

**Advisory Committee Meeting
Zoom Video Conference
January 4, 2023, 6:30 p.m.**

Those present from Advisory Committee included Shawn Baker, Doug Smith, Madison Riley, Rani Elwy, Gail Sullivan, David Prock, Bill Schauffler, Pete Pedersen, Al Ferrer, Jenn Fallon, Christina Dougherty, Wendy Paul, Susan Clapham, Neal Goins, and Andrea Ward.

Shawn Baker called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Doug Smith took roll call.

Citizen Speak

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

Recreation Overview and FY24 Budgets

Matthew Chin, Director, Recreation, and Mark Wolfson, Recreation Commissioner, were present.

An overview of the Recreation Department, the Recreation FY24 budgets, and the Morses Pond project were presented and reviewed.

Questions

- Has COVID impacted the number of programs that are offered?
 - Recreation is getting back to normal with program offerings. Last summer we saw an increase from people not normally registering in programs. In FY21 (calendar year 2020) there was a drop off in programming due to COVID.
- Are you affiliated with WCCC?
 - WCCC is a separate group and is run out of Wellesley College.
- What is the difference between the \$426,000 and the revenue generated from the programs.
 - \$426,000 is for staff and is the tax impact portion of the budget. \$20,000 is set aside for treatment at Morses Pond. \$1.2 million program revenues are generated through fees which offset program expenses. Office expenses also come out of program revenue.
- Has there been any changes to the mix in the programs offered and in fees? Are there any trends?
 - There was a huge bump in tennis in the summer of 2020 and 2021. Everyone was taking tennis during the pandemic.
- Are there currently any facilities at the location of the new buildings proposed for Morses Pond?
 - These buildings will be brand new.
- Was there any investigation of the foundation soil composition at Morses Pond?
 - Yes, this was done as part of the feasibility study.
- Have you considered photovoltaic panels on the building in addition to those proposed to be located in the parking lot?
 - This will be part of the process as we evaluate and review the plans.
- Have you considered creating a recreation room for birthday parties rather than the large room for first aid?
 - During the summer season parties can be outside. The open area with tables has a roof. The first aid area could be used as function room in other seasons.
- What is the PFAS situation for the pond water?
 - Recreation works with the BOH on testing the water for safety for swimming. When people swim, they don't normally consume large amounts of water.
- Will the solar panels provide all the energy for this building or is it a mix of sources?

- There will be electric heat in winter. The solar source will offset at 50% or more. We are still working on this. Over the next few months, we will be looking at this type of building to determine whether this is the type of building the town wants. We are also investigating the potential for a prefab building. We are trying to have all the information and answers to questions before deciding on the type of building.
- How does Recreation determine the programs that are offered?
 - Many people come to Recreation first to offer programs or residents will ask for programs. Recreation has conducted some surveys in the past.
- Are any programs virtual or are they all in person now?
 - We have the ability to offer virtual classes by providing the Zoom link to a class.
- What efforts are made to be proactive to finding staff for Morses Pond?
 - We reach out to the high school swim team, and we offer certification. We have a good relationship with the high school athletic department. We also have a lifeguard instructor on staff who runs lifeguard instructor classes throughout the year.
- How do you match programming costs with the fees that are charged? How are you managing increasing costs due to inflation?
 - We add 20% to the overall program costs. This generates a surplus and covers all expenses as well. However, with inflation we might consider a higher percentage. For Morses Pond, the 2022 fees were based on the number of people who attended in 2019 and what was needed to break even.
- Is there pushback on increasing fees?
 - No, people actual value some of our higher-priced classes over some of those which are lower-priced classes. For example, free classes are often not full.
- Do you coordinate programming with other organizations in town such as the library and the COA?
 - Yes, we meet monthly with the library, COA, and Youth Commission to make sure we are not duplicating programs.
- Are there regulations regarding times that the Morses Pond can be used in the off season and evening?
 - Currently we follow NRC regulations, and the park rules are sunrise to sunset. However, we have done things in the evenings such as run movies. We coordinate with NRC about anything outside these rules. The reason we are proposing two (2) buildings is so we can close one down completely in the off season and keep the other open.
- Is there an update on last year's ATM warrant article about private use of public facilities?
 - We installed a membership option to play during the day. It is free and is through the PlayLocal app. We kept the membership in evening where residents must pay to play under the lights. The membership system allowed us to provide court time for more people. Residents can reserve court time and now there seems to be enough court time for everyone.

Select Board update and overview of the 2023 ATM Warrant Articles

Meghan Jop, Executive Director; Tom Ulfelder, Select Board (SB); Lise Olney, Chair, SB; Beth Sullivan Woods, SB; Ann Mara-Lanza, SB were present.

A brief overview of the SB Departments' FY24 budgets, which are still being deliberated by the SB, was provided. An overview of the SB-sponsored 2023 Warrant Articles was provided.

Questions

- Is the need for reduction of \$3.3 million in cash capital similar to other years on average?

- It is an average \$3 to 4 million range each year. In looking at the 5-year capital plan, cash capital is between \$7 to 10 million in the out years. We are borrowing less right now, but there are projects coming online. It also depends on how much annual revenue we are generating. We use conservative revenue projection. There are several different strategies to meet the 6.8% debt policy, such as pulling out large projects to fund with free cash and other strategies.
- A comment was made that during COVID boards were asked to be conservative in their cash capital.
 - We have worked hard to catch up. We have expended over \$10 million for each of the past two years.
- Do you see the increased costs of cybersecurity as a one-time upgrade, or will this be a continuing step up in the budget?
 - We will have an initial investment to make the improvements identified in our recent cybersecurity audit, and then there will be different programs with additional costs that will continue. We utilize a subscription basis for programs. There is a significant buy-in cost this year, but we will need to continue to monitor costs. We are trying to expand public access. Digitization is also a focus for our departments and is an on-going need. We see digitization as a cost.
- Has the insurance rate gone up in addition to the increase in the value to cause the 11-12% increase in insurance costs? What is the split between the increase in rate and the value and do we periodically bid out the insurance?
 - MIIA is the primary municipal insurance carrier in the state. Insurance costs are driven by claims. We continually evaluate claims and the way the town is working to reduce these claims. Each year we have different training provisions to get credit. We push the departments to get credits. The training also reveals deficiencies which could have a cost. Year-over-year increases and claims impact our insurance costs. We are also building new buildings that have additional costs, as does bringing new buildings online.
- Have Workers Compensation claims continued to go up or have they dropped?
 - We have claims that will be on-going through FY24. Some of these employees have been unable to work for an extensive period of time. Based upon recent claims, the actuarial analysis is pushing us to a slightly higher number. There has been no essential increase in claims. We are still in the process of managing some existing claims in various departments.
- What is behind the decision to change the approach for the 50/60 series employees to include the 2% COLA in the budget?
 - With the merit pay plan structure, HR creates a matrix each year. The mid-point is modified by a percentage each year. But a 50/60 employee will not necessarily receive that amount because they receive a percentage based on their standing in the range. Long term employees who are higher in standing in the range are not getting the full amount. In the past there was a high merit pay plan so employees received COLA, but this changed over the years due to financial pressures. This is a correction to the merit pay plan matrix; currently someone might not even receive COLA if they have a high standing in the range. The matrix will cover the performance increases.
- What is the total amount of correction?
 - The remaining 2% COLA is factored into every department's budget. \$215,000 is the separate merit pay plan.
- If the 50/60 merit pay plan is combined with the COLA increase, would that come to a 3% increase?
 - Yes, approximately that.

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- Is the 50/60 pool separated?
 - It's in one pool. These are salaried, non-hourly management staff. Range is 50 – 69.
- Does this reflect that 50 series are newer employees and 60 series more experienced?
 - Standing in range reflects the level of experience for employees.
- The SB is proposing to use 40R funds for improvements to the housing authority community center; is this the same project that CPC was looking to fund?
 - Yes, it is the same. We were looking at multiple sources for funding but couldn't use CPC funds. We also went to WHDC, but their mission is the creation of affordable housing. We are trying to sustain the housing authority properties.
- A comment was made that in the big picture the housing authority and properties are 50 years old and pre-date CPC; the special legislation is intended to correct this.
- Is it anticipated that the SB will sign the warrant at their next meeting?
 - We will have a good draft, but the warrant is not expected to be signed until January 24.

Administrative items

- Advisory members were encouraged to use the Google Sheets document as it contains useful information, including meeting dates and deadlines. Comments and thoughts on preferences for calendar were requested.
- Public Hearing is currently scheduled for February 1.
- Advisory members were reminded of the Saturday meeting (February 11) for discussion and voting.

Minutes Approval

Neal Goins made, and Al Ferrer seconded a motion to approve the December 14, 2022, minutes.

Roll Call Vote

Jennifer Fallon – yes

Doug Smith – yes

Susan Clapham – yes

Al Ferrer - yes

Wendy Paul – yes

Pete Pedersen - yes

Madison Riley – yes

Rani Elwy - abstain

Christina Dougherty - yes

Gail Sullivan – yes

David Prock -yes

William Schaufler – yes

Neal Goins – yes

Andrea Ward – abstain

December 14, 2022 minutes were approved, 12 to 0.

Liaison updates

Select Board/Doug Smith – Chief DeLorie's retirement party is tomorrow.

Schools/Jenn Fallon – a recap of the recent School Committee meeting was provided. There was a discussion about clean school buses; a review of the budget calendar; School Committee votes on the school budget on February 7 and will present to Advisory on February 8; during Citizen Speak at the SC meeting, a group of students spoke and requested adding Chinese New Year as a holiday,

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BOH/Christina Dougherty – there is a new BOH weekly newsletter to which residents are encouraged to subscribe. The BOH spoke with the school superintendent about masking in the schools; the BOH is not mandating masks; there will be free COVID test kits at the Warren School and the Library; the need to focus on other illnesses was discussed at the recent meeting; a FDA grant of \$26,400 was received to help train staff in food code inspections; the BOH budget was reviewed.

Planning/Madison Riley – Sisters of Charity would like to see 125 Oakland Street sold to a for-profit entity to manage; current zoning, however, does not permit this. Members of the Planning Board would like to see this site as residential. Making this change would require a Residential overlay and will need Town Meeting approval. This will be a Planning Board-sponsored warrant article.

MLP/Neal Goins – MLP will be back to Advisory to answer questions about the budget.

CPC/Wendy Paul– CPC will have a new liaison. CPC is co-sponsoring an ATM warrant article for special legislation to authorize Community Preservation Act funds to be used for housing authority purposes.

Adjourn

Wendy Paul made, and Christina Dougherty seconded a motion to adjourn.

Roll Call Vote

Jennifer Fallon – yes

Doug Smith – yes

Susan Clapham - yes

Al Ferrer - yes

Wendy Paul – yes

Pete Pedersen - yes

Madison Riley – yes

Rani Elwy - yes

Christina Dougherty - yes

Gail Sullivan – yes

David Prock -yes

William Schauffler – yes

Neal Goins - yes

Andrea Ward – yes

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m., 14 to 0.

Documents Reviewed

<https://www.wellesley.ma.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/1934>

- Recreation FY24 Operating Budget
- Recreation FY23 Operating Budget Narrative
- Recreation Advisory Presentation PowerPoint Jan. 4, 2023
- Recreation FY24 Capital Request
- SB Departments' FY24 Budget Request and review of 2023 ATM Warrant Articles