

Finance Committee Meeting

March 24, 2021 7:00 PM EST
Zoom Remote Meeting Platform
Millis, MA 02054

In Attendance:

Pete Berube, Chairman
Craig Schultze, Vice Chairman
Doug Riley, Clerk
Joyce Boiardi
Jodie Garzon
Cathy MacInnes
Katie Tieu

Invited Guest:

Michael Guzinski, Town Administrator
Carol Johnston, Finance Director
John Moore, Veterans Services Officer
Kris Fogarty, Recreation Director
Terri Gonsalves, Assistant Assessor
Lisa Hardin, Town Clerk
James McCaffrey, Select Board Chairman

Pete Berube called the Finance Committee Meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

Veterans Services FY22 Budget Request Discussion:

Above Level Service Request – The position of Veterans Services Officer (VSO) initially required a minimum number of hours per week. However, after further research and gathering of information, the position requires more hours to thoroughly complete the task.

John Moore outlined the accomplishments he has made during his time as Veterans Services Officer:

- Enhanced Chapter 115: Bringing Veterans and their families above the poverty level, recouping \$36,000.00 in matched benefits and \$27,900.00 annually in State Funds available.
- Improved the Veterans' Claim Program through Vetra Spec – several Millis Veterans have benefitted from this drastic improvement.
- Veterans Property Tax Abatement and Work Off Program – The program was previously managed by the Council on Aging; under the Veterans Services Officer the program no longer has income or age limits. Additionally, the Brave Act increased the Property Tax Abatement from \$1,000.00 to \$1,500.00.
- COVID-19 Vaccines and Food for Veterans
- Providing DD-214 documentation – certification of Military Time Served

Overall, an improved system for Millis Veterans to access the benefits they deserve.

A summary of surrounding town's staff and weekly VSO hours was provided. Millis' VSO's hours need to be increased. In working with the Town Administrator, it was determined the annual stipend should be increased from \$11,195.00 to \$18,000.00. There are approximately 450 Veterans in Millis, which include two Medal of Honor Winners. An additional request for \$10,000.00, an average of \$1,100.00 monthly per Veteran, is being requested. This ensures funds are available if a Millis Veteran decides to claim his/her benefits. Those funds would be seventy five percent reimbursed by the Federal Government.

The current FY22 Budget:

Salaries:	\$11,195.00
Expenses:	<u>\$48,130.00</u>
Total:	<u>\$59,325.00</u>

The Expense Line Items includes:

- Supplies and Expenses: \$ 850.00
- Veteran Benefits: \$44,280.00
- Veteran Burials: \$ 3,000.00

Doug Riley inquired if all surrounding town's have their own VSO; the answer is no. The Town of Ashland provides VSO services for Holliston and Medway. The services provided are not adequate for Medway and Holliston Veterans. The idea of a primary and dedicated VSO and staff for several towns, funded jointly, is reasonable. Committee members thanked Major Moore for his service and dedication in helping fellow Veterans receive benefits.

Recreation FY22 Budget Request Discussion:

Kris Fogarty thanked the committee for recommending an additional \$10,000.00 at the November 2020 Town Meeting and outlined the Recreation Department's function and accomplishments over the past year. Highlights include a successful Inclusive Summer Camp Program, funded by a \$10,000.00 grant. The department is seeking to expand this program to include more participants. The Pickleball Courts were completed which enabled the department to rejuvenate their Pickleball Program. Overall programming was hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, however the department, working in conjunction with the Council on Aging and Fire Department, provided a Sunshine Club, a Pen Pal Program and Santa in a Snow Globe event. The department hosted "E-Games" including tournaments; the program was successful. Several other programs were offered which kept the community engaged while adhering to social distancing protocols. One of the department's goals is to complete construction of the basketball courts; a donation from a resident will be used for this project. The department would also like to construct a storage shed.

Above Level Service request for FY22 is to add an additional line item in the Operating Budget to include the 10 hour per week Department Assistant I, \$11,920.00. When the position was added, the salary for the position was paid from the Revolving Fund. The individual has since secured twenty hours per week in the Town Clerk's Office; this individual qualifies for healthcare benefits. The Revolving Fund, which was changed in 2018, requires benefits to be paid from the Revolving Fund which has impacted the fund by \$5,334.39; 1/3 of healthcare costs. As part of the Operating Budget, salaries and healthcare costs for the Department Assistant would be paid by the town's General Fund. This step would bring the department closer to being funded fully through the General Fund. One half of the Director's Salary, \$32,665.00, is paid by the General Fund the other half, \$32,665.00, is paid by the Revolving Fund.

The department is requesting Marijuana Impact Funds for FY22 to include:

• Inclusive Camp Staff:	\$ 7,200.00
o Camp Director - \$25.00/hour	\$1,600.00
o Lead Counselor - \$20.00/hour	\$1,280.00
o (5) Camp Counselors - \$13.50/hour	\$4,320.00
• Teen Program Coordinator:	\$15,000.00
o Oversees special programs and events and works with the DARE Officer to implement specific programs for teens: 15 hours - \$19.00/hour	
• Inclusive Camp Meals and Tips:	\$ 500.00
• Inclusive Camp Supplies and Equipment:	\$ 1,500.00
Total:	<u>\$24,200.00</u>

Pete Berube agreed, the Teen Program Coordinator is an ideal request for use of Marijuana Impact Funds.

Carol Johnston expanded on the benefits funding of the Recreation Department Staff by the Revolving Fund. The Revolving Fund is 53 ½ E; any salaries drawn from the fund require the proportional benefits (1/3 for the Department Assistant and ½ for the Director) to be paid by the fund. Unfortunately, in the last eighteen months, the Revolving Fund has not had the ability to pay for the staff's benefits; the General Fund has picked up the cost. The Department Assistant's hours, due to lack of funds in the Recreation Revolving Fund, were shifted temporarily to the Town Clerk's Office in preparation of the Presidential Election.

Mike Guzinski clarified the policy the town has in funding the Recreation Department is being discussed by the Select Board; a determination has not been made. The broader question is determining the town's policy if the General Fund should absorb 100% of the Recreation Department's Salaries and benefits.

Craig Schultze recalled discussions to have the Recreation Department fully funded by the General Fund, similar to other departments, and eliminate the Revolving Fund; all fees from programs would be deposited into the General Fund. At the time, there was resistance from the Recreation Committee to eliminate the Revolving Fund.

Finance Director and Accounting Department FY22 Budget Request Discussion:

Carol Johnston outlined the FY22 Budget:

Salaries:	\$264,304.00
Expenses:	<u>\$ 6,538.00</u>
Total:	<u>\$270,842.00</u>

The salaries are contractual. The difference between FY20 and FY21 reflect the decrease in certain staff hours of 10% starting July 1, 2020. The hours were reinstated as of December 1, 2020 after approval at the November Town Meeting. The SEIU contract, which includes the Town Accountant and Department Assistant III, is under negotiations; the salaries include step increases only. Expenses are level funded.

The department has finalized the MUNIS Chart of Accounts and implemented a Purchase Order System with the School Department. An Employee Self Service System has been rolled out to the Municipal Departments. Information available under this system includes: Time Off Balances and Payroll Information for example. This system will be rolled out to the School Department by July 1, 2021.

Treasurer Department FY22 Budget Request Discussion:

Salaries:	\$230,797.00
Expenses:	<u>\$ 41,090.00</u>
Total:	<u>\$271,887.00</u>

Similar to the above, the salaries are contractual and reduced hours for certain employees in this department were reinstated in December 2020. Expenses are level funded.

IT Administration FY22 Budget Request Discussion:

Salaries:	\$ 80,000.00
Expenses:	<u>\$255,045.00</u>
Total:	<u>\$335,045.00</u>

An IT Specialist was funded at the November Town Meeting. The town is currently in negotiations with the Town of Norfolk to fund this position, Millis 57% and Norfolk 43% of the \$80,000.00 Those funds will be reimbursed by Norfolk to Millis through Local Receipts, similar to the Animal Control Officer agreement with the Town of Medway.

Increases in Expenses include: Software Maintenance \$15,078.00 and Annual License Fees \$21,957.00. The School Department will gradually contribute to some of the IT costs.

Town Clerk, Elections and Registrars FY22 Budget Request and Discussion:

Lisa Hardin outlined the Town Clerk's functions, accomplishments and FY22 Budget Request.

Town Clerk:

Salaries:	\$113,830.00
Expenses:	<u>\$ 7,450.00</u>
Total:	<u>\$121,280.00</u>

The Salaries request includes contractual obligations and an increase from \$12,413.00 to \$25,000.00 annually for the Town Clerk. Expenses remain level funded. For several years, the Town Clerk has requested an increase to the annual stipend. This would allow more hours to perform Department Head responsibilities. The current staff is performing the daily functions of the department well. The Town Clerk would like more time to preserve town historical record.

In 2019, the town hired a consulting firm, Community Paradigm, to conduct a review of the Town Clerk's Office and Staffing. The results of that study found the office is sufficiently staffed. The full report is available on the town's website:

https://www.millisma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf901f/uploads/town_clerk_office_organizational_assessment_2019.pdf

The position is currently an Elected Position, there have been discussions among the Select Board and Charter Review Committee to change the position to an Appointed Position; allowing for increased

accountability to the Town Administrator. Jim McCaffrey clarified at the time of the study; the Select Board was not ready to move the position from Elected to Appointed.

Above Level Service Requests include:

- Dog Licensing Software and Annual Service Contract: \$4,000.00
 - Initial Start-up Costs: \$2,000.00
 - Migration Fee (\$.15/dog) \$ 200.00
 - Annual Service Contract: \$1,800.00
- Increase Town Clerk Stipend: \$12,587.00

The dog licensing software would allow residents to process their pet's license online and would alleviate staff time manually processing the licenses. The Animal Control Officer is in favor of implementing this new process.

Elections:

Salaries: \$ 15,814.00
Expenses: \$ 12,350.00
Total: \$ 28,164.00

The Town Clerk asked if perhaps an Election Stipend for the Town Clerk could be considered.

Registrars:

Salaries: \$ 1,280.00
Expenses: \$ 4,060.00
Total: \$ 5,340.00

Assessors FY22 Budget Request Discussion:

Terri Gonsalves outlined the FY22 Budget:

Salaries: \$134,159.00
Expenses: \$ 9,736.00
Total: \$143,895.00

Salaries are contractual. Expenses include increases to Supplies and Expenses: \$100.00, Dues and Subscriptions: \$25.00 and Meetings: \$200.00.

The department is requesting the purchase of an iPad and software for data collection: \$18,595.00 as well as annual maintenance of the software: \$4,166.66. The programming would begin in October 2021. Terri Gonsalves will follow up with clarification of the Maintenance Agreement Terms and Conditions.

The Board of Assessors submitted two Warrant Articles for the May Town Meeting:

- FY22 Personal Property Interim Year Inspections: \$20,000.00
- FY23 Recertification Process (Begins January 2022): \$18,000.00
- Total: \$38,000.00

Spring 2021 Town Meeting Warrant Additional Article Discussion:

Mike Guzinski summarized the changes to the Draft Warrant:

- Street Acceptance – Hickory Hills Subdivision and Town ByLaw Amendment – Sewer Warrant Articles have been removed from the Warrant.
-Capital Items Article – some of the typical recurring articles will be rolled into this article.
-The Select Board are considering if the Tree Pruning and Removal and Road Maintenance and Repair Article will remain as Warrant Articles or be included in the DPW Operating Budget.
-The Select Board has added a Warrant Article: Establish Lansing Millis Memorial Stabilization Fund, \$363,887.00; the Community Preservation Act Committee will discuss this article at their upcoming meeting.
-Authorize the Sale of Town Owned Land, Acorn Street – the Select Board are still considering this article. It is a small land locked parcel on Acorn Street. The Parcel # was not readily available. Jim McCaffrey clarified it is adjacent to the Hickory Hills Subdivision, built by Bob Fox.

Approve Bills Payable: Postmaster – Postage for the Finance Committee Report:

Jodie Garzon made a motion to approve payment to the Millis Postmaster in the amount of \$681.22 for postage to deliver the Finance Committee Report to all residents; Joyce Boiardi seconded. Vote: 7/0 motion carries unanimously.

Old Business/New Business:

Jodie Garzon asked the committee to review the Finance Committee Policies and Procedures Handbook and convey any comments, additions or suggestions to her for revision. Pete Berube's intent is to review the handbook at an upcoming meeting and take an official vote on it.

Jim McCaffrey suggested the committee expand the press run of the Finance Committee Report, 500 copies, for distribution at Town Meeting. The additional cost could be covered by the CARES Act. Pete Berube noted the request and the committee will consider it if their budget allows.

The Annual Spring Town Meeting will be held on Saturday, May 1, 2021 at noon, the designated location is the Middle/High School Parking Lot located at 245 Plain Street.

Adjourn Meeting:

Craig Schultze made a motion to adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting at 9:06 PM; Jodie Garzon seconded. Vote: 7/0 motion carries unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Deirdre Gilmore