

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Steven P. Rose, Chairman
Eric S. Beckerman, Clerk
Jason L. Suzor, Associate

Gregory S. Enos
TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Town of Avon Massachusetts



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TOWN OF AVON
2021 FEB -5 A 8:59
TOWN CLERK

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING
JANUARY 30, 2021 at 8:00 a.m.**

- Members present:** Steven P. Rose, Chairman (via teleconference)
Eric S. Beckerman, Clerk (via teleconference)
Jason L. Suzor, Associate (via teleconference)
- Others present:** Gregory S. Enos, Town Administrator (via teleconference)
Shanna M. Faro, Executive Assistant (via teleconference)
Erin Barry, Town Accountant (via teleconference)
Christine Godino, School Superintendent (via teleconference)
Kathleen McDonald, School Business Coordinator (via teleconference)
Tracy Sheehan, School Committee Chair (via teleconference)
Police Chief Jeffrey Bukunt (via teleconference)
Ann Fogg, Library Director (via teleconference)
Christine Quinn, Council on Aging Director (via teleconference)
- Finance Committee:** Daniel Norian, Chair (via teleconference)
James Norian, Member (via teleconference)
Richard Jordan, Member (via teleconference)
Shannon Coffey, Member (via teleconference)
Derek Staffier, Member (via teleconference)
Judith Leggett, Member (via teleconference)

Chairman Rose announced that pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Board of Selectmen is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public was permitted, but every effort was made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. Chairman Rose reminded the viewing audience that persons who would like to view this meeting while in progress may do so by joining the Zoom link for the videoconference in session.

Chairman Rose called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Each Board member acknowledged their presence at the meeting by responding in the affirmative during the roll call. In addition, all anticipated speakers acknowledged their presence by responding in the affirmative when Chairman Rose called their names.

BUDGET WORKSHOP

As a preliminary matter, Mr. Enos informed the Board that he was still waiting for an estimate on student enrollment for the 2021-2022 school year at Norfolk County Agricultural High School. Mr. Enos stated that he has received a solid figure from the Blue Hills Regional Technical Vocational High School. Mr. Enos stated that MIIA has predicted that health care insurance will increase by approximately 7% next year with the average increase being 6.3%. Mr. Enos stated that the MIIA representative has suggested a 3.9% increase for Avon. Mr. Enos informed the Board that he has budgeted for a 5% increase in the health insurance line item for the town. Mr. Enos also reviewed the local receipts for the town including motor vehicle taxes, meals tax, license and permit fees, and water service fees to project potential revenue.

School Department Budget

Ms. Godino informed the Board that the School Committee determined their Total Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2022 to be \$10,649,952. From this amount, the Committee has determined to apply Fiscal Year 2022 Projected School Choice Funds in the amount of \$960,622.00. This would bring the School Committee's Total Fiscal Year 2022 request for funding from the town in support of the School Department's Operating Budget to \$9,689,330. Ms. Godino informed the Board that the increase in the budget was mostly due to contractual salary obligations and special education needs. Ms. Godino stated that the COVID-19 pandemic has also affected the budget as things such as the number of vans needed to transport special education students to out-of-district schools had to be increased due to social distancing protocols. Ms. Godino informed the Board that the Avon Public Schools did receive Chapter 70 money for the Student Opportunity Act. As part of this act, districts are required to submit three-year evidence-based plans aimed at closing persistent disparities in achievement amount student subgroups and minorities. However, Ms. Godino stated that state-funding will not be enough to support all the efforts needed to tackle this endeavor and will need town funds as well as they strive to achieve equity for all students in the Avon Public Schools. Ms. Godino stated that in Fiscal Year 2022, the schools are seeking to hire ELL teachers as well as a School Adjustment Counselor for students whose learning and education are severely impacted by difficulty in their personal lives. Ms. Godino stated that it was the goal of the School Committee to hire these additional teachers and support staff last year, however, the proposal was tabled due to financial strains caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Ms. Godino stressed the importance of getting these services in place for the next school year. With both the Selectmen and Finance Committee satisfied with Ms. Godino's explanation of the proposed School Department budget, she departed from the meeting.

Library Budget

Ms. Fogg discussed her proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2022 with the Board. Ms. Fogg stated that the union salary line item has increased due to AFSCME contractual increases. Ms. Fogg stated that the salary non-union line item has increased as the Library Director's contract is up for renewal and she added a proposed increase for herself to begin the discussion on contract negotiations. Chairman Rose requested that she level-fund her salary line item for now as increases in salary are discussed during contract negotiations and not at budget meetings. Chairman Rose stated that salary increases can always be taken from the salary reserve line if they are not included in a department's budget. Ms. Fogg stated that currently there are two open positions in the library, a full-time circulation assistant and a part-time circulation assistant. The full-time circulation assistant position was eliminated from the revised Fiscal Year 2021 budget last year as the pandemic raged on and the Avon Public Library was closed to the public from March through June. Ms. Fogg requested the Board budget for this position in Fiscal Year 2022 as it will be needed should the library fully open upon the conclusion of the pandemic. Ms. Fogg stated that the part-time circulation position has been vacant since September and she requested that this

position be included in next year's budget as well for the same reasons. Chairman Rose stated that the Board should fund whatever positions are needed to provide excellent service to the patrons of the library. Mr. Enos suggested that the Board fund for these positions, however, to not fill the positions until the library is fully functioning, open to the public and operating at maximum capacity. Ms. Fogg agreed to this compromise. Finally, Ms. Fogg requested an increase in the pay rates of the part-time employees to be competitive with neighboring libraries. Ms. Fogg stated that she is striving for a rate of approximately \$15.00 per hour for part-time workers as the current rates are significantly lower. Mr. Enos stated that he will budget for higher rates for these employees. However, the new rates would still have to be approved by the Board of Selectmen acting as the Personnel Board at one of their meetings prior to any changes being made. With no further questions or comments from the Board or the Finance Committee, Ms. Fogg departed from the Workshop Meeting.

Police Department Budget

Chief Bukunt appeared before the Board to discuss the proposed Fiscal Year 2022 budget for the Police Department. Chief Bukunt stated that his budget increases were largely driven by contractual increases for the Police Officers. The contract for the Police Union dictates a 2% increase with additional steps as required. Chief Bukunt informed both the Board and the Finance Committee that the Police Department will require additional Police Officers in Fiscal Year 2022. Chief Bukunt stated that currently the department has one Officer who has been deployed while another Officer has been out – injured on duty. The goal is to have the School Resource Officer be full-time in the schools without having to be called out when assistance is needed. Chief Bukunt reminded the Board that when the department is not fully staffed, it also drives up the overtime budget. Both the Selectmen and the Finance Committee expressed their support for the Police Department. Chief Bukunt departed from the meeting with no further questions from either board.

Council on Aging Budget

Christine Quinn discussed the Council on Aging's proposed Fiscal Year 2022 budget. Ms. Quinn stated that the Council on Aging budget had no drastic increases for next year. Ms. Quinn stated that there was an AFSCME employee contractual increase. She stated that her expenses are low as they still have many supplies leftover from this year as the Senior Center has been closed to the public since March 2020. She also reminded the Board and the Finance Committee that the Council on Aging receives \$10,000 yearly from the Howard Fund. There is also a \$5,000 Tufts grant to be used for healthy living options for the seniors. Mr. Enos informed the Board that he did budget for a part-time Assistant Cook in anticipation of the Senior Center opening to the public again in Fiscal Year 2022. With no questions from the Board, Ms. Quinn departed from the meeting.

February 20, 2021 Special Town Meeting Warrant

The Selectmen and the Finance Committee read and reviewed all six articles on the Special Town Meeting Warrant of February 20, 2021. Chairman Norian of the Finance Committee called for a motion to recommend all six articles as written on the Special Town Meeting Warrant to the voters of the town. Ms. Leggett made the motion. Ms. Coffey seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Mr. James Norian voted aye. Mr. Staffier voted aye. Mr. Jordan voted aye. Ms. Leggett voted aye. Mr. Coffey voted aye. Chairman Dan Norian voted aye. The motion carried.

Adjournment

At 10:43 a.m., Ms. Leggett made a motion to adjourn the Workshop Session for the Finance Committee. Ms. Coffey seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Mr. James Norian voted aye. Mr. Staffier voted aye. Mr. Jordan voted aye. Ms. Leggett voted aye. Mr. Coffey voted aye. Chairman Dan Norian voted aye. The motion carried.

At 10:45 a.m., Mr. Beckerman made a motion to adjourn the Workshop Session for the Selectmen. Mr. Suzor seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Mr. Suzor voted aye. Mr. Beckerman voted aye. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Shanna M. Faro

Executive Assistant to the Town Administrator