

Finance Committee Meeting

March 22, 2023, 7:00 PM EST
Veterans Memorial Building – Room #229
900 Main Street Millis, MA 02054
Participation Via Zoom Remote Platform

Committee Members In Attendance:

Pete Berube, Chair
Jodie Garzon, Vice Chair
Peter Underhill, Clerk
Joyce Boiardi
Michael Krone
Jonathan Loer
Cathy MacInnes
Sara Reyes
John Steadman

Invited Guest:

Michael Guzinski, Town Administrator
Carol Johnston, Finance Director
Chris Soffayer, Police Chief
Rick Barrett, Fire and Rescue Chief
Patty Kayo, Council on Aging Director

Pete Berube called the Finance Committee Meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

Police Department FY24 Budget Presentation:

Chief Soffayer highlighted the Police Department's Accomplishments which include the following grants:

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| • Evidence Room Certified from an outside Private Agency: | \$ 3,000.00 |
| • Bulletproof Vest (5-year life): | \$ 15,000.00 |
| • Dispatch Training Grant: | \$ 5,920.48 |
| • Technology/Equipment: | \$ 34,389.00 |
| • Traffic Enforcement: | \$ 20,560.00 |
| • Safe School Signage: | \$ 7,000.00 |
| • MA Vest-a-Dog: | \$ 6,995.00 |
| • K9 Unit: | \$ 27,000.00 |

Over the past five years, the department has secured funding through Grants and Drug Asset Forfeiture for Capital Items including tasers, handguns, cruiser radios and equipment, portable radios, fingerprint scanners, software, less-lethal equipment and community policing equipment totaling \$637,124.36.

The department includes 26 Staff Members:

- 1 Police Chief
- 5 Sergeants
- 13 Patrol Officers
- 4 Full-Time Dispatchers
- 3 Part-Time Dispatchers

An Above Level Service Request includes (2) additional Full-Time Police Officers, approximately \$180,000.00 per year. The request is due to the increase in the number of incidents as a result of community growth. Additional staff will bring the Millis Police Department in line with comparable communities. Three Police Staff Members are on duty during each shift, excluding the Police Chief.

HCA (Host Community Agreement) funding totals \$158,500.00 and includes an SRO (School Resource Officer), Marijuana Stipends and Training. When the HCA expires, the department would consider requiring the School Department to fund ½ of the SRO's Salary.

New Housing Projects include:

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| • Anthology, an assisted living facility, located on Bridge Street: | 107 Units |
| • Blueberry Lane: | 2 Units |
| • Emerson Place located off Ridge Street: | 43 Units |
| • Larch Road Development: | 48 Units |
| • Rivendale Woods located off Causeway Street: | 4 Units |
| • Regency at Glen Ellen: | 329 Units |

Other potential project include:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| • Woodland, located off Cottage Avenue: | 44 Units |
| • 144 Union St (Herman Shoe): | 98 Units |
| • 1060 Main Street, formerly Budabings: | 24 Units |
| • 1344 Main Street: | 4 Units |

The department replaces (2) cruisers per Fiscal Year. The 7-year Vehicle Replacement Program is part of their operating budget. The cost of the program has increased from \$70,000.00 to \$84,304.12 for FY24. The window tint on the vehicles is a cost savings of approximately \$7,000.00 and provides privacy of residents' personal information and reduces solar glare while the Officers are using MDTs (Mobile Data Terminal).

The FY24 Police Budget:

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|-------------|-----------------------|
| • Salaries: | \$2,290,984.00 |
| • Expenses: | <u>\$ 366,574.12</u> |
| Total: | <u>\$2,657,558.12</u> |

The FY24 Dispatch Budget:

- | | |
|-------------|----------------------|
| • Salaries: | \$ 310,668.00 |
| • Expenses: | <u>\$ 12,300.00</u> |
| Total: | <u>\$ 322,968.00</u> |

Salaries are contractual and expenses have increased approximately \$50,000.00.

The Chief is a member of the Metropolitan Squat Team which includes Tactical Teams and Crises Negotiations. The Town's Social Worker, Amy Leone, provides several resources to the town and has a tremendous networking system.

Fire and Rescue FY24 Budget Presentation:

Chief Barrett highlighted the department's functions and goals:

- Fires and Carbon Monoxide Emergencies
- Motor Vehicle Accidents
- Medical and Weather-Related Emergencies
- Missing Persons
- Mutual Aid
- Inspections, Hazardous Materials and Code Compliance
- Public Education

The department includes 32 Staff Members:

- 1 Fire and Rescue Chief
- 1 On-Call Deputy Chief
- 4 Full-Time Lieutenants
- 12 Full-Time Firefighters/EMTs
- 14 On-Call Firefighters/EMTS

Chief Barrett echoed Chief Soffayer's concerns with ongoing and upcoming housing projects. Call volume has increased significantly due to expanded housing and mental health. The Select Board has established a Lift Assist Policy which typically results in transport to an area hospital. The policy was put in place for the Anthology, the Assisted Living Facility, and would charge the facility \$500.00 per Lift-Assist Incident.

The FY24 Fire and Rescue Budget:

• Salaries:	\$2,067,301.00
• Expenses:	\$ 334,600.00
Total:	<u>\$2,401,901.00</u>

CBA obligations for Annual Stipends include:

• Task Rescue Team:	\$1,000.00
• MA Task Force:	\$1,000.00
• Swat Team Paramedic:	\$1,000.00
• Fire Safe Officer:	\$ 500.00
• Car Seat Instructor:	\$ 500.00

Ambulance Revenue fund Rescue Wages, \$618,402.00. Ambulance Fees have increase by 73% since FY19 and the department provides Mutual Aid to surrounding towns due to staffing (4) Paramedics which was possible by the SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) Grant. Ambulance Revenues fund approximately \$200,000.00 in Healthcare Benefits for the Paramedics. The SAFER Grant will expire in October of FY24. The Ambulance Fund Revenue is limited in scope as voted at Town Meeting several years ago and must be used for costs to operate an ambulance.

The department faces shift coverage challenges primarily due to Out-On Injury Staff. A policy was established that limited Out-On-Injury Leave to one year if the individual would not be capable of filling the position in the future; involuntary retirement. The FY23 Budget could potentially have a deficit in Shift Coverage Wages. Training is required and results in overtime.

An increase of \$50,000.00 in Expenses is due to rising costs for equipment, training and medical supplies.

An Above-Level Service Request includes the addition of a \$5,000.00 Budget Line Item for AED (Automated External Defibrillator) Management. The department has (32) AED Units, the request would provide (16) batteries which typically have a five year life and (28) replacement pads which typically have a two year life. The Oak Grove Farm and Pickleball Courts recently had AED installed through the initiative by a High School Student's Senior Project and a local donation.

In FY23, the department received several grants:

• Firefighter Gear:	\$15,000.00
• Safe and Senior Safe:	\$ 7,500.00
• MEMA:	\$ 5,000.00

The department filed for a \$100,000.00 Grant from the Federal Government for specialized equipment for search and rescue.

An Engine Replacement takes up to sixteen months and is scheduled for delivery in September/October 2023. The current wait time for an Ambulance is 2+ years, the anticipated cost is \$400,000.00. The department's ten-year scheduled Capital Item Replacement includes a Brush Truck, Engine #5 and Car #2.

The town is very fortunate to have both the Police and Fire and Rescue departments work so well together in their response to the residents' needs and emergencies.

Council on Aging FY24 Budget Presentation:

The primary goal of the Council on Aging is to increase the quality of life of the Senior Population. The Council does so by providing information and referrals to Local and State Programs. The Outreach Programming has increased 124% in the last few years. Increases in services include:

- Food Insecurities
- Financial Insecurities
- Fuel Assistance
- Homelessness and Housing

The need for assistance for Seniors has increased extensively over the last three years. The department has implemented several weekly programs to assist with food insecurities and services approximately (50) Seniors per week. There is an anonymous resident who provides staple foods for Seniors in need. In 2022, 788 Seniors utilized the Council on Aging services. The department would like to offer more programming and events.

The FY24 Council on Aging Budget:

• Salaries:	\$155,431.00
• Expenses:	<u>\$ 9,934.00</u>
Total:	<u>\$165,365.00</u>

Above-Level Service Requests include:

• Add a Program/Operations Manager:	\$ 55,764.80
• Increase in Director Hours:	\$ 9,388.08
• Increase in Outreach Worker Hours:	\$ 3,533.40
• Increase in Dispatch/Reception Hours:	\$ 1,698.32

The Above-Level Service Requests are necessary to provide afternoon programming.

The town does offer a Senior Tax Work Off Program for (21) Seniors; (15) are for Low-Income the other (6) are for individuals who bring a special skill that benefits the town departments. The town also offers a Veterans Work Off Program.

Capital Item Requests include:

- Replacement of Chevy Cruz: \$ 25,000.00
 - 10 years old with 63,000.00 miles

The Director of the Council on Aging plans to retire at the end of April 2023. The need for a Program/Operations Manager will be necessary to keep the department functioning. Pete Berube and the committee extended their gratitude to Patty Kayo for her efforts and dedication to the Council on Aging.

Spring 2023 Town Meeting Draft Warrant Article Review:

The Select Board has not made any changes to the May 2023 Town Meeting Warrant which includes:

- Article #1 Unpaid Bills
- Article #2 FY23 Additional Wages and Expenses
- Article #3 FY24 Operating Budget
- Article #4 Ratification of CBAs
- Article #5 Sewer Enterprise Fund
- Article #6 Water Enterprise Fund
- Article #7 Stormwater Enterprise Fund
- Article #8 Consent Items
- Article #9 Capital Items
- Article #10 Design and Construction of Sidewalks
- Article #11 Tree Maintenance/Removal
- Article #12 School Computer Lease
- Article #13 Police Cruiser Lease
- Article #14 General ByLaw Amendment – Powers and Duties of the Town Administrator
- Article #15 Establish Millis Net Zero Goal
- Article #16 Amend Plastic Bag Reduction ByLaw
- Article #17 Unemployment Insurance
- Article #18 OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) Fund
- Article #19 Special Education Stabilization Fund
- Article #20 Stabilization Fund
- Article #21 Petitioned Article

An additional Warrant Article could be added by the Select Board which includes Oak Grove Farm Trail Improvements funded by Community Preservation Open Space/Recreation Reserves.

Board and Committee Liaison Updates:

The Capital Planning Committee will meet to finalize their list of Capital Improvements and will present the list to the Finance Committee on April 5, 2023.

The Community Preservation Committee met last week and unanimously voted to fund Oak Grove Farm Trail Improvements in the amount of approximately \$35,000.00 from Open Space/Recreation Reserves.

The Select Board met today to discuss the FY24 Operating Budget, Free Cash Appropriations and discuss solutions to bridge the gap in the School Department's FY24 shortfall; an override may be necessary. A solution is quite complex: funding the shortfall with Stabilization Funds would affect the town's bond rating. The town will need to borrow funds for the Middle/High School Renovation as well as an additional PFAS Treatment Facility. The School Department and Select Board will devise a plan to bridge the shortfall gap, the Finance Committee will then deliberate and vote on how the FY24 Operating Budget is presented at Town Meeting.

Final Recommendations will be made on April 12, 2023. Another key factor is the possible Tri-County School Building Project which could have a substantial impact on the town's assessment which is based on the number of Millis Students who attend Tri-County. The number fluctuates from year to year; ranging from 25 – 60. The project will be voted on in October 24, 2023 by all participating districts. If passed, the town will be obligated to fund the assessment. It is crucial Millis residents are informed of the potential impacts to the town. Local Aid Receipts are expected to be decreased by \$20,000.00 in FY24. 119 Communities in the Commonwealth are considered Minimum State Aid Districts or moderately wealthy communities; Millis is included in that group. Additional funding typically goes to "Gateway Communities". The funding formula is based on demographics may need to be revised

The March 29, 2023 Finance Committee could potentially be a Tri-Board Meeting; Finance Committee, School Committee and Select Board.

The town does have a Stabilization Fund Policy which will be discussed at upcoming meetings.

The Finance Committee's Report, which is distributed to all residents prior to Town Meeting, includes the Chair's Letter which will outline all concerns the town is facing. Ultimately, Town Meeting will decide what is funded.

Bills Payable – Postmaster:

Jodie Garzon made a motion to recommend approval of payment to Millis Postmaster in the amount of \$987.65 for postage to mail the Finance Committee Report; Cathy MacInnes seconded. Vote: 9/0 motion carries unanimously.

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes Approval:

Jodie Garzon made a motion to approve the February 22, 2023 Finance Committee Meeting Minutes as written; Cathy MacInnes seconded. Vote: 8/0 1 abstained. Motion carries.

Adjourn Meeting:

Jodie Garzon made a motion to adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting at 9:26 PM; Joyce Boiardi seconded. Vote: 9/0 motion carries unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Deirdre Gilmore