

BILLERICA FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES
March 16, 2021

A Meeting of the Billerica Finance Committee was held on Tuesday March 16, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom Video Conferencing Communication App.

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

Excused: Kelley Sardina, 1st Associate

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman David Gagliardi called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No one signed in for public comment.

FY22 BUDGET:

Police Budget – Dan Rosa, Chief

Standard budget, there are 24 step increases, 1 dispatcher funded by a grant, 2 patrol officers funded by grants, there is an overtime increase that basically covers the raises in the recent contracts. We are expecting the retirement of a lieutenant as well as the Chief in FY 2022 with the possibilities of a couple of vacancies at the beginning of the FY. Supplies and expenses are level funded, a small increase in contract services for a leasing program replacing the video service in Town Hall and Police Dept. Capital Outlay – we are asking for 4 vehicles this year. Training has been a challenge due to COVID, losing in person training has been a burden. Some in-person training is starting to resume, not in-class training yet but some firearms training in small groups. The Police Reform Bill was passed, not all of the bill is known but training may be an issue.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. Are the four new patrol cars enough? On average, four or five cars a year to help keep ahead with the fleet. How did your officers do with COVID, did you have many out due to the virus? At the beginning we did have a few that got it and very few instances were traced back to work, most from home or just being out in general. We did very well with using distancing, PPE, keeping groups apart, etc. The reform bill training has to do with some mental health training. Who pays for this training, will the state or federal government be helping to cover the cost? There will be a new state committee, Police Officers Standards and Training (POST) where the state will certify (and de-certify) officers. There should be some funding coming in through the state and some cost will be on the Town. It's unknown what the costs will be at this time. Prior to the pandemic mental health calls had increased then with the pandemic the calls increased exponentially. Some emergency parts of the bill are already in effect, other provisions

will go into effect in July and then there is the last part that goes into effect in Sept. The increase on the Capital Outlay is the difference between three vehicles last year and four vehicles this year. Can the committee get a copy of the NEMLEC budget? That budget is in the early stages, and when it is done, the Chief will request a copy. Over 80% are vaccinated, this includes the paramedics and dispatchers. Have there any positive or negative marijuana activity now that it is legal in Massachusetts? Driving drugged is a hard thing to detect but on the road fatalities are up. Though some of that is pandemic related with fewer people on the road. Do we have a delivery date for the vehicles? They haven't been ordered yet but may have them early in the new fiscal year.

Doug Meagher seconded by Don Damon made a motion to recommend the Police Budget in the amount of \$9,130,194.

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
John Mulloy – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Doug Fogerty – Aye
Patrick Logue - Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Ambulance Budget – Joe Devlin, EMS Director and Dan Rosa, Chief

Chief Rosa sent a handout to the committee prior to the meeting, it included the EMS service stats, incident time- call hour and transport/non-transport trend. Joe Devlin is now a full time EMS Director, no longer going out on calls and focusing on paperwork and making sure things do not get lost in the shuffle. Much of the paperwork was difficult to keep up with while still going out on calls. There are 16 paramedics included in this budget. We do have one paramedic out with long term injuries, he was hit by a car and has some serious leg injuries. In this budget, supplies are level funded and the 2020 ambulance revenue remains steady at the 2 million mark. There was a significant drop of calls April and May due to COVID.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. Mutual Aid has increased, the mental health issues along with the drug and alcohol are again on the rise. When transporting for another town we still bill like we would normally. What if person doesn't have insurance, is there a way of recouping cost from the other town? No, we follow our regular billing/collection process. Do you anticipate replacing a vehicle in the near future? The vehicles have been being replaced on a three-year cycle. Possibly be checking out one next year for the year after that. Part time/per diem Services for \$15,000 what is this for? There are some per diem

employees that work for other ambulance services. If for some reason a shift cannot be filled, we will call on a per diem employee. Opioid and alcohol calls are up. Peak calls seem to be around 10 am then again 4 or 5 pm.

Doug Meagher seconded by Don Damon made a motion to recommend the Ambulance Budget in the amount of \$1,878,178.

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
John Mulloy – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Doug Fogerty – Aye
Patrick Logue - Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Animal Control – Christine Gualtieri

There are two step increases, overtime is level funded and supplies and expenses are level funded. Calls were down through the COVID month, though typically winter months have a lower call rate. There were 2,355 total calls and about 35% of those were Tewksbury. We are in a partnership with Tewksbury for animal control. There are 3 people in the department. There are talks about replacing a vehicle for them soon.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. How the agreement with Tewksbury works is Billerica funds the full-time officer and a part time officer. Tewksbury funds a full-time officer and part of the supplies and a vehicle. Has there been an uptick in wildlife calls? The wildlife has always been there, they are losing wooded areas to live and now learning to coexist in smaller areas. Are people giving up their pets due to losing jobs/income due to COVID. We are not seeing that here, it might be more in the city type areas. But there are a lot of programs and organizations out there to help people with their pets. The \$500 sick leave for the Tewksbury employee, it is there more as a place holder. Everything for the Tewksbury employee is paid for by Tewksbury. Is the dog pound going to be enlarged? No, it is staying the way it is. About how many registered dogs do we have in town? Last year there were about 3,000. We believe there will be more this year.

Mr. Curran wanted to thank Christine for all the work she does. It's a professionally run department and we get compliments on a regular basis about the department. Christine has a great set of skills one being diplomacy, she does a great job, and that department has improved so much since Christine has come on board along with Lt. Troy Opland and the Chief.

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to recommend the Animal Control Budget in the amount of \$132,987.

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
John Mulloy – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Doug Fogerty – Aye
Patrick Logue - Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Emergency Management – Bill Laurendeau, Director

John Curran – This is a level funded budget except for the salary increase which is by law amount. The Emergency Management job has changed drastically over the last year with COVID. Bill Laurendeau has been instrumental particularly with PPE, the FEMA reimbursements, and CARES Act money.

Dan Rosa – Bill did not do his usual letter due to most events being canceled. However, Bill and his EMA team were doing the screenings at the Town Hall at the beginning of COVID. They put together the drive throughs for the Community Pantry. Bill was instrumental with getting our first responders N95 masks and other emergency equipment. Helping with the organization and logistics of the testing sites.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. About how many volunteers do we have? There are about 20 to 30 staggered. Are the Marshall School and the COA the emergency shelters? The Marshall is the official shelter and the COA is used more as a warming center. The Emergency Management vehicles, how are those acquired? The last couple were purchased with grants. The EMA officers all pay for their own training and materials. Is the FEMA reimbursement that Mr. Laurendeau helped secure is that the same FEMA funding the town got or is this for something else? We get FEMA reimbursements every year, mostly for snow emergency and other weather-related emergencies. From time to time some of that money is used for Emergency Management. This year we have not received all the FEMA reimbursement and it was primarily from COVID. How much the town gets is based on the size of the emergency, the last one the Town got was \$70,000.

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to recommend the Emergency Management Budget in the amount of \$26,909.

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
John Mulloy – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Doug Fogerty – Aye
Patrick Logue - Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Mr. Curran wanted to take a moment to praise the Chief and his service for the town. They have known each other for many years, growing up in Woburn. They have worked together in Billerica for 11 of the Chief's 19 years here. Mr. Curran went on to tell a little story of his interview for Billerica and how the Chief helped him out. He has been a great friend and a great colleague. He is a constant professional. He has great vision and was working on police reform long before the state, addressing substance abuse and mental illness. He is very well respected in Town.

Planning and Economic Development – John Curran, Town Manager

John Curran – With the reorganization the budget is has gone up from \$163,000 to \$316,000 with the reallocation of resources within the budget. The positions of Planner and Director of Planning and Community Development have been combined into one position. In addition there will be a Staff Planner and also a Principal Clerk. There was also \$40,000 added to the Expenses for contract professional services zoning or community development issues. Currently Denise McClure is the Acting Planner and is doing a great job, unfortunately she does not want this position. She owns her own company and works with many towns.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. What is the timeline for getting someone into this position? There is no rush right now, things are running smoothly with Denise McClure and they can take their time to find the right person. There are currently a couple of strong resumes they are checking out. Because the position is bylaw position, it could start at a step 9. Denise is being paid out of Contractual Services. What is your vision for that position? How will it be different from the past? Someone with the level of skills and experience of Denise, long history in planning, can stand up in front of Town Meeting and work with the businesses in town and work with the other departments etc. The hope is that person will have the broad vision of the Town.

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to recommend the Planning and Economic Development Budget in the amount of \$316,596.

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
John Mulloy – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Doug Fogerty – Aye
Patrick Logue - Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Historical Commission – John Curran, Town Manager

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. What is the status on the Howe building and update on that? Mr. Curran has been talking with the person who has brought a lawsuit against the town, hopefully we are approaching a settlement agreement. Once that happens it can be put out to bid and things can get started.

Doug Meagher seconded by Don Damon made a motion to recommend the Historical Commission Budget in the amount of \$300.

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
John Mulloy – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Doug Fogerty – Aye
Patrick Logue - Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

MINUTES:
Minutes of March 4, 2021

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to accept the March 4, 2021 minutes.

A roll call vote was taken
It was voted 8-0-3:

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

Mary McBride – Aye
Doug Fogerty – Aye
Patrick Logue - Abstain
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE – not subject to discussion

Next FinCom meeting will be March 23, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT:

Doug Meagher seconded by Doug Fogerty 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
John Mulloy – Aye
Mary McBride – Aye
Doug Fogerty – Aye
Patrick Logue - Aye
Phil Newfell - Aye
Dave Gagliardi - Aye

Chairman David Gagliardi adjourned the meeting at 9:02 pm.

Joyce MacMillan, Recording Clerk