

**Budget Subcommittee Meeting Minutes  
March 22, 2023**

**Present:** Ms. Lynn Cavicchi, Ms. Jennifer Walsh, Mr. DelVecchio, Ms. Sara Walsh and Mr. Walter Wilk

**Also Present:** Mr. Kevin Dumas (arrived at 6:55PM), Mr. Barry LaCasse and Mr. Ed Donoghue

**Not Present:** Ms. Diana Bren

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2023 NOV 17 A 8:35

**1. Open Meeting**

Ms. Sara Walsh called the Budget Subcommittee meeting to order at 6:30PM with five members present.

MANFIELD  
MASSACHUSETTS

**2. Consideration to Approve Meeting Minutes from February 8, 2023 and February 16, 2023**

**Motion:** To approve the meeting minutes of February 8<sup>th</sup> and February 16<sup>th</sup> with one amendment to the February 16<sup>th</sup> meeting changing the word in the first paragraph from applications to implications and now reads "Mr. DelVecchio asked what the practical implications would be for the fund." (J. Walsh/DelVecchio)

**Passes 5:0**

**3. Budget Update from Town and Schools**

Mr. LaCasse began the discussion stated that the FY24 budget is balanced. He stated that this budget is not perfect and the difficult discussions started back in August. The critical goal was to maintain town services within the means of proposition two and a half. He believed the budget used a reasonable amount of free cash and it was not creating a cliff in FY25 and there will be funds available to approve CIP items. He then noted that the budget was a compromise. Mr. LaCasse then shared a table of the progression of the budget dating back to the beginning of the year with a 5.3-million-dollar shortfall and reviewed how a balanced budget was reached. He highlighted that \$250,000 will be used from free cash to offset the spike in electricity costs and added that it is believed that the rates will go down in FY24. Mr. DelVecchio agreed that as a Light Commissioner it is expected to see a decrease in electric costs. Mr. Wilk asked for an opinion from the electric department so that it can be shown to the residents at Town Meeting. Ms. Cavicchi stated that gas prices spiked, but they not returned to where they were. She stated that the prices are still high and asked if some of these electric costs could become a cliff in next year's budget. Ms. Sara Walsh asked if there could a slide in the presentation for next week that explains electric and what the risks could be in next year's budget. Mr. LaCasse stated that the lease payment of \$193,000 for smart boards is moving from the operating budget to CIP. Mr. Donoghue then explained the pay and ride revolving fund has a balance of about \$900,000 and it will be used as a revenue source. He further explained that the salary reductions of \$400,000 in the last reduction were from one resignation and three retirements. The additional salary reductions will be six or seven FTE's and it was not known which school those would be from. Ms. Cavicchi noted that it is easier at the elementary level because teachers can move amongst different grades, but at the high school level the teachers teach more specific courses. Mr. Donoghue stated that there would not be any dramatic changes, class sizes would not be increasing by ten students, but it may be that some AP courses are not offered. Mr. LaCasse then noted that the salaries on the government side are going to be shared amongst departments. He stated that DPW public buildings is spending a significant amount of time on the water projects so 50% allocations of the salaries will be allocated to the water enterprise fund. Mr. Wilk stated that that will be a concern because the water project is almost done but Mr. LaCasse responded that there are other well sites to do.

Mr. DelVecchio commented about the lease payment for the smartboards for the schools and thought it was a good idea to handle these consistently and should be moved from operating to free cash. Mr. Feely was concerned that this never should have been placed in operating budget and items like this should always be in CIP. Mr. LaCasse noted that as far as capital projects he has taken a deeper dive and pushing departments harder and have been able to delay some projects to future years. Mr. Wilk stated it was important to not

push all projects because it could easily lead to 10 million in future years. Mr. Feely stated that there should not be pressure put on the operating budget if expenses are not in right place. Mr. LaCasse agreed that we shouldn't defer what cannot be deferred. They are going to continue to fund the projects, but not all need to be funded immediately. Mr. DelVecchio stated that this whole process started knowing it was going to be a tough year. Ms. Sara Walsh stated that the school and town did good work and are not dipping into stabilization but thought it would be good to look ahead at next year because of the higher use of free cash and uncertainty of economy and at high level what does a two- or three-year budget look like.

Ms. Cavicchi stated that at next week's Tri-board meeting things need to be explained at a high level and tell residents that there will have to be further reductions in FY25 because the money isn't there. She commended the school and town for getting this year's budget balanced, but its not sustainable and explain in a way that residents can understand. Mr. Wilk asked Mr. LaCasse how difficult it would be to create a budget for next year and show what the step off would be Mr. LaCasse said we have good projections of new revenue, cannabis facilities, we are looking ahead at FY25 and FY26. Mr. Dumas explained how he is working on the TOD changes which would create new growth opportunities. Mr. Feely stated if there is too much info it can be ripped apart and also stated that if we are wrong then next year they will say why should we believe that you are right now. Ms. Sara Walsh stated that it's a delicate balance of looking two to three years out. Mr. DelVecchio commented that we need to show resiliency.

#### 4. Discussion of 3/29 meeting format and agenda

Mr. DelVecchio noted that Town Meeting is planned for June due to TOD and the need for the Planning Board to have public hearings not because of the budget. Mr. LaCasse stated the goal is to get a vote of support from all three boards at the Tri-Board meeting. Mr. Wilk stated that he would vote no next week because he wants to see what the step off looks like next year. He added that he knows it will be a range and not perfect, but would like to get a feeling of what the hole looks like. Ms. Cavicchi said it could be helpful in both directions and at a high level the boards need to understand and note which items are a potential concern for next year. Mr. LaCasse stated it was a fair request to look at next year, but it is difficult because collective bargaining isn't complete and still have revenues coming in. Ms. Sara Walsh then stated that the Tri-board meeting would be on tv and that it would be many people's first time seeing the budget discussion. She expects that the budgets will be explained and how the budget was reduced and added if it is feasible to provide what the following year looks like and where we need to go. Mr. DelVecchio stated that everyone was trying very hard here and the budget did not use stabilizations and it did not cut school sports. He continued stating that the Town is in a strong place and there still is rainy day fund and it is not like twenty years when CIP projects were not funded. Mr. Donoghue stated that he would do his own presentation and it would be about three to five slides. Ms. Cavicchi stated that the School Committee wouldn't vote on the budget until after the tri-board meeting. The Committee discussed a potential next meeting date of April 26<sup>th</sup>.

#### 5. Any Items Not Known within 48 Hours

There were no items.

#### 6. Adjourn

**Motion:** To adjourn the Budget Subcommittee meeting of March 22, 2023 at 7:22PM. (DelVecchio/J. Walsh)

**Passes 5:0**

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Signature

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Date

11/16/23

*Minutes prepared by Carrie Champagne*