

**Advisory Committee Meeting
Zoom Video Conference
Wednesday, January 12, 2022, 6:30 p.m.**

Those present from Advisory Committee included Shawn Baker, Tom Cunningham, Jake Erhard, Jenn Fallon, Neal Goins, John Lanza, Jeff Levitan, Corinne Monahan, Doug Smith, Susan Clapham, Al Ferrer, Wendy Paul, Pete Pedersen, Madison Riley, Patti Quigley.

Neal Goins called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and introduced members of Advisory in attendance.

Citizen Speak

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

Human Resources Board (HR) FY23 Budget and Overview

Scott Szczebak, Director, Human Resources Department; John Hussey, Chair, Human Resources Board were present. An overview of the Human Resources Department and FY23 Operating Budget were presented.

Questions/Comments

- What are the criteria for performance-based increases and is there any performance criteria for adhering to budgets?
 - The performance evaluation for the 50/60 series employees is available on the website. Part of it is managing the budget and efficiencies in the department. It is not completely uniform as board/committees review the department head. The supervisor has a set of goals for each employee and these could be cost basis.
- Are there any criteria about lowering cost of operations so we can beat schedules and budgets?
 - It is the discretion of the boards to set to these goals. These are not HR's responsibility. Select Board and Executive Director play a broad role in this but it is up to each department and the individual boards.
- Is there DEI guidance for departments in hiring or for training existing employees?
 - This is an evolving process. HR meets with each department as each is different. We are taking the best practices from Town wide initiatives and applying them to departments.
- The budget is \$8,500 lower than last year, do you need that money?
 - We want to make sure our budget is under guideline. The difference is in advertising as we stopped purchasing ads in the Boston Globe. We now advertise on Indeed which is free.
- Is advertising centralized through HR?
 - It is centralized through HR and we work with departments for advertising on specialized websites.
- Where is the Merit Pay Plan in the budget?
 - This is a separate article approved by Town Meeting and is not in HR's budget.
- Is \$20,000 enough and is it over what departments have in their budget?
 - The \$20,000 covers enough for smaller departments and HR is conservative with it. And there are standards.
- Do you have any open positions in HR?
 - No.
- With the health insurance change to Blue Cross Blue Shield, is there a process to help everyone make the change?
 - Yes. The use of the on-line platform helps and counseling sessions are offered.

- Do you look holistically across town for performance increases so there is a balanced distribution on performance increases?
 - This is difficult with the number of employees spread out over town. HR has worked on the form and it now requires setting goals and standards rather than just circling a number. Generally, we don't look at each performance evaluation to make sure it's on par. We don't have the ability to force a balance although we try to manage this but it is an on-going challenge.
- Comment was made that one of the numbers on the chart appears not to be a true variance.
- Is there difficulty in filling the number of vacancies across town departments?
 - Last year there were many retirements and COVID related resignations. We fill 70 to 100 positions per year depending on the year. We are successful in recruiting. However, it is difficult to fill part time positions and this has not changed. We try to make sure compensation is on par. We have 18-19 openings right now. And all openings are reviewed at each HR meeting.
- Has HR re-established the relationship with Mass Bay?
 - We did start up again this year. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of interest due to the limit in classes and on-line learning. We hope to be able to restart this.
- Who does collective bargaining for each department and is HR involved and who else is involved?
 - HR sits in all collective bargaining. The department head might be involved and Executive Director might be involved.
- Historically in periods of high inflation what has the town done and are you concerned about the recent increase in inflation given the lower amount used for the annual pay increase? Are you watching your benchmarking communities to see what they are doing?
 - It is a concern but we looked at rates in September/October and the HR Board voted in November. We do a good job benchmarking with our comparable communities. We can look at other towns to see what they are offering for the current year. We will figure out next year if we fall behind. Next year will be the biggest challenge. We will have to do research on what the town has done in the past.
- Is the benchmarking information for all employees or just the 50/60 series employees?
 - We benchmark for both 40 and 50/60 series employees. This increase is for non-union employees and we look at specific non-union 40 series positions across other towns.
- Is this annual?
 - Yes.
- Does HR compare job groups?
 - We look at different job descriptions and what they do and the difference. We look at titles but there are positions that are unique to Wellesley.
- What are the transfers from Finance?
 - This covers the reclassification of the benefits specialist and the remainder of the salary increase is covered by a transfer from the Merit Pay Plan. The department budget could not cover the increase. The budget goes up when the Merit Pay Plan transfers to a department.
- How much of the turnover of 70 to 100 employees per year is related to the schools?
 - HR doesn't handle the school hiring. The schools have their own HR department. This number does include part-time and seasonal employees.
- How many of the 70 to 100 are part time employees?
 - We will need to research on this.
- Does the re-negotiation of the insurance hit the budget before ATM?
 - We hope to negotiate with the unions and come to an agreement. This should be settled by ATM. This would show up in the town budget

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- HR salaries went up by 4.3% from FY22 to FY23 and the increase was offset by the decrease in advertising spending. Are we going to see this year to year and what happened to cause it to increase?
 - The reorganization of the HR department resulted in the increase and it won't occur year to year.
- Is HR bringing policy changes to ATM this year and can you give a preview and will you be coming back to Advisory to present these policy changes?
 - HR policy changes are on the HR Board agenda for this week and then they will go to the boards for comment. We are just cleaning up the policies and consolidating them into one compressive guide to post on-line. Most are existing policies. The only new one is the remote work policy. These will be presented to Advisory.

Community Preservation Committee (CPC) 2022 ATM projects

Barbara McMahon, Chair, Community Preservation Committee (CPC) was present and provided an overview of CPC and presented the 2022 ATM projects and those under consideration.

Questions/Discussion

- Do you entertain requests only from Town boards or do you take requests from other groups?
How do you get the word out?
 - Town Meeting has approved appropriations to different groups in different ways. Private initiatives have been funded but they usually go through a town entity. For example, CPC worked with the Wellesley Historical Society and a private citizen worked with NRC on the Perrin basketball court and pickleball courts.
- Is there a reason that the reserve money of \$3.5 million is so large and could we be using it?
 - Yes CPC is planning on using it. Reserve levels have been cyclical and it is related to how much revenue is generated each year and what types of projects are coming up. CPC is looking several years ahead at the Morses Pond bathhouse needs. CPC has spent money over the past few years on playing fields projects.
- When is CPC planning to vote on other things?
 - CPC is hoping to be able to vote next week.
- How long has CPC been around?
 - Since 2003.
- A comment was made that since the size of reserves go up and down each year that it would be helpful to look at a history of reserves and what CPC spends each year and an outlook for spending in the future. Also, it would be helpful to know the percentage of money that has gone into each of the buckets.
- What are the thoughts on things that are hard to fund and hard to fundraise for?
 - There are a variety of opinions on the committee. If CPC funds everything then the Town is never getting a full picture or understanding of how important these projects are to the Town.
- Is there a state match each year?
 - Yes but we can't depend on the amount each year. The state match at one point was 100 percent and it is different each year.

Natural Resources Commission (NRC) – Overview, FY23 Operating Budget and Capital Budget

Brandon Schmitt, Director, NRC; Raina McManus, Chair, NRC were present.

Discussion/questions

- Is the 15% increase due to the reclassification of the job?

- A portion is the reclassification of the Wetlands Administrator but the bulk of the 15 percent is the conversion of the current part-time education and outreach position to a 35-hour full-time position. NRC is making this position a full-time position to help address compliance issues in addition to the existing education and outreach role.
- Can the Tree Bank funds of roughly \$200,000 be used for capital projects?
 - Yes in theory we could use funds from the Tree Bank fund for work related to the planting of trees. The language is vague for the Tree Bank. NRC and Planning Board can use funds related to the preservation of the tree planting bylaw
- A request was made to have NRC to come back with a plan to use the Tree Bank funds.
- What is the basis of the lower FY21 expenses than the FY21 budget request and is this due to COVID?
 - NRC was understaffed for FY21 and didn't spend other money for various reasons largely due to COVID restrictions on activities. A more detailed answer can be provided.
- Are there special pieces or portions of operations eligible for grant funding?
 - The Green Communities grant relates to energy efficiency improvement projects. NRC is working with the Climate Action staff on the retrofit of lights which could be a portion of this.
- A suggestion was made to involve more students in NRC activities.
 - The outreach coordinator works with the schools within parameters of the education programs.
- Has NRC been involved with Recreation and Morses Pond?
 - Yes and NRC has been supportive of the project conceptually.
- A question was asked about a larger playground at Warren that was planned but due to tree concerns was scaled back?
 - NRC is not aware of this.
- A comment was made about the passive versus active conflict of NRC's activities.
 - NRC recognizes this and tries to balance all the needs.
- A question was asked related to the lights on the fields and how NRC protects the land and allows it to be utilized and loved.
 - The lights are a big topic in Town. The track and field lighting is not an NRC budget item it is a school item and they plan to fund raise for the lights.
- Concern was expressed about the process with NRC.
 - NRC will discuss the lights at its next meeting on the 20th. NRC's next action step is to look at the proposal in the context of NRC criteria.
 - NRC balances the effort and the focus on the natural spaces used for active activity versus those that are natural environment.
 - Playing fields that are park land are NRC and other playing fields are under the School Committee. NRC spends a lot of time on active recreation and designates a lot of resources.
- Has NRC talked with Planning to see if the new compliance person can help enforce the tree bylaw and perhaps the funding could be shared as this role would be for the greater good of the community?
 - Yes we have discussed this with the Director of Planning. We receive many calls regarding the tree bylaw. The hope would be that this person would be able to help with this. Concern was expressed that if this were a shared position it would spread the enforcement too thin.
- Has the Planning Board weighed in about this position as it seems like NRC is addressing property issues and these would be a Planning or Building Department issues?
 - This is an outreach and education position with enforcement duties added to address NRC statutory issues or issues on NRC property such as wetlands, public shade trees and

park land. NRC cannot do anything regarding zoning. NRC feels it needs to work with the public and educate them about NRC land.

- Why are the track field lights not part of the proposed light project since this field is near the track field?
 - Existing lights are there and they need to be replaced. No one was stepping up to do this. NRC felt it needed to do something so it was put in the budget.
 - NRC is still determining if lights are appropriate at the track field. When people put in the other lights, they were not paid for by NRC.
- More information about consultant for the lights replacements was requested.
 - The lighting consultant is the same consultant who was brought in to educate the Town on the light retrofit.
- A question was asked about the lawn conversion.
 - Native plants need less care than non-native plants and the native plants adapt to their conditions.
 - We are not exactly certain which plants would be planted but these plants would be allowed to grow and let nature take its course.
- When NRC addressed the erosion of Morses Pond is the material tested for PFAS?
 - We could test sediment materials that were moved around but we are not sure for what purpose as it wouldn't add to the information on the testing of the well water. The pond manger does look at water quality.
- Clarification was requested about the merging of two positions as to whether it was education or enforcement.
 - The position would be both education and enforcement and give NRC the opportunity to look at encroachments on NRC land.
- What is the priority - education or compliance?
 - It depends on the nature of the encroachment and the Wetlands violations. At some point NRC would like to see more focus on education.
- What is the enforcement and penalty?
 - Ultimate result might be a lien on the property until the issue is resolved. There are set fees outlined for illegal tree removal and we have sought damages in the past. There are daily fines associate with Wetland's violations.
- Is the increase in encroachments due to COVID as it is forcing people outside to improve grounds and this would go away if COVID ends or is this an increasing issue?
 - Park related issues are COVID related because people are out. Wetland's violations and public tree violations are more related to property rights and building practices that are not respectful of the bylaws. These existed before COVID.

Recreation

Matt Chin, Director, Recreation; Paul Cramer, Chair, Recreation; and Mark Wolfson, Recreation were present.

An overview and discussion of Wellesley Recreation, the FY23 budget, and the operational challenges of the COVID restrictions were presented.

Recreation is leading the Morses Pond bathhouse project because of Recreation's use of this over the summer. Recreation does not have control over any facilities or lands. Recreation activities require cross board cooperation.

Discussion/Questions

- A question was asked about the businesses who have left Wellesley and if there is a drop off of sponsorships?
 - Recreation is holding off sending out letters and is looking at refreshing the summer concert series to try to capture more people. The camp scholarships are not money out of pocket but rather a deference of camp fees. Recreation does not have a huge dependency on business to fund programs. The program pricing is not market based. Recreation is trying to provide a diverse offering to as many residents as possible.
- Why do seasonal employees contribute to the retirement program and could this save the town money?
 - It is statutorily required that part time employees contribute to the pension plan. Municipal employees don't contribute to social security, they contribute a portion of their earnings to the pension plan according to the law.
- Why is there a 6% increase in professional services but FTEs are still the same?
 - We had one person leave and the position was budgeted but vacant. The position has been filled and two people in the Recreation department moved into other positions. The new person was hired a higher rate than what it had previously been.
- Are there any other open positions?
 - Recreation is fully staffed
- What is the holistic view of fees charged to the programs?
 - In the discussion of fees there is always the debate whether Recreation should charge more. However, Recreation feels the goal should be to keep programs at an affordable and reasonable level. If there is surplus money it would just go back to the General Fund.
- Will the fees increase or stay the same to help with the Morses Pond improvements?
 - We have tried to keep increases to a reasonable percentage to keep it affordable. Long term expectation is for most or all the Morses Pond funding to come from CPC funds and town funds. Recreation is not looking to create a piggy bank of funds to put into Morses Pond. We will have to discuss fees at that time.
- What is the schedule today for the renovations of Morses Pond that has been pushed off because of other town projects?
 - FY24 for design funds; \$4.5 million for the construction has been moved to FY25. It depends on the timing of specific things for building requirements but it is one year out from originally planned.
- Do program fees cover variable program costs?
 - The \$417,000 is the operating costs to employ people in the department. Revenues vary on the number of programs run.
 - Staff are paid for by taxpayers. Programs are paid for by users of the programs.
- A comment was made that the \$11,000 increase this year is due to the person hired with more experience so Recreation's budget didn't get to the 2.75% guidelines.
 - The position was budgeted at the low end rather than at the midpoint or range. The full-time administrator was hired at a low rate and was due a 6 month increase after being with the town for 6 months and then received a step increase after an additional 6 months and this wasn't factored into the previous budgets.

Minutes Approval/Liaison Reports/Administrative Items

Liaison Reports

Schools/Jenn Fallon – School Committee meeting last night included a COVID update; changes to surveillance testing program; there may be a move to more rapid testing; the schools are trying to react to all the changes; changes in the MS and HS programs were discussed; the budget was presented. The liaisons have received the schools' budget book.

Approved January 19, 2022

DPW/Pete Pedersen – At the recent BPW meeting PFAS and the Stormwater enterprise fund were discussed. The PFAS permanent fix amount is still a work in progress; enterprise fund fees are still unknown. DPW should be scheduled to return to Advisory on these two items

A comment was made that if there are questions about things we haven't discussed this needs to be done before voting. Comments can be sent to liaisons to forward on to their boards.

COA/Corinne Monahan – provided a recap of the recent COA meeting. The kitchen, which is a catering kitchen, is still under discussion with FMD and the BOH.

Library/Corinne Monahan – Provided a recap of the recent library trustees meeting. The Wellesley Library Foundation is holding a gala on April 7 at the Wellesley Country Club.

FMD/Madison Riley – The high school LED light project of \$1.2 million will be a separate warrant article. It is assumed this will be funded outside the levy.

Coming attractions

- January 19 – Planning, FMD Capital Budget, CP – Zoning, Audit (tentative)
- January 26 – Select Board; Town Clerk
- February 2 – Public Hearing

Minutes

Jenn Fallon made and John Lanza seconded a motion to approve the January 5, 2022 minutes and adjourn the meeting

Roll Call Vote

Jennifer Fallon – yes
John Lanza – yes
Corinne Monahan - yes
Patti Quigley - yes
Tom Cunningham – yes
Jake Erhard – yes
Jeff Levitan - yes
Doug Smith – yes
Susan Clapham - yes
Al Ferrer - yes
Wendy Paul – yes
Pete Pedersen - yes
Madison Riley – yes
Shawn Baker – yes

January 5, 2022 minutes were approved, 13 to 0 and the meeting was adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

Documents Reviewed (link to website documents)

<https://wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/1350>

- Draft AC Minutes 01/05/22
- NRC FY23 Operating Request
- Morses Pond FY23 Operating Request
- Recreation F23 Operating Request
- NRC FY23-27 Capital Request
- NRC Advisory January 12, 2022 Presentation
- Morses Pond Capital Request FY23-27

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- HR Salary Increase for Recreation
- Human Resources FY23 Presentation
- Recreation FY23 Operating Request
- Recreation FY23-27 Capital Request