

Cohasset Advisory Committee

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

Virtual Meeting-Zoom Video Call

7:00 p.m.

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, Section 20(b), following Governor Baker's declaration of a state of emergency in the Commonwealth arising from the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Advisory Committee will meet virtually utilizing remote technology. **All votes will be taken by a Roll-Call Vote.**

Documents Received: Fire Department Budget Presentation; IT Department Budget Presentation.

This meeting was recorded. Meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm by Vice-Chair Mary McGoldrick.

Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:

Adam Amann, Jeanne Astino, Michael Barclay, Fran Collins, Robert Hillman (joined meeting at 7:45 p.m. and took over chairing the meeting at that time), J. Patrick Kennedy, Mark Maggi, and Mary McGoldrick.

Advisory Committee Members Absent:

Meg Wheeler

Guests: Chris Senior, Town Manager; Don Piatt, Director of Finance; Robert Silvia, Fire Chief; John Dockery, Assistant Fire Chief; Ron Menard, Director of IT.

1. FY23 Budget Presentation by the Fire Department

Mary McGoldrick welcomed Chief Robert Silvia and Assistant Chief John Dockery, and after giving the Advisory Committee a brief history of his service to the Town of Cohasset and upcoming retirement, Chief Silvia turned the power-point presentation over to Assistant Chief Dockery:

- Chief Dockery presented slides on the proposed FY23 operating budget and staffing levels for the Fire Department, which is a level-service budget with increases due to steps and contract-based amounts;
- It was noted that the FY23 budget remains preliminary at this time, with considerable uncertainty, due to ongoing negotiations between the Town of Cohasset and the Fire Department's local union bargaining unit over terms of a new contract (noting that the prior contract has already expired and that services are currently being provided under the terms of the expired contract);
- Personnel costs and staffing levels for FY23 were based upon the expired contract, without any contingency for back-pay or other extraordinary budget impacts of a newly negotiated contract or arbitration award that could provide for back-pay, and/or have a substantial increase in staffing or personnel expenses going forward;
- Mike Barclay presented information about capital expenditure items included in the FY23 budget for the Fire Department; and

- It was noted that the overall budget presents a slightly larger increase than normal for items needed on a one-time basis, not a structural issue with the budget (although there is embedded overtime budget costs due to current staffing levels).

Chief Silvia, Assistant Chief Dockery, and Mike Barclay responded to questions by other Advisory Committee members.

2. FY23 Budget Presentation by the IT Department

Director of IT Ron Menard, with Chris Senior and Don Piatt, presented power-point slides highlighting the IT Department's proposed FY23 Budget, noting:

- There's an emphasis on cyber-security and fire-wall capital items of approximately \$600,000 in the FY23 budget to proactively provide the Town of Cohasset with upgraded IT protection in light of emerging cyber threats and risk;
- The Town is proposing to move its second data center into the cloud; and
- There's a proposed reclassification of an IT systems analyst (with a line-item cost of approximately \$70,000) who works within IT from the School Department budget to the shared budget as between the Town and School Department.

Ron Menard, Chris Senior and Don Piatt responded to questions posed by Advisory Committee members.

3. FY23 Budget -- General Items for Town

Don Piatt presented the overall Town-side proposed Budget for FY23. Chris Senior and Don Piatt responded to questions posed by Advisory Committee members.

4. Preview of Expected Warrant Articles for Annual Town Meeting

Chris Senior presented an update on the rundown of expected Budget issues and Warrant Articles for the upcoming May 2022 Annual Town Meeting. Chair Robert Hillman asked for a skeleton copy of the draft Warrant to be provided in advance of the Advisory Committee's next meeting. Chris Senior and Robert Hillman responded to questions posed by other Advisory Committee members.

5. Liaison Reports

School Department liaisons Jeanne Astino and Mary McGoldrick provided a general preview of the anticipated FY23 School Department budget, noting that the Department still has significant budget issues to work through given its currently-proposed increase substantially in excess of the 2 and ½ percent tax levy. There exists particular concern regarding School Department staffing that was hired with COVID-funding or based upon other one-time grants, which have expired, that the Department is now proposing to include in its FY23 budget as permanent positions. The liaisons further noted that the budget cycle for the School Department remains tight, and that the proposed time-line presents limited opportunity for independent Advisory Committee review prior to the Warrant being finalized.

6. Topics not reasonably anticipated within 48 hours of meeting posting / Upcoming Meetings: No 48-hour business was discussed that was not on the Agenda. Upcoming meetings: March 15 (joint with Select Board), March 16 (to include a presentation by the Town Hall Building Committee), and March 23.

Motion to Adjourn by Mary McGoldrick, seconded by Mark Maggi, and all present members voted Aye.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.