

Town of East Longmeadow
Town Council's Budget Financial Oversight Committee
Meeting Minutes of April 29th, 2021

Present; Chr. James Broderick, Tom O'Connor, Kathleen Hill, Christine Sauliner

Absent; Richard Freccero

Also attending; Mike Kane ex-officio, Mary McNally, Steve Lonegran, Bruce Fenney and Ryan Quimby

Chairman Broderick opened the meeting at 1:30 PM with a call of those in attendance. Due to the absence of committee member Richard Freccero, and Tom and Kathy not in attendance on April 22nd the committee moved to table approval of April 22nd minutes for the next meeting.

First order of business, a follow over from the previous meeting that was devoted to the capital projects. The committee received the expanded capital projects spreadsheet that Steve provided with additional information the committee requested. Jim opened it up to the committee to ask questions.

Chris asked the following question regarding the module classrooms at MV and whether it would be built in place or being brought in and cost. DPW Superintendent Bruce Fenney stated the project will be stick-framed onsite. Regarding the cost of demolition, Bruce stated this estimate of \$315 per sq ft. came from the same firm used for the project at Meadowbrook last year. The cost includes demo, work limited site work and build.

Kathy asked about the timeframe, Bruce stated the work being if approved won't actually be done until the summer of 2022. He estimated time to demo and build in the area of four months for these expanded classrooms. The engineering firm operates under industry standards and prices for products at the moment with it being subject to change once the shovel hits the ground.

Tom stated he was concerned over the estimate provided to the committee based upon the higher costs associated with Covid-19, potential abatement and the increasing price of products due to low supply and would like a not to exceed est. Bruce stated that given the year the they were built he sees no abatement needed. Mike mentioned that the cost of lumber has increased for a sheet of plywood from \$18 to \$51 and it will level out when supply and demand normalize. Mary stated the impact of the debt service would not hit the budget until 2023.

Bruce stated this project cost was provided by the engineering firm who has experience with Meadow Brook last year and cost could move up or down. Jim concurred with this and he believes we are just putting for an estimate to the TC.

Moving on, Chris questioned the sidewalk projects and a concern over the debt service and length of bond and suggested contributing a yearly smaller amount of money instead of a larger project that would have the town pay interest on debts regarding the sidewalks. Taking on debt payments for sidewalks may not be the best strategy for the community and would lose the flexibility for the town to pay towards sidewalk projects.

Tom discussed the Mapleshade exterior door project noting the previous year's request for this project and the additional request of funds needed to complete the project. There have been changes regarding security and looking at new concerns that pop up Supt. Fenney stated.

Jim, after no further questions regarding the capital projects deferred to Bruce regarding the DPW budget. Bruce noted that the budget is lean with general fund liabilities only increasing by \$2,223.29. Jim spoke about a number of technical questions regarding the budget presented to the committee.

Tom spoke about the increasing cost of utility rates and is looking at ways to address this potential shortfall now by possibly requesting additional money into this line item to avoid coming back for more.

Jim appreciated the in-depth answer that Bruce gave to the committee regarding the DPW budget.

Jim moved the agenda to I. T. Director Ryan Quimby's budget having a number of questions regarding summer help. Ryan spoke about changes with Covid-19 and utilizing existing staff in an effort to save money. There have been savings regarding the two-way radio system no longer being used for ambulance services because of the new WestComm partnership the town has entered into.

The meeting turned to the committee's budget format factoring in the Covid-19 monies received by the town. Mary said there was approximately \$4.7 million apportioned to the community receiving Covid-19 funding according to the Mass Municipal Association Chart. This money was made to Hampden county, but because there is no longer a county form of government the monies were distributed based on population amongst all the communities in Hampden County. These monies have not yet been used or given clear restrictions yet according to Mary. The funds had to be connected to a Covid-19 related issues.

There was a discussion around the process of the budget and considering the nature of unknown variables that Covid-19 has produced making the budget subject to change in the later part of this calendar year. Neighboring communities have put away extra monies to their stabilization funds to account for these changes. Tom asked if the state will allow late budgets at the local level like they had done last year. Mary said no, the state won't be allowing this.

For the budget presentation made before the town council, Councilor Hill suggested that the committee adopt a slide of information presenting the areas of the budget that may change due to federal dollars coming in related to Covid-19 relief legislation.

The agenda for the next meeting will focus on a budget presentation made by the school department and school committee.

Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday May 6th, 2021 at 1:30 PM.

Chris motioned to adjourn with Tom seconding it. Roll call vote passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 2:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas O'Connor