

Town of Milton
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
March 9, 2023

ATTENDANCE:

Members: Laura Turgeon (Chair), Bob Carrier, Humphrey Williams, Peg Hurd, Kim Wischnewski, Stephanie Mills. Excused: Lisa Gautreau, Mike Beaulieu

Staff: Chief Richard Krauss, Police Department

Public: Mackenzie Campbell, Water District

Laura Turgeon, Chair, opened the session at 6:00PM.

1.) Pledge of Allegiance: Laura Turgeon, Chair, led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2.) Roll Call:

a. Ms. Turgeon, Chair, led the roll call of members to determine if a quorum was present. Laura Turgeon (Chair), Stephanie Mills, Kimberly Wischnewski, Bob Carrier, Peg Hurd, Humphrey Williams. A quorum was present.

3.) Ms. Hurd motioned to approve the January 17, 2023, minutes with corrections. Mr. Williams seconded the motion.

Laura Turgeon, Humphrey Williams, Bob Carrier, Peg Hurd, Kim Wischnewski and Stephanie Mills voted Yes. Motion Carried – 6/0/0.

Mr. Williams motioned to approve the January 31, 2023, minutes with corrections. Ms. Hurd seconded the motion.

Laura Turgeon, Humphrey Williams, Bob Carrier, Peg Hurd, Kim Wischnewski and Stephanie Mills voted Yes. Motion Carried – 6/0/0.

4.) BC business conduct and participation:

Mackenzie Campbell, Water District: Mr. Mackenzie Campbell prepared a summary on behalf of the water district. Although they function as a separate municipality, they do not have their own budget committee. He presented an overview of their budget.

They will be cycling out the warrant articles that were not included last year, reallocating the amounts. There are not many changes and were not unduly impacted by inflation. Upcoming items to be aware of:

The Water District secured grant funding for their asset management project that provides a good inventory of what's in the ground, more accurately account for depreciation, and properly fund savings accounts in a timely manner. Mr. Williams – Wright-Pierce was awarded the contract for an asset management program for the town which will include the water district. The grant money amount was for \$60,000. Overall budgeting line-items – there are no major changes in their budget. The Budget Committee thanked Mr. Campbell for attending the meeting and information

presented.

Chief Richard Krauss, Police Department: Chief Krauss asked to speak to the Budget Committee to address questions from residents at the recent Deliberative Session:

a.) How the hiring process works for a police department? Chief Krauss explained they are currently in process with three individuals – all three started in January. One is certified while the other two are uncertified. Steps are 1.) interview and 2.) physical agility test. If they can pass the agility test, they move on to the next steps; 3.) conditional offer allowing them to ask questions; next is 4.) background checks including criminal history/drug history/polygraph test and interviews of people who know them; if the applicant passes those they move on to the next step; 5.) medical history test. If they complete and pass all these steps, this allows them to go to the police academy. This entire process can take between 1 and 4 months. Once the process is complete, they move onto the police academy for 16 weeks. Chief Krauss noted that during this entire process from start through the police academy, they are not being utilized by the Milton Police Department. However, they are being paid for the 16 weeks of training at the police academy. Upon return from the academy, they go through a 10-week in-house (paid) Field Training Program, not functioning as a lead officer during this period (not able to on their own). This is a 26-week process (police academy and Field Training program). Currently, there is one certified Field Training Officer (FTO) (Chief Krauss). Filling five open positions with only one FTO is not tenable. One full-time officer is going through training to become a field training officer which will help in the future.

Chief Krauss reminded the board he has not asked for any increase in overtime pay in this year's budget. This is doable only because he is short-staffed. He noted if he is able to get to full-staff and has to cover the required 16 hours of training per officer, this will lead to an increase in overtime for coverage. Ms. Turgeon appreciates that Chief Krauss brought forth a very sound budget while understanding that some on the Budget Committee do not agree with his presented budget.

Responding to another question posed during the Deliberative Session – “Why can't he cut money out of his budget, if those positions that are not filled?”

Chief Krauss said it's important to remember once money is cut from his budget, he no longer has access to it leading to losing needed positions. He would need to go to the BOS and ask them to use a special meeting to ask the residents to add monies into his budget to cover those positions. Currently down five full-time officers, the monies expended amount to the same since it's covered by paying for overtime. Ms. Turgeon said it's important for the town to understand that it does cost more to pay overtime than for full-time staff. Chief Krauss said police can make more money in the private sector. Another issue is there are not as many younger people entering the field.

Chief Krauss explained he reviews each budget line-item each year to determine what lines really do need to have an increase like uniforms, equipment, etc. He works hard to utilize grants to help cover expenses. He noted they have been hit hard by inflation just like all other departments. However, the biggest issue continues to be pay and the fact that a larger community such as Rochester, have a higher starting rate than Milton. They also have a large sign-on bonus for

certified officers. Chief Krauss does not believe, as some have suggested, that Milton is unable to compete. This can be done but must be in an appropriate manner. One example is benefits like insurance. Milton has better insurance than the surrounding towns. He also pointed out that the officers pay close attention to the Budget & BOS meetings, along with what residents write on social media platforms; they are very aware and can be impacted by, negative comments. He stressed he wants people to ask questions when they do not understand.

Mr. Williams suggested after the upcoming election, the new Board should meet with Chief Krauss and other department heads. Ms. Hurd said she remains very impressed with Chief Krauss and the Police Department. Mr. Williams said the Police Department just recently lost two employees. Yet, he has heard from residents that despite the staff shortage they do see the officers out and about the town.

Chief Krauss said he and two other officers will be jumping into Milton 3 Ponds as part of the fundraising for Special Olympics. He said being part of the community is important to him and the other officers. Being connected to the community can have a positive impact on the town. Mr. Carrier stressed he continues to support the Police. Concerns have been expressed to him about the budget and associated costs.

Mr. Williams said due to work done by Chief Krauss, this helped the development of the employee pay plan. He noted his appreciation for Chief Krauss' contributions to the community.

Chief Krauss said he tries to be the best steward of the town's monies. Chief Krauss reported the cost of new cruisers has increased from \$36,000 (cost of the hybrid police car) to ~\$42,000. With additional needed equipment to outfit a cruiser, the total cost now is ~\$66,000. The Police Department has as many difficulties as the other departments; Chief Krauss tries to make the best possible decisions to resolve and manage the issues, both current and into the future, without adding burdens to the Budget Committee & BOS. He knows residents will ask the BOS and Budget Committee members about budgets and express their concerns or frustrations. He strives to keep both boards updated so they can address those concerns. He also said residents can approach him directly and ask him questions about their concerns. Ms. Wischniewski appreciates all that Chief Krauss does to help this and all other committees and departments. Chief Krauss said the majority of residents in town do support the Police Department. This is so important for the Police to know they have that support.

5.) Town Expenditure Reports:

Mr. Williams provided a quick summary of the 2022 expenditures:

The total budget, including warrant articles, Capital Reserve Fund, and encumbered funds was \$6,231,669.79; 91.65% of the total was spent. The balance left is \$520,000 mostly due to encumbered funds not used and are still available for projects.

Higher-than-expected areas include Town's legal services, heat & electricity, Town Clerk/Tax Collector, due to departing TC, and the Fire Department. The transferable or reimbursable line-items were for the Cemetery, Zoning Board and Planning Boards, and Sanitary Sewer Services (liner repairs).

Mr. Williams said overall last year did pretty well, although there were overages including the Conservation Commission, Fire Department, Milton Free Public Library, Recreation, Solid Waste, and Highway. Although some overages were on the smaller side, Mr. Williams said it's important to understand where the overages are and why they occurred. Another difficulty with the budget is determining when expenses are going to hit throughout the year.

Ms. Turgeon said it's also important to note that other communities, like Farmington, are not recycling anymore due to the increased costs. Milton continues to stay with the recycling program – fees have increased due to having to ship out the recyclables. Under Town Administration, there were higher overages for legal fees.

Mr. Williams said Brittney continues to work on adjustments. He anticipates at the April meeting, there will be an expenditure report for 2023 to review. Ms. Hurd asked if there is any idea about how much will be returned back to the town. Mr. Williams clarified for residents there are no monies that are given back to the town, rather they are monies that were not spent. All unspent monies remain in the general fund.

6.) School Expenditure Reports, Revenue & Grant Reports:

Ms. Hurd provided an explanation for the reports. She said that Adam Houghton, Superintendent, is doing a fantastic job finding ways to cut expenses, correct errors, and plan for the future. Mr. Williams agreed that Mr. Houghton is far more engaged than previous administrators. Ms. Hurd addressed Mr. Carrier's previous question about recent public hearings concerning grants and why there needed to be a public hearing. Ms. Hurd explained if there is unanticipated income/revenue from a grant/funding source, they are required to have a public hearing to accept the funding. The most recent grant was for \$30,000 to help support after-school programs for MES. Mr. Houghton is also involved with the grants, providing information, and ensuring all grant monies are spent (if they are unspent, the school will lose the monies).

7.) Other business that may come before the board:

a.) Mr. Williams commented on the last vote transferring the ownership of the Historical Building located in Milton Mills to the town. There have been questions about how the lease works, now that the building has been transferred back to them. The building was transferred to the town at a cost of \$1.00 and is now considered a government building and is insured by the town. The lease agreement is such that the Historical Society is responsible to maintain the building as best as they can. There is no lease fee; the town owns and insures the building while the society maintains the building.

8.) Public Comments or Questions on Budget Committee Meeting Topics: There were none.

9.) Next Meetings: April 6, 2023

10.) Adjournment:

a. Ms. Hurd motioned to adjourn at 8:25PM; Seconded by Ms. Wischnewski. All were in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy Winslow-Weiss, Recording Secretary – Budget Committee