

SELECT BOARD

Eric S. Beckerman, Chair
Jason L. Suzor, Sr., Clerk
Shannon M. Coffey, Associate

Jonathan L. Beder
TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Town of Avon Massachusetts



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AVON TOWN CLERK
REC'D JAN 20 2024 AM 0:50

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN & FINANCE COMMITTEE
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING
MARY MCDERMOTT MEETING ROOM
JANUARY 11, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.**

Members Present: Eric S. Beckerman, Chair
Jason L. Suzor, Sr., Clerk
Shannon M. Coffey, Associate

Others Present: Jonathan L. Beder, Town Administrator
Shanna M. Faro, Executive Assistant
Debra Morin, Finance Director
Police Chief Jeffrey Bukunt
Christine Godino, School Superintendent
Kathy McDonald, School Business Coordinator
Tracy Sheehan, School Committee Chair
Paul Chapman, School Committee Member
Brian Martin, Interim DPW Director

Finance Committee: Derek Staffier, Chair
Suzzette Waters, Vice Chair
Dan Norian, Member
James Norian, Member
Jarrett Beeley, Member
Janet Shaw, Member
Paul Smith, Member

Chairman Beckerman called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with all members present. He announced that this joint meeting of the Select Board and Finance Committee is being conducted via a hybrid method. The public may attend these meetings in-person or may continue to participate via remote Zoom access.

Budget Workshop Meeting

220 Fire Department

Mr. Beder presented the proposed budget for the Fire Department in the absence of Interim Chief Partridge. Mr. Beder stated that the Department Head salary line item has increased to \$160,000 as the town is actively searching for a new Fire Chief and the salary was adjusted and advertised according to the market rate. Mr. Beder informed the Board that the first round of interviews for the Fire Chief position will take place next week from January 23 – 24, 2024. Mr. Beder stated that an Assistant Fire

Chief position and line item was added as the Deputy Chief has stated his intent to retire in August. The Fire Department has budgeted an Assistant Chief position to be \$125,000. Mr. Beder stated that the biggest expense increase was the "energy/utilities" line item due to rising costs of the newly renovated building. Mr. Beder stated that the "professional and tech" line item was increased for additional training and education. Mr. Beder informed the Board that the "fuel/gasoline" line item increased drastically due to rising fuel costs. Custodial cleaning and supplies have also increased quite substantially. Finally, vehicular repair and maintenance has increased from \$25,000 to \$35,000 as the equipment begins to age and needs more upkeep. Ms. Waters asked Mr. Beder why the salary union line item appears to have decreased. Mr. Beder informed Ms. Waters that an additional line item was created for overtime expenses which explains the salary union line item appears to have decreased when it was only separated for distinguishment between the two items.

299 Emergency Management – No questions from the Select Board or Finance Committee

210 Police Department

Chief Bukunt appeared before the Board to discuss the Police Department's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2025. Chief Bukunt stated that the "salary – union overtime" line item has increased by \$16,000 due to staffing shortages. Chief Bukunt informed the Board that the Police Department is actively in the process of interviewing entry level Police Officers, so he does anticipate that line item decreasing as more officers are hired in 2024. Chief Bukunt stated that for the Police Department's expenses, there has been a significant increase in the "energy/utilities" line item due to rising costs. The "fuel/gasoline" line item has also increased for the same reason and similar to the request of the Fire Department. Chief Bukunt informed the Board that he has doubled the expense in the "repairs/maintenance/building/equipment" line item due to some items such as plumbing issues in the cell block toilets. Finally, vehicular repair and maintenance has increased from \$22,500 to \$30,000 as the equipment begins to age and needs more upkeep. There were no questions from the Board for Chief Bukunt on the Police Department's proposed budget. Mr. Beeley did note that most of the increases were for expenses in this budget and not for contractual salary items.

215 Dispatch

Chief Bukunt stated that there was a significant increase in the "Salary-Union Overtime" line item due to staffing shortages. The Police Department is currently down two full-time dispatchers. Chief Bukunt informed the Board that they are actively interviewing candidates for these positions. The Police Department has also recently hired three Per Diem Dispatchers to assist the full-time Dispatchers with shift coverage.

440 Department of Public Works

Mr. Martin appeared before the Board to discuss the DPW's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2025. Mr. Martin stated that the "Salary-Union" line item has a small increase. Mr. Martin informed the Board that this is due to ongoing projects needing completion. In addition, Ms. Morin stated that is due to more DPW employees getting their certifications which results in bi-weekly stipends for licensure. Mr. Martin stated that in terms of the expense budget, there has been an increase in the "lab test" and "chemicals" line items due to new regulations and testing requirements for harmful chemicals such as PFAs. As with the Police and Fire Departments, Mr. Martin stated that there were increases in the "energy/utilities" and "fuel/gasoline" line items due to rising costs and market rate. Ms. Coffey asked if the "Salary – Department Head" line item should be increased as the town will be advertising for a new DPW Director. Mr. Beder informed the Board that the proposed salary is more than adequate and will not need to be increased. There were no further questions from the Board.

423 Snow & Ice – Mr. Beckerman reminded the viewing audience that this is one of the few line items that the town is authorized by the state to be allowed to deficit spend. There were no questions from the Board or Finance Committee.

424 Street Lighting – Mr. Beder informed the Board and Finance Committee that he will have a budget recommendation for this item at their meeting of January 25, 2024.

300 School Department

Ms. Godino, Ms. McDonald, Ms. Sheehan, and Mr. Chapman appeared before the Board to discuss the School Department's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2025. Ms. Godino informed the Board and Finance Committee that the School Department is requesting a 9.7% increase in their operating budget from Fiscal Year 2024. This proposed budget was voted in the affirmative by the School Committee and submitted to the Select Board.

Ms. Sheehan informed the Board that the School Committee realizes that this budget is a big request to the Board and the townspeople. However, the School Committee firmly believes that most of these items are non-negotiable. Ms. Sheehan informed the Board that the School Committee is proposing three new positions, and only one is possibly negotiable. Ms. Godino stated that most of the increases stem from contractual agreements, grants that are ending from the COVID-19 pandemic, or necessary for special education. Ms. Godino stated that there are increases in the salary lines for administrators and teachers. Ms. Godino stated that the proposed budget is based on a 4% increase in year one of a proposed new contract with the teachers, with a 3% increase in year two. Ms. Godino stated that although the teachers' union is still in negotiations, the budget was based on the town's last proposed offer to the Bargaining Unit during the most recent negotiating session. Ms. Godino stated that currently the School Department is budgeted for \$700,000 in salaries. With the proposed increase, the salary line items would increase to approximately \$1,000,000 collectively. Ms. Godino stated that the three new positions the school would like to implement are for an ESL teacher, a SPED teacher, and an additional guidance counselor at the Avon Middle High School for grades 6-8. Ms. Godino stated that the School Committee has also budgeted for a facilities manager, which is a new position, to be shared equally with the town-side of operations. If at all possible, the School Department is requesting an additional custodian as well. With the increase of illnesses such as RSV, COVID-19, and influenza, it is imperative the buildings remain clean and disinfected as much as possible.

Ms. Godino proceeded to discuss the expense budget with the Select Board and Finance Committee. Ms. Godino stated that a new student with extensive special needs came into the school system this year and with that came a large increase in costs for transportation fees and collaborative education. Other expenses include an increase in athletic supplies and equipment, maintenance supplies, and art supplies. The central office needs a new radio system as well. Mr. Beeley asked Ms. Godino if the proposed budget included salary increases for all teachers currently on the payroll. Ms. Godino replied in the affirmative but only based on the increases as offered by the town during the contract negotiations. Mr. Chapman informed the Select Board and Finance Committee that the School Department Subcommittee has scrutinized this proposed budget and feels it is absolutely necessary that they receive the entire amount requested for their operating budget of Fiscal Year 2025.

With no further questions on any departmental budget discussed this evening, Mr. Beckerman informed all Department Managers and the viewing audience that the Select Board will take all proposed budgets under advisement. The Select Board anticipates voting on the proposed budgets at their meeting of January 25, 2024.

Adjournment

At 6:55 p.m., Mr. Suzor made a motion to adjourn the Workshop Session. Ms. Coffey seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Ms. Coffey voted aye. Mr. Suzor voted aye. Chair Beckerman voted aye.

Respectfully submitted,



Shanna M. Faro
Executive Assistant

List of Documents

1. January 11, 2024 Meeting Agenda
2. Proposed Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2025