

BILLERICA FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES
March 9, 2021

A Meeting of the Billerica Finance Committee was held on Tuesday March 9, 2021 at 6:45 p.m. via Zoom Video Conferencing Communication App.

Present: David Gagliardi, Chairman; Douglas Meagher, Vice Chairman; Mary McBride, Secretary; Donald Damon, Member; Rino Moriconi, Member; Cheri Gargalianos, Member; Philip Newfell, Member; John Kleschinsky, Member; John Mulloy, Member; Kelley Sardina, 1st Associate; Sharon Healey, 2nd Associate; Town Accountant, Paul Watson, Ex-Officio; and Joyce MacMillan, Recording Clerk

Excused: Doug Fogerty, Member

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman David Gagliardi called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No one came forward.

FY22 BUDGET:

Wastewater Enterprise – Paul Watson, Town Accountant

This is basically a level funded budget; the salaries were corrected and there is a slight change in the supply amount. There was notification from the Abatement Trust, there will be new debt numbers to be fixed in October, they will be going up.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. Question regarding the Wastewater Directors salary, it had been discussed at the last meeting and corrected according to the salary survey reclassification. The numbers in red within this budget were items requested by the department but will not be fulfilled.

Doug Meagher seconded by Rino Moriconi made a motion to recommend the Wastewater Enterprise Fund Budget in the amount of \$8,449,311.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 8-2:

John Kleschinsky - Aye
Rino Moriconi - Aye
Doug Meagher – Aye
Don Damon – Nay
Sharon Healey - Aye
John Mulloy – Aye
Kelley Sardina – Nay
Mary McBride – Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Billerica Public Library – Jan Hagman, Library Director

Jan Hagman sent an annual report for FY2020 along with a list of accomplishments was forwarded to the committee prior to the meeting. 2020 was a challenging year for everyone, the library got creative and expanded their services/technology to bring them right into residents' homes.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. There was some question regarding future building maintenance. There is a possibility of the front doors needing repair. The steps, chimney and heating system were all recently repaired. There was a question regarding the 1.9% increase in salaries due to step increases. There was also an increase in computer equipment and other supplies. The Library had a great year despite COVID.

Doug Meagher wanted to remind the members that he has a disclosure on file regarding the library.

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to recommend the Billerica Public Library Budget in the amount of \$1,691,087.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 10-0:

John Kleschinsky - Aye
Rino Moriconi - Aye
Doug Meagher – Aye
Don Damon – Aye
Sharon Healey - Aye
John Mulloy – Aye
Kelley Sardina – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Veterans Services – Joe Ruggiero, Veterans Services Director

Joe Ruggiero, it was a challenging year for everyone, Veterans Services too. Chapter 115 (a benefit for Veterans with limited income) was the main focus this year. Unfortunately, they lost many veterans this year due to COVID, which meant many funerals. They have moved to an online base (Facebook and Twitter) for information flow. There were over 1,000 boxes of food delivered through different Federal organizations. There was a team of people from Billerica, Tewksbury & Wilmington that went to Hanscom for fresh food to fill the boxes.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. About how many veteran's come through our doors? Mr. Ruggiero was not sure, but he did say they had 44 cases via Chapter 115, they conducted 97 VA disability claims and they had 108 fuel assistance. Is it Billerica only? Yes. It was suggested if this department is looking for a spread sheet, Concord has a good example of one. Do we know how many vets we have in town? We do not know but would like to put together census.

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to recommend the Veterans Service Budget in the amount of \$549,189.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 10-0-1:

John Kleschinsky - Aye
Cheri Gargalianos—Abstained
Rino Moriconi - Aye
Doug Meagher – Aye
Don Damon – Aye
Sharon Healey - Aye
John Mulloy – Aye
Kelley Sardina – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Cheri Gargalianos joined the meeting at 7:15 pm

Treasurer/Collector – John Clark, Town Treasurer/Collector

John Clark, the budget went 2.66% from the prior year. There were three separate reasons for this. Most of it was new contracts, sick leave went up from \$2,000 to \$4,000 and longevity increased from \$11,911 to \$13,894 and the rest is salary increases.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. Do we know how many tax bills are mailed out? It is about 61,000 real estate bills, just under 50,000 water/sewer bills and about 55,000 motor vehicle excise bills. Did we lose any revenue due to COVID? The due dates were extended but not a significant loss in revenue. The book has 455 people in retirement, is this Middlesex retirement? It includes, Police, Fire, all the Town departments and the school administration. Who does the town use for banking? Century and Bank of America, others are credit card platforms, to account for the banking fees. Why do we have two postage machines? We have two leases with Pitney Bowes, one machine is for postage the other is a folder/stuffer machine that is shared with the school department.

Doug Meagher seconded by Rino Moriconi made a motion to recommend the Treasurer/Collector Budget in the amount of \$.800,626.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 10-1:

John Kleschinsky - Aye
Cheri Gargalianos—Aye
Rino Moriconi - Aye
Doug Meagher – Aye
Don Damon – Aye
Sharon Healey - Aye
John Mulloy – Aye
Kelley Sardina – Nay

Mary McBride – Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Fire Department – Robert Cole, Fire Chief

Chief Cole stated it was a trying year, but the Pinehurst Station is taking shape, this week they are putting in the concrete flooring. We have taken possession of a new rescue engine all the apparatus is finally in the 21st century. We have had several retirements and three firefighter candidates that are currently going through physical fitness process to make sure they are good to go for hiring. The budget has been impacted this year with OT increases due to COVID, but the houses have all been maned with isolation rules. A lot of money was spent on PPE and disinfecting products but much of it should be able to be recouped via the CARES Act and FEMA. The budget has gone up about \$100,000, they tried to level fund as much as they could, this year is tough to gage what next year will bring. The IT budget increased, they are moving ahead with the fire prevention permitting system online and pushing forward with a new dispatching system. The current dispatching system is over 20 years old. Utilities budget went up and salaries up 2.1%.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. Are all the firefighters vaccinated? Many got their first shot January 12, about 75 to 80% of the department has antibodies. Two men are still out with the after affects of COVID. Chief Cole also went through to explain why OT is so high. Have any firefighters refused the vaccine? What is the policy for the people that have refused to take the vaccine? Currently sick time is being used, they are using their own time. How much has the budget gone up due to COVID? Thankfully, they got through the heart of the pandemic on donations and the CARES Act. It is still difficult to get masks and other items, many are on back order. The new engine acquired will be in the center house and a 2018 from the center station will be going to the Pinehurst station near the end of the month. The old ladder truck was traded in for the new truck. The grant writer is working on grants for washer/dryers for West Billerica Station. Some of the grants we get are SAFE (Student Awareness Fire Education) Grant, annually from the state about \$5,000 or 6,000. Try every year for many grants, the AFG from the Federal Government which they have had good luck with. They actively search out and try to get as many as possible. What is the difference between a SE Captain and a Captain? An SE Captain is a shift commander at the Center Station with specialized duties. Do you anticipate the upcoming retirements being an issue? No, not worried, plenty of younger guys waiting to take their place. How many response calls have we had this year? Since January we are at 1268 calls, we average about 6500 calls a year. We have about 2500 hydrants in town and a few hundred private hydrants. Permit fees go to the general funds. Details, 10% goes to town admin fees. There is a town work rate and a commercial work rate. Average fire vehicle life expectancy is about 15 years, the department is currently in good shape with all the vehicles. How many out with injuries not pertaining to the job? Currently just two that are out with COVID. How many are out with on-the-job injuries? There are three out at this time, one will be back in about 3 to 4 months, another anticipating shoulder surgery, and another may be retiring due to his injuries. Uniforms, new replacement gear is twelve Turn Out Gear.

Doug Meagher seconded by Don Damon made a motion to recommend the Fire Department Budget in the amount of \$9,169,421.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 11-0:

John Kleschinsky - Aye
Cheri Gargalianos – Aye
Rino Moriconi - Aye
Doug Meagher – Aye
Don Damon – Aye
Sharon Healey - Aye
John Mulloy – Aye
Kelley Sardina – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Assessors Budget – Rich Scanlon, Chief Assessor

Rich Scanlon, overall budget is personal heavy in the overall compilation of it, with a small amount on supplies and expenses and contract services. Most of the increase this year is salary increases due to step increases. One of the changes, Docu-Sign was eliminated, not working out, too many questions and frustrations with it. Plus it did not update electronically, personal still had to physically do the updates.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. Does your budget reflect your retirement in April? No, it is left fully funded and can change with the person coming in. How are Condo and Apartment buildings taxed? All are taxed at residential rates unless it is a commercial building. Last years budget to this year's budget, last year was at 3.11%, this year is at 3.9% and looking at what was budgeted and what was used was a lot less. Wondering why we always budget high? The budget was reduced this year. However, we always try to spend less than what is budgeted any leftover funds are transferred to the General Fund. How many abatements this year 2021? Generally average about 100/150 abatement applications a year but this year just 100 that are currently being worked on. Why have the commercial amounts gone down? There are certain sectors of Commercial and Industrial that are going to struggle right now. There are many vacant office buildings plus residential properties are increasing at a higher rate right now. Do you anticipate senior tax exempts increasing? No, we only have two right now. Some of the problem is if you have a mortgage on the property you must get the bank to defer or take a second position on the mortgage and not a lot of banks are not willing to that.

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to recommend the Assessors Budget in the amount of \$574,104.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 10-1:

John Kleschinsky - Aye
Cheri Gargalianos–Aye

Rino Moriconi - Aye
Doug Meagher – Aye
Don Damon – Aye
Sharon Healey - Aye
John Mulloy – Aye
Kelley Sardina – Nay
Mary McBride – Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Discussion and Vote for Annual Spring Town Meeting Warrant Articles

This discussion was placed on the agenda by committee member Phil Newfell. Phil went over the reasoning for adding this item. A few of the committee members would like to see the article for the Town Clerk and the Select Board on separate articles. They do not believe they should be together on one article. Phil did go over a couple of different options such as listing the select board stipend amount down to a dollar or maybe list it as zero dollars or remove the select board from the article all together. There have been times in past years where some members of the committee vote no on the article only because of the select board stipend. During the discussion it was learned that there is no legal reason for them to be together in one article. Many of the committee members stated they did not have a problem with the article being split. It was also suggested to move it to another article as an expense item. In either case, the select board needs to be notified of the discussion. It was decided to move this discussion to the next meeting on Thursday March 11, 2021.

Town Hall/Buildings – John Curran, Town Manager and Paul Watson, Town Accountant

John Curran, this budget has changed. The Facilities Director position has been moved to this budget from the Town Managers budget. Moved a laborers position into this one from the Recreation Budget. Part of the budget increase is a reallocation of funds from one budget to another. The bulk of the postage is in this budget.

Paul Watson, there is a significant increase in this budget that relates to abandoned buildings. We no longer have any abandoned buildings; it has been zeroed out and replaced with a line item for the Masonic Building. They are looking for a \$50,000 appropriation to cover building maintenance costs.

John Curran, most of the budget beyond that is level funded.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. The Facilities Director salary is kind of low for that position, it is at low end of step, plenty of room for growth. Is the \$50,000 going to be enough to cover the expenses? They already know the heat is going to be an issue in that building and a door fell off the side of the building, that needs to be repaired. Basically, they want to make sure there is enough to cover any unforeseen issues with the building. Postage budget break down and projected postage, need clarification. Mr. Curran explained it. Is the Food Pantry paying rent at the Masonic Hall and does the \$50,000 include insurance on property. No to both questions and the insurance is included in the Town Wide/Shared Cost budget. Supplies have

increased due to Masonic. The dismantling of both the Vining and the old Ditson will begin in May and both buildings should be completely down by August 2021. The dismantling of the Ditson will not interfere with the temporary Fire Station, all electrical, water etc. the building is completely independent from the old Ditson.

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to recommend the Town Hall and Buildings Budget in the amount of \$747,003.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 10-1:

John Kleschinsky - Aye
Cheri Gargalianos—Aye
Rino Moriconi - Aye
Doug Meagher – Aye
Don Damon – Aye
Sharon Healey - Aye
John Mulloy – Aye
Kelley Sardina – Nay
Mary McBride – Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Town Manager – John Curran, Town Manager and Paul Watson, Town Accountant

John Curran the budget went down due to the Facilities Director position being moved to the Town Hall budget and the Community Development Director position was moved from this budget to the Planning Board budget. There was \$25,000 added for an assessment for the lieutenants and deputy Chiefs which will take place after we hire a Chief. An additional \$9,000 for printing and \$9,500 for training and professional development.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. Is everyone eligible for overtime? No, not everyone is. Has anyone found the time capsule yet? Not yet, and not sure it even exists but making every effort to find it if it is there.

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to recommend the Town Manager Budget in the amount of \$811,334.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 10-1:

John Kleschinsky - Aye
Cheri Gargalianos—Aye
Rino Moriconi - Aye
Doug Meagher – Aye
Don Damon – Aye
Sharon Healey - Aye
John Mulloy – Aye
Kelley Sardina – Nay
Mary McBride – Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye

Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Town Systemwide – John Curran, Town Manager and Paul Watson, Town Accountant

John Curran, this budget is level funded except for retirements. We have several retirements this year.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. All 2600 street lights are retro fitted, is everything up to date now? That project has been completed and all are working well.

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to recommend the Town Manager Budget in the amount of \$2,571,640.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 10-1:

- John Kleschinsky - Aye
- Cheri Gargalianos–Aye
- Rino Moriconi - Aye
- Doug Meagher – Aye
- Don Damon – Aye
- Sharon Healey - Aye
- John Mulloy – Aye
- Kelley Sardina – Nay
- Mary McBride – Aye
- Phil Newfell - Aye
- Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Debt and Interest – John Curran, Town Manager and Paul Watson, Town Accountant

John Curran, pretty much a level funded budget. Consists of general budgeted debt, exempted debt, the water, and wastewater enterprise fund. We are constantly investing in the town through Debt Services.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. No questions.

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to recommend the Debt Service Budget in the amount of \$7,037,498.72.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 11-0:

- John Kleschinsky - Aye
- Cheri Gargalianos–Aye
- Rino Moriconi - Aye
- Doug Meagher – Aye
- Don Damon – Aye
- Sharon Healey - Aye
- John Mulloy – Aye

Kelley Sardina – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi – Aye

Capital Budget and Town/School Shared Costs will be moved to the next meeting.

Finance Committee – Dave Gagliardi, Finance Committee Chairman

Dave Gagliardi, \$2,000 in salary for recording secretary, supplies and expenses level funded, contract services level funded, and the reserve fund level funded.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. Does the town anticipate touching the \$88,000 during the year? It is possible, but not sure and it probably would not be the entire amount.

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to recommend the Town Manager Budget in the amount of \$88,120.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 11-0:

John Kleschinsky - Aye
Cheri Gargalianos–Aye
Rino Moriconi - Aye
Doug Meagher – Aye
Don Damon – Aye
Sharon Healey - Aye
John Mulloy – Aye
Kelley Sardina – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Sealer of Weights and Measures – John Curran, Town Manager and Paul Watson, Town Accountant

John Curran, level funded budget.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. No questions.

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to recommend the Sealer of Weights and Measures Budget in the amount of \$12,500.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 11-0:

John Kleschinsky - Aye
Cheri Gargalianos–Aye
Rino Moriconi - Aye
Doug Meagher – Aye

Don Damon – Aye
Sharon Healey - Aye
John Mulloy – Aye
Kelley Sardina – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Town Civic Events – John Curran, Town Manager and Paul Watson, Town Accountant

John Curran, there is one line item being increased which is the Memorial Day Home Coming aka Yankee Doodle, a request from the Yankee Doodle Committee.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. No questions

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to recommend the Sealer of Weights and Measures Budget in the amount of \$40,700.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 11-0:

John Kleschinsky - Aye
Cheri Gargalianos–Aye
Rino Moriconi - Aye
Doug Meagher – Aye
Don Damon – Aye
Sharon Healey - Aye
John Mulloy – Aye
Kelley Sardina – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Review of March 2, 2021 Minutes:

Two corrections to be made on page 6

Doug Meagher, seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to accept the March 2, 2021 minutes as amended.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 11-0:

John Kleschinsky - Aye
Cheri Gargalianos–Aye
Rino Moriconi - Aye
Doug Meagher – Aye
Don Damon – Aye
Sharon Healey - Aye
John Mulloy – Aye

Kelley Sardina – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE – not subject to discussion

N/A

ADJOURNMENT:

Doug Meagher seconded by Don Damon made a motion to adjourn.

A roll call vote was taken

It was voted 11-0:

John Kleschinsky - Aye
Cheri Gargalianos–Aye
Rino Moriconi - Aye
Doug Meagher – Aye
Don Damon – Aye
Sharon Healey - Aye
John Mulloy – Aye
Kelley Sardina – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Chairman David Gagliardi adjourned the meeting at 10:05 pm.

Joyce MacMillan, Recording Clerk