

BILLERICA FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES
March 15, 2022

A meeting of the Billerica Finance Committee was held on Tuesday March 15, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. in Room 210 in the Town Hall.

Present: David Gagliardi, Chairman; Douglas Meagher, Vice Chairman; Mary McBride, Secretary; Donald Damon, Member; Rino Moriconi, Member; Cheri Gargalianos, Member; Philip Newfell, Member; John Mulloy, Member; John Kleschinsky, Member, Doug Fogerty, Member; Patrick Logue, 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 7:02 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No one came forward.

BUDGETS:

Council on Aging – Jean Bushnell, COA Director

Chairman Gagliardi has recused himself from this portion of the meeting. He works for the COA as a part-time driver and has filed a disclosure with the Clerk's Office and the Moderator. Vice Chairman Meagher ran this portion of the meeting.

Jean Bushnell sent a handout to the committee prior to the meeting. Jean went over some items in the handout, stating they enable seniors to live life to the fullest. They support family caregivers, evolving to meet the needs of the community and helping seniors maintain a focus on empowerment, connectivity, and dignity. The 2020 census has shown big growth in our senior population. The COA has much to offer in programs and activities. They are also creatively addressing the severe increase in mental health. The COA has many volunteers, in any given year 51% of their capacity comes from volunteers. However, through the last 20 months of covid it was about 40%. Along with the great volunteers, the COA staff and Community Partners are what makes the COA successful. FCOA helps bring in funds for the COA when funds are not forthcoming from the town. They not only help raise funds for computers, equipment, entertainment, and programs. The COA budget is increased by \$26,560 over last year's budget. Part of the increase is moving the receptionists' hours from 9 hours to 22 hours. Another part is adding \$2,800 to the mental health consultant line.

John Kleschinsky joined the meeting at 7:16 pm.

Vice Chairman Meagher opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. Is the COA building adequate for all the programs and activities the COA offers? No, and the town is looking into ideas of a new building combined with the Recreation Dept. to create an inclusive community center of sorts. The Capital Facilities Committee is proposing a feasibility study, looking at new and/or existing buildings (Town land being considered, the Cider Mill, the Vining, and the Ditson properties) and incorporating both departments. This committee likes the idea of a community center and bringing the seniors of the community together with the kids. How is the new online payment system working? Initially, there was tremendous resistance. The COA gave classes on how to use the new system and it is working out great. Can seniors from other communities join the Billerica COA? Yes, neighborly exchanges and mutual aid. Will the same person currently at the front desk be filling in the extra hours? Possibly, there could be a couple. Looking to have consistency with standards, oversight, and

training daily. What is SAIL exercise program? It is a monitored exercise, the results are sent to the state, it is a state funded program and results have shown health improvement. It is nice that Nick Rosa is still helping the COA through his memorial donations. He was a great guy and will be missed. Grants, Elder Affairs, does that come from the state? Yes, they give \$12 per resident aged sixty and over. We are hoping that with the increase of seniors shown in the 2020 census that Billerica's funding will increase. Will there be a name change in the future? Possibly to something like the Activity Center.

Mary McBride seconded by Don Damon made a motion to recommend the Council on Aging Budget in the amount of \$422,227.

It was voted:

10 – In favor
0 – Opposed
1 – Abstained - John Kleschinsky

Town Clerks Office – Shirley Schult, Town Clerk

Shirley Schult – No presentation, available to answer any questions

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. The Assistant Town Clerk retired, have we hired a new assistant? Shirley promoted a clerk in her office to be the Assistant Town Clerk. They will have to fill that clerk's position. Any game plans for starting to replace the voting machines? They will be, they were waiting for the results of the redistricting.

Doug Meagher, seconded by Don Damon made a motion to recommend the Town Clerk budget in the amount of \$291296.

It was voted:

11 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Elections – Shirley Schult, Town Clerk

Mary McBride works as a precinct warden and has recused herself from this vote. Shirley stated that the Town added Precinct 12 as a result of the federal 2020 Census, and Precinct 12 will vote at the Marshall Middle School. Slight increase in salaries and there are three elections in this coming fiscal year vs. only one in FY2022.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. What is the role of the warden? They oversee the precinct on election day to make sure everything runs smoothly. We now have a 12th precinct. Yes, you cannot have more than a certain number of people per precinct. There will be two precincts per elementary school and two at the Marshall. What is the cost? The cost will entail additional voting machines, poll workers, police, and custodians. Plus, the DPW sets up and breaks down the machines. Would raising the hourly wage help bring in more workers? No, most people do not do it for the money. Are there any thoughts on how to bring in more people? Shirley is open to suggestions. They advertise, there is word of mouth, and social media. Do they still make the machines we have? No, we will try to get something as close as we can to what we have. There are still 240 Town Meeting members. In 1993 the machines were \$7500 each, do we know what they are now? They do not have any pricing yet.

Doug Meagher, seconded by John Mulloy made a motion to recommend the Election Budget in the amount of \$160,010.

It was voted:

11 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Registrars – Shirley Schult, Town Clerk

Shirley Schult – No presentation, available to answer any questions

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. There was a question regarding the number of board members. There are four members, two from each party. The Town Clerk is a board member, the Clerk facilitates the meeting. The other three members are the voting members.

Doug Meagher, seconded by Don Damon made a motion to recommend the Registrars Budget in the amount of \$71,957.

It was voted:

11 – In favor
0 – Opposed

System Administration – Chris Bartlett, Director of Technology

Mr. Curran began, there is an increase to this budget due to the supply line and the contractual services and the leases line. One employee in this budget. The big items here are the laptops. The Fire Dept has a \$5,000 increase for a new software program. Permitting has a \$2,000 bump in Sophos (IT security company). The backup program has gone up about \$6,000, also copiers and annual maintenance going up. They are looking at adding to staff for this office in the next year, maybe in the fall or spring. They are doing an assessment across the way, the record system for the fire department and the CAT system for Fire and Police both. Also, Lt. Greg Katz, the Police IT officer is retiring soon, and Firefighter Pat Corbett from the Fire department passed away. Pat was an integral part of the departments IT systems.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. Microsoft licensing, is it for town and school? No, just town. School has their own. What do we pay per license? It is a state contract, so it's a set price. Will be doing cloud back up for Microsoft 360 for email. Data storage happens in house and data must be stored for a set period. Do we have cyber insurance? Yes, through the Town's insurance. Is Munis the biggest cost? Yes. Have we looked at other companies? We have and as bad as Munis is, it is the best system out there. Plus, the cost of transition would be huge. The Town does get a good deal on it. Billerica was one of the first towns to use it and Munis has maintained a decent price. The city of Lowell pays well over a million dollars for their system. We have a three-year lease rotation for the PC's. How many people will you add to staff? Not sure, it is in the discussion stage. Part of the discussion has to do with adding to staff, and do we add in the police and fire. The lease on the PC's is up in September, and will we stay with the same company? Depends on the brand of computers we get and who finances? Also, who will give us the best price. If there is a holdup in the supply chain, we can extend out our lease to a fourth year if needed. Do we have battery backup? We do not need it; we have a generator but there are a select few computers that do still have a battery backup. How many years is our Comcast contract? The town does not have a contract with Comcast, we are billed monthly and can terminate the

relationship at any time. Verizon does not work with the Town's firewall. No extra pay for Town Meeting? Glad to hear we will eventually be expanding the dept, you need another person.

Doug Meagher, seconded by Don Damon made a motion to recommend the System Administration Budget in the amount of \$641,581.

It was voted:

11 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Sub-Committee Report on Compensation:

The sub committee report was gone over at the last meeting and the committee wanted more time to go over the reimbursement policy even though that is not what we will be voting on. What the committee will be voting on is whether to remove the salary from the Select Board and open the five boards (Select Board, Board of Health, Conservation Committee, Planning board and Zoning Board of Appeals) to the same opportunities. Let them know that they have classes and seminars available to go to and to be reimbursed for said classes and seminars. The Finance Committee's Sub-Committee is recommending reimbursement instead of stipends for out-of-pocket expenses. The Select Board submitted their own article to keep their stipend in place.

The committee asked a couple more questions. If someone from any of the five boards/committees wanted to go to for example a state held conference, webinar/seminar, or class, they would be reimbursed for that class? Yes, but not for something like going to school to get a bachelors or master's degree. The reimbursement policy will be specific. The Town already has this policy in place, correct? Yes. Up until 1979 The town was run by the Board of Selectmen. It was at that time they decided they needed a more professional not political person to run the town. It was up until that time the Selectmen received a full salary. Maybe should put this out there for the Town Meeting to decide. Exactly what are we voting on? We are going to adjust the two budgets. Right now, the Selectmen have the article for the stipends in there. The Finance Committee would recommend reducing the Select Board Budget by \$9,200, the amount of the stipend and reduce the overall budget. We would be going to Town Meeting with two Budgets, the Finance Committee Budget, and the Town Manager's Budget. If we vote to reduce the Select Board Budget, how does that affect the Warrant Article to pay the Select Board the \$9,200? If the Select Board article goes through, the Chair would recommend the Town Budget. If the Select Board article fails, the Chair would recommend the Finance Committee budget. The sub-committee did its job, they were only supposed to recommend to the board about committee expense compensation. There was much confusion as to what should have been and what still should be voted on.

Mary McBride seconded by Doug Meagher made a motion to accept the recommendation of the Finance Committee's Sub-Committee on compensation with the amended \$20,000.

It was voted:

8 – In favor
3 – Opposed – Rino Moriconi, Patrick Logue, and Don Damon

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to reduce the part time seasonal budget line item in the Select Board account from \$13,102 to \$5702 here by reducing the Select Board budget from \$103,101 to \$95,701.

It was voted:

5 – In favor
6 – Opposed – John Kleschinsky, John Mulloy, Mary McBride, Patrick Logue, Rino Moriconi, and Don Damon

Board of Selectmen – John Curran, Town Manager

John Curran stated not much has changed. There is decrease in the secretary salary due to the secretary retiring; the new person will probably come in at a lower step.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. There was some question as to why the selectmen stipend and Town Clerk’s salary are both in the budget and as warrant articles (anyone that is an elected official, their salary must be voted on), How is the Middlesex 3 figured, could the Town Meeting budget be taken out of this budget and have a separate one for Town Meeting.

Doug Meagher seconded by Mary McBride made a motion to recommend the Select Board budget in the amount of \$103,101

It was voted:

9 – In favor
2 – Opposed - Cheri Gargalianos and Phil Newfell

Town Manager – John Curran, Town Manager

John Curran – this budget has increased 16%, the biggest adjustment being the addition of Human Resource director position and an adjustment to the Asst. Town Manager salary, the \$20,000 that was added to the expense line item for reimbursements and reduced the professional development line item by \$10,000. Also, the Assessment Center is reduced by \$25,000. Hopefully there is no need for one in FY23.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions or concerns. A committee member asked the Town Manager to still promote the new reimbursement policy for boards and committees.

Doug Meagher, seconded by Don Damon made a motion to recommend the Town Manager Budget in the amount of \$941,698.

It was voted:

11 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Miscellaneous Correspondence:

Next Finance Committee Meeting Tuesday March 22, 2022

Phil Newfell asked if it is possible that the subcommittee meet within the meeting or prior to the meeting to accept their minutes then dissolve the subcommittee? Yes.

ADJOURNMENT:

Doug Meagher, seconded by Phil Newfell made a motion to adjourn.

It was voted:

11 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Chairman David Gagliardi adjourned the meeting at 9:09 pm.

Joyce MacMillan, Recording Clerk