

**Advisory Committee Meeting  
Zoom Video Conference  
Wednesday, January 27, 2021, 6:30 p.m.**

Those present from Advisory Committee included Shawn Baker, Julie Bryan, Tom Cunningham, Lauren Duprey, Jake Erhard, Jennifer Fallon, Neal Goins, John Lanza, Jeff Levitan, Bill Maynard, Deed McCollum, Corrine Monahan, Patti Quigley, Mary Scanlon and Doug Smith.

Julie Bryan called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

**6:30 p.m. Citizen Speak**

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

**6:30 p.m. HHU Project Update – School Building Committee (SBC)**

Sharon Gray, School Committee (SC) and Chair, SBC and Melissa Martin, Vice Chair, SC and member, SBC; David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools (WPS) and Matt King, Vice Chair, Permanent Building Committee (PBC) were present.

Information and an update on the HHU project were provided. The project team, project goals, Hunnewell update, Hardy/Upham update, schedule, and next steps were reviewed and discussed.

**Questions and Discussion**

- Is the vote next fall for construction funds for both schools?
  - Yes, the vote would be for both schools but one school is a Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) project so there will be two debt exclusion questions on the ballot in December 2021 pending Town Meeting approval in the fall of 2021. MSBA requires a separate ballot question for Hardy.
- Was there a discussion about bringing these projects to separate town meetings given the unknowns?
  - SC has wanted to complete these projects and they are overdue. SC wants to move them forward together because the projects serve three schools so it is important to bring them to the voters at the same time. MSBA also has a deadline and timeline for how long a process can be to get to a vote.
  - With Hardy, we are asking for a balance of design fund and construction funds and this is different than the normal process because it is a MSBA project.
  - These are large projects and a large ask of the town. It is a package approach to solving the long-term problem.
- Over the next 5-6 years, taxes will go up 23%. For the high school construction, we got lucky because contractors were hungry for work so the cost was less. Is it possible we will be in a similar situation with contractors hungry for work and therefore the price will be less?
  - The overall impact of COVID on pricing is unknown and is not included in the budgeting. PBC generates enthusiasm on our projects before bidding and is cautiously optimistic. Savings were seen with the bids for the Middle School Building Systems and with the library project.
- Is there a bulk purchasing for any contracts?

- We can't tie the projects together because the MSBA is involved, and in fact we made a conscious decision to separate the projects. Wellesley has a good reputation in the construction industry for paying on time and this helps us during bidding.
- What's the plan for redistricting given the two schools will be now completed a year apart?
  - The projects have always been separated by a year. SC decided that redistricting and consolidation into six schools would occur when final school is complete. Coverage during Hunnewell construction will be addressed through internal swing space. Exactly where will be dependent on what enrollment looks like at the end of next year. Hardy is being built behind the existing school.
- Why is it an atypical ask for Hardy?
  - The MSBA process dictates that the balance of design funds and construction be approved together at the end of schematic stage.

### **7:10 p.m. Department of Public Works (DPW) FY22 Budget**

David Cohen, Director, DPW; Jeff Azano-Brown, Assistant Director, DPW; Ellen Korpi, Chair, Board of Public Works (BPW); Jeff Wechsler, BPW; Scott Bender, BPW; and Dave Hickey, Engineer, DPW were present.

DPW's FY22 Budget request and update were provided. The reviews covered DPW's organization and staffing; budget drivers and overall funding; and impacts from budget guidelines. DPW's tax impact operating budget request is within the 2.5% guideline. Capital budget objectives and the capital FY22 budget and reductions were reviewed.

### **Questions and Discussion**

- \$559,000 has already been cut from the cash capital budget and an additional \$570,000 will need to be cut. Where will these cuts be made?
  - We haven't worked out everything yet with Finance. There is a major equipment repair fund with \$170,000, but DPW has authorization to use only \$50,000 every year; we might agree to turn back the \$120,000 and use that. Another source of funds is the tree bank fund. We are preserving capital wherever we can. Unfortunately, the cuts are essentially deferrals which cost us down the road.
- Are there any increased costs if we wait to repair a street?
  - It's an incremental cost. The objective is to try to do work on streets before they come into disrepair. The cost is a service cost. Vehicles are a direct cost.
- When the Town asks DPW to defer work, operating costs for repairs go up and ultimately we have to catch up. Everyone feels a sense of unease about that, but is there any way DPW can be more specific and/or quantify how much of a concern this is?
  - DPW has had support from the town on the capital program over the years, and so the infrastructure is in good shape. Because we have a mature program and items are in reasonably good shape, we can survive this cut. However, if cuts are sustained into FY23 then we will have to look at doing things differently. For example, there might be a different way to deal with projects such as grouping a large number of projects and bonding them for a few years.
  - In any case, the expectation is that when things get better, we can properly fund all this work. Our infrastructure is critical.
- TM voted on the Grove Street project. How does that work with those funds?
  - TM previously awarded funds for Grove Street, but the bids came in higher than budgeted. The past ATM rescinded the funds and moved the funds to Great Plain Ave. which was identified as a greater need because of safety concerns.

- There was concern last year about the ability to hire auto maintenance staff to maintain the fleet. Has that resolved itself?
  - DPW has been successful in bringing on a mechanic this year.
- If we defer all these projects, does it impact the operating budget?
  - Yes.
- Is it possible to consolidate all these things that have been pushed off with an amount and how many times pushed off?
  - Yes, this can be can pulled together and sent along.
- Can the RDF charge higher fees to offset increases in the recycling program fees?
  - Actually, we might want to go the other way and stop charging fees to encourage people to recycle more. We do charge fees on the commercial side and those funds go back to the general fund.
- In the cash capital budget, vehicles are the largest expense. What is DPW's approach to vehicle ownership, and has leasing been considered so there are no vehicle maintenance costs?
  - Leasing is something we've looked at several times. Leasing is a borrowing cost and a premium is paid for leasing. DPW holds its vehicles for a long time.
  - This is a philosophical question for the town and it is not certain whether the town thinks it is a good idea.
- A request was made to see the frequency of use of the vehicles.
  - DPW has a utilization report that shows how much vehicles are being used. DPW is purchasing vehicles that are multiuse.
- How much of Grove Street will be included in the project?
  - All of Grove Street will be included from the town line up to Wellesley Center, stopping at the intersection with Washington Street. It will be reconstruction of the whole street including safety, sidewalk and drainage improvements.
- A request was made for information regarding the new Great Plain rotary.
  - There has been positive feedback and people feel it is safer.
- A request was made to provide Advisory with the updated five-year capital plan request after additional cuts are made.
  - This can be provided after the BPW meeting on Feb. 9

### **Water and Sewer Enterprise Fund**

The water and sewer enterprise funds are funded by ratepayers and not through tax appropriations. All projects stay in the fund, and cash flow is break even. The FY22 budget summary, budget drivers and capital budgets were reviewed.

### **Questions and Discussion**

- Why no hydrants in FY22?
  - There are prior year capital funds available for that work.
- Are MWRA costs due to usage?
  - Water is charged based on prior year usage. For sewer it is the three-year prior usage.
- Why is there an increase in water?
  - Drought and a resulting increase in outside watering.

### **FY21**

The FY21 DPW budget status was presented and is in good shape. There were exceptional overtime events due to windstorms in the summer but a normal spring is expected. Trash revenue is up due to an increase in commercial usage and that is a COVID bump.

**Other DPW warrant articles were presented and discussed.**

Allocations of general and administrative expenses to the water and sewer enterprise funds were presented and explained. Benchmarking water and sewer rates were compared. DPW allocation considerations were presented. Water and sewer oversight was reviewed. Confidence was expressed in the water and sewer enterprise fund management.

- A comment was made that there needs to be background and an explanation at Town Meeting so people understand what this is all about. It feels like everyone is starting from the middle of the story, and an explanation is needed about what the background behind this.
  - DPW doesn't expect to discuss this at Town Meeting. A concerned citizen brought this to DPW attention. The results of the resulting analytic work, and proposed action items, were shared with the citizen, and the citizen withdrew the objections. DPW had promised to come back and finalize conclusion with Advisory. There is now no citizen petition pending.
- Are the changes good for the town?
  - The analysis that was created was used by the board and by the department as an internal document. It is great for the town in understanding how to manage allocations when there are multiple sources of funds.

**8:20 p.m. Municipal Light Plant (MLP) FY22 Operating and Capital Budgets**

Jeff Wechsler, Chair, MLP and Don Newell, Director, MLP were present.

MLP's business model, mission statement, budget methodology, and major risks were presented. The review covered purchased power and delivery costs; sustainability initiatives; capital investments and the major capital work plan projects. . FY20 actuals and variance; the FY2018-22 operating and capital budget plans; and 2016-2024 cost comparisons were discussed.

COVID impacts, such as staggering start and finish times for the crews, and staging crews at home, were discussed as necessary measures during COVID to ensure that services were provided without interruption. However, due to Covid restrictions, not all capital projects will be completed as planned and some are being selectively deferred.

There was a discussion of the Williams Street project – the John Hancock redevelopment of Wellesley Office Park – which will come online in 2023 and will represent a 10% increase in MLPs total energy. There will be a significant carbon reduction with the use of all-electric energy for heat, cooking etc. Over time, MLP would like to continue to drive beneficial electrification.

**Questions and Discussion**

- How is the extra demand to be served?
  - In FY21, a new supply line will be added from Needham into Wellesley in order to increase our capacity and to spread out the age of our supply lines. This will increase capacity in town.
- Will this change our success rate in not losing power even if buying power from another town?
  - This will not change. We are contractually connected to the substation in the grid. We use rights which are connected to the grid and we do not buy power. New supply lines improve reliability.
- How does the increase in the rate for voluntary renewable energy fit into rates being so low?

Approved 2/3/2021

- Because of the voluntary nature of the program, we buy RECs and retire them. REC prices are subject to market forces, and the cost of RECs has increased. The voluntary renewable energy program allows residents to feel good that they are contributing to reducing carbon emissions. That said, irrespective of participation in the voluntary REC program, residents can still feel good about renewable energy because of what the town is doing by buying actual renewable energy supplies and retiring the RECs associated with those.
- The WeCares program starts July 1. TM voted on an opt out program. This will be communicated to residents. The bulk of the money is going into a reserve fund.
- How is the \$1 million dollar payment to the town calculated, and is it revisited?
  - In 2001 or 2002 it was decided to go from \$800,000 to \$1 million payment in lieu of taxes. If it were based on a notional tax bill, the payment would be \$600,000 to \$700,000. On a per-revenue basis, MLP's payment is more generous than that of other light plants in Massachusetts.

### **Administrative Matters/Liaison Reports/Minutes**

#### **Minutes Approval**

Corinne Monahan made and Mary Scanlon seconded a motion to approve the January 20, 2021 minutes.

#### **Roll call vote:**

Bill Maynard – yes  
Patti Quigley – yes  
John Lanza – yes  
Mary Scanlon - yes  
Deed McCollum - yes  
Jennifer Fallon – yes  
Jeff Levitan – yes  
Corinne Monahan - yes  
Shawn Baker – yes  
Doug Smith – yes  
Jake Erhard – yes  
Tom Cunningham – yes  
Lauren Duprey – yes  
Neal Goins - yes

January 20, 2021 minutes were approved 14 to 0.

#### **Liaison Reports**

*Citizen's Petition/Doug Smith*– The Citizen Petition for 2 Edgemoor split zoning went before the Planning Board. The Planning Board wants a public hearing because this property backs up to a condo complex and they wish to hear from residents rather than just the condo complex manager.

*Planning/John Lanza* – It appears that two of Planning's articles, specifically changes to Project of Significant Impact and Design Review, are not ready and so will be dropped from Town Meeting.

*BOH/John Lanza* – BOH is meeting regularly. The local BOHs can only do what the state will allow them to do, and the state has decided to be the prime mover of the vaccine. Hence, the amount of vaccine being given to towns is small.

Approved 2/3/2021

*Schools/Jenn Fallon.* – Schools teachers have been moved down in the vaccination priority list. A new dashboard is being developed. All students who want to go from RLA to schools have been accommodated except for a few. Schools are reaching out to everyone on enrollment.

**9:30 p.m. Adjourn**

Deed McCollum made and Corinne Monahan seconded a motion to adjourn.

**Roll call vote**

Bill Maynard - yes  
Patti Quigley – yes  
John Lanza – yes  
Mary Scanlon - yes  
Deed McCollum - yes  
Jennifer Fallon – yes  
Jeff Levitan - yes  
Corinne Monahan - yes  
Shawn Baker – yes  
Doug Smith – yes  
Jake Erhard – yes  
Tom Cunningham – yes  
Lauren Duprey – yes  
Neal Goins – yes

Approved 14-0.