Middlesex Budget Committee
Regular Meeting
Thursday, January 4, 2024
4:00 PM

Present: Randy Drury, Elias Gardner, Mark Harris, George Longenecker, Zara Vincent

Meeting Minutes

4:06 Call to Order - Amendments -

- Elias had a question on the computer maintenance line item (56) regarding its high cost and what alternatives had been explored. Randy responded that the cost was an estimate from RB Technologies, and that another bid was requested but the individual had to drop out for personal reasons. Elias also asked about the cost of a Google solution vs. what was being proposed. Randy agreed that there may be less costly solutions, and that it would be to the Select Board's benefit to seek other bids.
- Elias asked about the General Fund, which has historically run a surplus, if there was any rule being applied for its usage once it accrued to a certain amount. Mark responded that he was not aware of one, and asked Randy to weigh in. Randy responded that there is wording about the general fund, but not specific to amount(s) reached and disposition. Randy and Mark concurred that the General Fund shouldn't be used to lower a budget increase, as it's a temporary fix and doesn't address the challenge of year over year budgeting.
- Zara asked about ways to raise funds for the town, like installing cameras to catch speeders and levy fines. Randy reported that no revenue enhancers had been discussed at the Select Board meetings.

4:20 Other Business

- Review and approve November meeting minutes
- 2023-11-07 Budget Committee Minutes.rtf
    - Elias motioned to accept the minutes as written, and Zara seconded
    - The motion passed 5-0-0
- Review Action Items - closed items 44 & 45
- Round Robin on FY 2024/25 proposed budget cuts:
    - Elias -
        - Line 56, Computer Maint, could be reduced
        - Line 57, Consultant Fees (Lister) could be reduced
        - Line 263, Town Hall Bldg Fund, could be reduced
    - Randy -
        - Line 45, Equip Purchases, could be reduced if the town went cloud-based
        - Line 56, Computer Maint, could be reduced
        - Line 57, Consultant Fees (Lister) could be reduced
        - Line 97, FD Stipends - could reduce this, as it hasn't hit the $18K estimate. Perhaps reduce by $6K.
        - Line 122, Road Gravel - could be reduced
        - Line 147, Sub Contractors, could be reduced
        - Line 149, Garage Maint, questioned if level funding was appropriate
        - Line 186, Culverts, could be reduced

    - Zara -
        - Line 61 - Electricity - Sarah responded that the electric bill is a combined one and she pays it
        - Line 187, Signs - why @ $4000? Randy responded that the plan was to replace/add several road signs in town.
    - George -
        - Line 45, Equip Purchase (Server) could be looked at
        - Line 56, Computer Maint, could be reduced
        - Line 122, Road Gravel - could be reduced
        - Line 186, Culverts, could be reduced
        - Line 263, Town Hall Bldg Fund, could be reduced by $30K
    - Mark -
        - Line 122, Road Gravel - suggested reducing by $20K and using ARPA $$ if necessary
        - Line 263, Town Hall Bldg Fund - suggested zeroing it out (saving $40K) and letting the Town Hall renovation address it
- Votes on final budget cuts:
    - Line 56, Computer Maintenance -
        - After much discussion, could be cut somewhat
        - Also should be put out to bid
        - Randy asked for input on qualified bidders
        - Elias, Mark, and Zara offered to assist
        - Consensus was to reduce this line item by $10,000
    - Line 57, Consultants -
        - $15,000 seems like a lot of consulting for Listers now in their 2nd year of experience
        - Consensus was to reduce the hours from 100 to 70, saving $4,500
    - Line 97, FD Stipends -
        - The Actuals have hovered around $12,000 annually
        - The Budget has been $18,000
        - Consensus was to split the difference and reduce this line item by $3,000
    - Line 122, Road Gravel -
        - Questioned whether after all the road upgrades, how much additional gravel would be needed
        - Consensus was to reduce this line item by $10,000
    - Line 186, Culverts -
        - Questioned whether after all the culvert replacements this year (over 180), how many new ones would be needed next year
        - Consensus was to reduce this line item by $5,000
    - Line 263, Town Hall -
        - Decided to keep $30K in case the elevator can/should be repaired next year
        - Allocating the annual amount to this fund isn't critical as the renovation cost is substantial and will be bonded
        - Consensus was to reduce this line item by $10,000
    - Total reduction of $42,500 -
        - Reduces the budget before Special Articles from 11.73% to a 9.2% increase

        - Reduces the budget after Special Articles from 14.21% to a 11.73% increase
    - Mark will summarize the proposed cuts and send to the Select Board, copying Budget Committee members *(Action Item 46)*
- Other matters that may come before the committee -
    - Randy took the opportunity to thank the committee for its efforts
    - Mark also commented that the Budget Committee should make it a practice to present budget recommendations to the SB each year after all Depts. have submitted their budgets
- Next meeting - **Tuesday, January 16th, at 4 PM** if necessary. Will depend on the outcome of the January 9th SB meeting on the proposed budget changes.

The meeting adjourned at 5:36 PM

Date Created	**Action Item #**	**Assignee**	**Action Item**	**Due Date**	**Date Closed**
11/07/23	44	Zara	Explore VT Flood Response & Recovery Fund as a source of reimbursement for our flood damage	11/21/23	11/21/23
11/07/23	45	Mark	Send SB Capital Funding details for FY 2024/25	11/10/23	11/10/23
01/04/24	46	Mark	Summarize proposed budget cuts and send to SB	01/05/24	01/05/24
	47				