she can physically do to set up and run events. Chris asked if there are other events they do and need help with. Kerrie said Local Color is a celebration of spring and involves a number of large scale intergenerational and interactive things to do. It would be better if there are more hands-on deck. Chris asked if the Chamber of Commerce has ever participated in the funding of events. Kerrie said they pay for 50% of the bands for Downtown Tuesdays, they pay for the internet at the Visitors Center, and they have been very generous with everything Kerrie has asked them for. They are not involved with Illumination. Funding for Illumination comes from sponsors. Walter asked if the rotary participates. Kerrie said they do work with the rotaries and they also do very well with grants. Rob asked how they tie in with the Y and in the past, it seems like there was a lot of funding, but he doesn't see that now. Kerrie said that before she was encouraged to ask for additional part time help, they had to reduce programming to schools because it was hard for them to grow without additional funding. Increasing the part time help will enable them to keep funding programs through the schools. Jamie told Kerrie that the Feoffees Fund is not spending what they are getting and he encourages Kerrie to reach out to them for funding for the school programs. Michael asked if there has been any assessment of numbers for Illumination. Kerrie said she can't imagine a way to figure out how many people attend. He asked if she had ever considered asking for donations. She said they did do donations for the Winter Ball and it went well. Michael asked who goes into the Visitors Center. Kerrie said the numbers of who goes into the center is going down but the online resource visits are going up. Kerrie said they don't keep track of where people are coming from. He also asked about the county wide calendar of events. Kerrie said the Ipswich Events calendar has been embraced by so many sectors of the community and they are so happy about that. They have full control over that. The Ipswich Creative County Initiative has established a county wide community events calendar. It gives a lot of reach to our events and Kerrie

makes every effort to list things on there. Chris asked Sarah why Tony only approved 13 extra part time. Sarah said he cut \$5,000 because when they started with Department requests they were \$290,000 short of balancing the budget. Chris said if they were very public about asking for donations they would probably get a lot. Getting people used to donating for events might be a good thing and maybe at some point they would have enough to kick some money back. A lot of businesses would also be interested in donating if they are able to post their business on the site. Kerrie said that would work well but that makes more work. Rob said he isn't hearing anything for kids like the Y or summer programs. These are things they were focusing on when they first started rebuilding the department. Kerrie said Campus Ipswich is something the department started and it has successfully spun off to a self-sustaining independent entity. They still advocate for them and collaborate with them. Kerrie said she doesn't mention them in the successes because it is now a self-sustaining spin off. There are also other programs that are done that are financially independent like the Lego program. As far as the Y, they invite all of the people that have participated in the Grants to Community program in the past, but the Y didn't apply this year. Rob said maybe next year they could get more numbers on programs for students.

## **5. Veterans – Karen Tyler**

Karen Tyler, Veteran's Services Officer for the town, explained her position. Massachusetts is the only state that requires there to be a VSO in every city. They want someone in the community that is able to help veterans and their spouses. Karen handles anything that has to do with Veterans such as claims, homelessness, advocating, events and education programs. Karen is an army veteran and she has one FTE and one PTE. The FTE is Kathy who is also a veteran. Karen discussed Chapter 115 which is a program where Ipswich pays 100% and then gets reimburse by the state for 75%. The program has 3 tiers: financial, medical, and fuel. Veterans can qualify for one or all three depending on circumstances. If someone qualifies for the program, they get a monthly stipend. Karen is a certified Veterans Services Officer which enables the town to get the full 75% back, whereas if she was not certified the town might only get 50% back. They also work closely with the Department of Veteran's Services. Karen explained how people are able to qualify for the various levels of help. The department is part of an 8-town district and Ipswich is the largest. The population in the district is 56,000. The operating budget is \$270,500 and Ipswich assessment is \$65,159. In regards to Chapter 115, the district has 61 clients on the program and of that 35 are Ipswich residents. They are doing better than average when it comes to how many veterans are utilizing the program. Karen said they also try to find other programs that will reduce the cost to Ipswich. There is a Mass Health buy-in for people who qualify. They get their Medicare reimbursed through the program. They got 5 people to apply for the program, it's a monthly savings of \$723 and an annual savings of \$8,676. This program also enrolls people into a Part D program which handles co-pays, whereas if they didn't Ipswich would be reimbursing them. Chapter 115 is hard to budget to predict because one person can get as much as \$1300 a month so if someone leaves or joins that makes a big difference. They also reimburse for medical expenses so that is also unpredictable. Karen said the office also does VA benefits and she earned accreditation form the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers. With that accreditation Karen can help people with VA claims which make a big difference. Last year she did 83 claims for the district and 19 of those were for Ipswich residents. It's no cost to the town and it gives people extra money. It's a great way to get benefits for people. Karen also went over the types of services people receive, how many people receive services, and how much money they get for those services. Karen said she is always looking for more education and training because what she does is so important for people's livelihood. She also said they made a new website which has a newsletter, information, benefits, and it also highlights a new veteran each cycle. They also invite various presenters to speak at meetings, hold educational classes, do workshops, and have quarterly board meetings. Karen said she just had a workshop on environmental hazards and about 75 people attended. It was also recorded by ICam and could be seen on TV. Another project Karen did was the POW MIA Ceremony with about 70 people in attendance. They secured about \$1,500 in donations and that's how they purchased the chair, the display, and the plaque. Karen has also developed a relationship with the Daughters of the American Revolution, and they have made a lot of donations to the program which has been incredible. Karen said they also prevented three people from becoming homeless this past year.

Joe thanked Karen for the background of the department and for all that she does. He then asked if she is paid by the state. She said each town pays a portion of the budget, based on the population. Sarah said they get reimbursed for the expenses for the veterans. Karen's salary is under district assessment and Sarah budgets for it on the base budget form. They won't see it on the budget, what they will see is the monthly expenses for the veterans. Walter asked why her department request is different from the approved Town Managers budget. Sarah said after talking to Karen about the opportunities they were able to lower it a bit. Sarah said Karen has done an awesome job getting people medical services through state funds which saves the town a lot of money. She is redirecting expenses to the state and federal government. We used to transfer \$50,000 - \$60,000 every year to pay for these services and now we are no longer doing this and

sometimes even have leftover money. Joe asked why there was an aggressive cutback on one of the lines, and asked if it was based on fewer members or because of Karen's ability to pay for this elsewhere. Karen said it's a combination. Finding different programs has been very helpful, there have been VA benefits that have been helpful. Rob asked Karen if she could send the newsletter to FinCom.

## **6. Library – Patti Titullio**

Patti gave an overview of the organization. The constituency is the entire population of the town, they serve all ages. Everyone that comes through the door needs something completely different. They are open 7 days a week including 3 evenings, and they provide a lot of services. Patti also briefly discussed the staffing model and the various departments. She also discussed the accomplishments from last year, as written in the budget book. Accomplishments include a 3% bump in library visitors, an 55% increase in attendance to library programs over the last 5 years, and this past year they celebrated to 15<sup>th</sup> year of the Ipswich Reads 1 Book program. They also recently did a one-month long series of community programs related to the substance abuse crisis. It was very well attended and well received. The library also hosted a Johnson Author series which was funded by the Friends of the Library and it was attended by 300 people. The library has partnered with the public schools which includes hosting the kindergarten screening, a putting on a joint spring one-book series, and also making Early intervention Resources available. The museum pass program funded by Friends of Ipswich saved residents over \$30,000 last year. In terms of technology they launched the re-designed website last year that now has reservations which has increased the use of the spaces. They are about to launch an app for people to access accounts. They also had a lot of local history goals last year and the archivist has accomplished many of those goals related to the long-range preservation plan. They received grants to digitize the Ipswich Speaks Oral Histories as well as the Historical Cicrofilm Newspaper Collection. 2019 was the 150<sup>th</sup> year of the library so they mounted a large-scale exhibition of the library's history featuring photos and items from the archive. The also had a lot of staff goals last year which helped to make better use of the spaces. They are working on launching the new library of things. It has been a very busy year and they are excited about a number of initiatives that are ahead. Patti said they have made minimal requests for the budget. Janice asked which population they are seeing the largest growth in demand. Patti said there has been a huge uptick in job seekers and people that are needing help with that as well as a big demand for technology assistance. A huge increase in the need for reference services. Patti said one of the increases in the budget was a request for a part-time reference service position but they had to eliminate that. Patti said their spaces are getting challenging because they have people with competing needs.

Patti explained the budget requests. Other than the contracted salary increases they asked for increases which will allow them to reclassify positions to higher grades on the union scale. These aren't intended to be merit based, the premise is about fixing the staffing model and correcting where positions lie on it. The current assignment of the four positions on the classification scale doesn't match the job responsibility in the organization or align with other positions state wide. First Patti is proposing that they reclassify 3 Professional Librarian positions one level up on the union scale. Currently they are \$3 below state average. Moving them up one grade gets them about 1/3 of the way there. The fourth position is the Senior Library Technician position which is the person who runs the Circulation Department. That needs to be moved up two grades on the union scale in order to classify it properly. The role has evolved to someone that is managing one of the key departments and supervising 6 employees. Even at the grade Patti is proposing moving it to, this person will still be paid \$4 an hour under the average. They are asking for \$2,000 for the materials budget. They are not currently meeting the state certification due to materials expenditure. They are required to spend 16% annually of the total budget on that line. They can supplement that with outside funds but the deficit is large and every year that we don't increase this line when other line items are increased the gap gets bigger. Also, the more Patti uses those funds to supplement, the less money is available for other things. Patti said the two requests are under \$10,000.

Jamie said he knows Patti has been trying to restructure the organization and asked what her thoughts are on the assistant director position. Patti said they just completed first round interviews and are moving on to a second round now. They are not re-defining the job requirements at all. They updated the description but not the requirements. Jamie said he supports spending the proper amount to be certified, Patti said we haven't been underspending, we have just been using outside sources to keep it at 16%. Jamie asked Patti if there is anything in the library in the next 10 years that they would need. Patti said they have some IT projects coming up within the next few years. They are already working on a grant to upgrade WIFI in the building. In terms of spaces, they are hoping to start to look at some options for interior space redesign. They are hoping to hire someone in to look at space usage. The collection is way oversized based on their space, even after weeding through. They could continue to weed out books and remove some shelving to put in more usable spaces. Rob said Patti did a great job and he really liked the one-pager. He asked Patti to spend time talking about technology and video streaming. Patti said there are services available that will accomplish the same kind of streaming

that people have at home. They are cost prohibitive right now but there are more and more vendors coming online. Patti said the DVD collection is plummeting, people aren't using DVD's as much. They are still getting used and it still makes sense to have them, but its clearly not where things are headed. Patti said people can get a Boston Public Library e-card and be able to get all online services such as e-books, audio books, movies, and resources. Rob also asked what the third-party fax service initiative is. Patti said there are vendors that offer contained machines where people put in a credit card and they can fax. The library doesn't currently offer faxing. Michael Schaff asked about the permanent wages that were requested and Tony recommended more than Patti asked for. Sarah said originally the step increases weren't in that figure, so the figure that's in there is the collective bargaining agreement and the increase requests. Michael asked about the peer wages. Patti said their certification requirements also require that all libraries in MA submit reports that include data and statistics about the library. They also have to report all of their financial data including municipal spending, materials, usage data, and salaries. Because of that anyone is able to see what particular positions are making in every certified library in the state. Patti also explained how they look at data and compare salaries within different positions.

#### **7. New/ Other Business – Janice Clements-Skelton**

Michael S. asked Janice to review the schedule. Janice said they are only meeting once next week on Thursday. The following week they will meet Tuesday and Thursday. The last week of February finishes up municipal budget hearings, and then we do the schools and warrant hearings.

#### **8. Adjournment – Janice Clements-Skelton**

- Motion to adjourn made by Chris and seconded by Walter  
→Vote: *Motion passed unanimously, 8-0*

Respectfully Submitted By  
Alyson von der Esch  
2-18-20