

**Needham Finance Committee  
Minutes of Meeting of January 4, 2012**

The meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order by the Chair, Matthew Borrelli, at approximately 7:00 pm in the Highland Room, Town Hall.

Present from the Finance Committee:

Matthew Borrelli, Chair; Richard Reilly, Vice Chair

Members: John Connelly (arrived 7:12 p.m.), Richard Creem, Richard Lunetta, Steven Rosenstock, Lisa Zappala, Richard Zimbone

Others present:

Theodora Eaton, Town Clerk

Patricia Carey, Director, Park and Recreation Department

Dave DiCicco, Trustee, Memorial Park

David Davison, Finance Director/Assistant Town Manager

Evelyn Poness, Town Collector/Treasurer

Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager

Christopher Coleman, Assistant Town Manager

**Citizen Requests**

No citizens requested to speak.

**Approval of Minutes**

MOVED: By Mr. Reilly that the Minutes of December 14, 2011, be approved as distributed. Mr. Rosenstock seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0. (Mr. Connelly had not yet arrived.)

MOVED: By Mr. Zimbone that the Minutes of December 19, 2011, be approved as most recently distributed. Ms. Zappala seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0. (Mr. Connelly had not yet arrived.)

**Departmental Spending Requests**

**Town Clerk**

Mr. Creem presented the budget. He stated that the some of the most important functions of the Town Clerk's office are compliance with numerous federal and state regulatory mandates, the administration of elections, maintaining vital records, and the issuance of various licenses. In FY 2013, the state Ethics Law will enter its second cycle of testing. The Town Clerk will be redoing the ethics training manual. There will be three scheduled elections in FY 2013, compared to two in FY 2012, causing an increase in the salary line of \$11,100. There will be an annual Town election, which is costly because of the number of different ballots, as well as a U.S. Presidential election, which is expensive because of the volume of voting, particularly

absentee ballots. In response to a question from Mr. Creem, Ms. Eaton stated that the Board of Registrars stipend is \$50 for the first 1,000 voters and \$50 for each additional 1,000 voters or portion thereof. She currently receives \$1,000 for approximately 20,000 voters.

The Town Clerk's total budget request is \$341,853, increasing by a total of \$24,173 over FY 2012, most due to the 3<sup>rd</sup> election. Services and Supplies are increasing \$7,262 because of an increase in repair costs, technical services for elections, and the volume of vital records. Postage costs associated with absentee ballots are also increasing. In the budget, the expense for voting booths has been shifted to the Office Supplies line. Ms. Eaton stated that in FY 2012, the Town will be purchasing four 4-unit booths, and plans to purchase an additional four 4-unit booths in FY 2013. The old wood booths will serve as back-ups to the extent they are usable.

The Town Clerk's office will also be doing follow-up work from the federal census, since approximately 85% of people responded initially. The office will continue issuing licenses, though not state fish and game licenses, due to a change in state fee collecting procedures. The Town Clerk's office processes Board of Appeals applications and issues vital records certificates. The processing of passports has been moved to the Town Manager's office because of a new federal regulation prohibiting the issuer of birth certificates to also process passport applications. The Town Clerk's office also has been working to preserve older vital records through document imaging. Mr. Creem added that the department is extremely well run, and handles new challenges efficiently.

Mr. Rosenstock asked whether there might soon be voting by email or fax locally, since the Town Clerk's office has conducted voting by fax and email for overseas military personnel. Ms. Eaton stated there would need to be a change of law, and she did not expect anything like that soon. Mr. Reilly asked about the AutoMARK machines. Ms. Eaton stated that the Town is required by law to have these expensive handicapped marking machines at each polling station, and they are almost never used. Mr. Zimbone asked when the typewriters in the Maintenance line of the expense budget are used. Ms. Eaton stated that certified copies of vital records are typed, though the office is moving toward electronic records. Mr. Zimbone asked about the time stamp machine. Ms. Eaton stated that it is used to stamp Board of Appeals applications. Mr. Borrelli asked about the staffing level. Ms. Eaton stated that work was slow in the summer, but there is always project work to be done. They had begun putting birth records into the computer, but needed to stop the project until the programming is straightened out at the state level.

### **Trustees of Memorial Park**

Mr. DiCicco stated that the Trustees are working on the building, with financial help from generous users, both groups and families. He stated that the carpet has been replaced, and the concessions area is 75% done. They expect to use the revolving fund to finish up the project, hopefully by spring. Much of the work is volunteer and in-kind, so they do not have a set schedule. Mr. Creem stated that he had recently been in the concession room and was disappointed with the condition. He noted that there is a policy that the last user must clean it up when finished. He asked whether there is any remedy when it is not left clean. Mr. DiCicco stated that the Trustees have discussed having the room professionally cleaned monthly when it

is in use. Mr. Creem asked whether Public Facilities could take over the job. Ms. Carey stated that it is not in their contract.

### **Park and Recreation**

Ms. Zappala presented the budget. She stated that some programs are funded through the General Fund, and some through revolving funds. She stated that recreation programs bring in revenue and help with the cost of the department. In FY 2011, summer programs brought in revenue of over \$150,000 and cost approximately \$80,000. She stated that it is a tightly run department. For FY 2013, salaries are going up 3%, while the overall request is for a total increase of only 1.8%. The Department has been given new work, with the budget staying almost the same. In FY 2013, the Department is picking up the maintenance of playgrounds, meaning it will cover the cost of DPW overtime for the work, adding almost \$5,000 to the Parks and Recreation overtime budget. Mr. Zimbone asked how the work was done before. Ms. Carey stated it was done by a private contractor. The work has shifted to the DPW unless it is work that the DPW is not trained for. The DPW is handling the playground surfacing, which is important for safety. Mr. Zimbone stated that the DPW overtime budget was very high, and the DPW should review why the work is being done on an overtime basis. Ms. Carey stated that the Park and Recreation Department has found areas where it can save. It is printing fewer brochures. Postage costs are down, although rates are increasing, because fewer brochures are mailed. Online registrations are saving money. All these savings have been put into the overtime budget.

Mr. Reilly stated that the information for Rosemary Pool shows usage and fees both increasing yet revenue is flat. Ms. Carey stated that the Pool functions on a calendar year, so its revenue bridges two fiscal years. Many passes are purchased through the early bird program, so they are purchased before one fiscal year closes. Last year, many people were uncertain so they bought passes later. As a result, the revenue may appear in a different fiscal year from the usage and fee data. She also noted that fee assistance is up, which would affect revenue. Mr. Reilly asked what the qualifications were for assistance. Ms. Carey stated that the Department requires a letter of need from an authority such as the housing authority. They do not judge the need themselves. Some people with seeking fee assistance come through the school guidance counselors. Mr. Borrelli stated that it would be helpful for the Rosemary Pool expenses and revenues to be broken out separately. Ms. Carey stated that the fees do not cover the costs, but they don't want to make the fee too high.

There was discussion of the field usage fees. Mr. Reilly stated that the DPW budget includes the maintenance of the fields. He asked how the fees are set relative to the maintenance costs. Ms. Carey stated that the fees have been the same since the 1990s, \$5 per person for use of the fields, which goes into the general fund. The revenue is approximately \$40,000-\$45,000 per year. The field usage does contribute to the Department's work. There was discussion about increasing the field fee. Ms. Carey stated that the Town Manager and the Board of Selectmen have discussed increasing the fee, and are deciding whether to increase it little by little or jump to increase it by \$5. The increase will help close the gap between field costs and related revenue.

Mr. Borrelli asked how the plans for Greene's Field are proceeding. Ms. Carey stated that there is a committee that is trying to determine the best type of entity for fundraising. They are also reviewing presentations for the project and follow-up work. She stated that the project will be a gift to the Town, but then Park and Recreation is responsible for maintenance. Therefore it is important to assess the quality of the work, and the builder follow-up.

Mr. Rosenstock asked how the Department could keep expenses flat for five years. Ms. Carey stated that she changes purchasing methods. For example, they used to buy many bathing suits for people working at the pool. They switched to a stipend so that they did not need to over-buy in order to accommodate all the sizes, which saved money. They have also shifted to online registration to save on printing and mailing. She watches where money is being spent, and considers how to hold back.

Mr. Reilly asked if the department had more money, what would they spend it on? Ms. Carey stated she would spend more on playground maintenance because of the safety issue. She would also spend more on maintenance of trails. She stated there are initiatives ready to launch with trails, but currently they must rely on volunteers.

### **Municipal Parking Program**

Mr. Connelly presented the budget. He stated that the request was the same as last year, \$55,000. The Program operates all of the Town parking, primarily in the downtown area. The greatest expense is the cost of the agreement with the MBTA to use spots on their property behind Chapel Street. The Program takes in \$30,000 - \$35,000 in revenue. Mr. Reilly stated that it appeared that to create the budget, numbers were plugged in to come up with the same bottom line from FY 2012. Mr. Davison stated that the numbers are all estimations since it is a program. Some years are heavier on operations and other years on expenses. The appropriation is a guideline, but everything is spent on municipal lots. Mr. Borrelli stated that the revenue from permits is down almost \$300. Mr. Davison stated that there may be fewer permits sold in a year, depending on how many businesses buy permits and how many they buy. It is usually pretty flat. The fees have not been changed in a few years. If the Town buys the Lincoln Street property for parking, the parking fee structure will be reexamined. Ms. Poness stated that currently a space is \$75, and the "buddy" spaces are \$100, which allows for 2 cars parked in tandem. She added that the fees have not been increased or discussed for a long time. Mr. Davison stated that the \$55,000 budget includes maintenance for permitted spots and for all free spaces. He added that the permit fee can only cover related expenses cannot subsidize the free parking. Ms. Poness stated that the Town sells more permits than spaces, and that the permits are only available for local employees. She expects if the Town purchases the Lincoln Street property that more permits will be sold. Mr. Davison stated that the buddy spaces are currently underutilized, but if the Lincoln St property is purchased, the Town plans to reconfigure those spaces.

### **Board of Selectmen/Town Manager**

Mr. Borrelli presented the budget. The expense line is flat, though some expenses have been reallocated among the lines. The Town Manager's office has recently undertaken the responsibility of processing passports. In response to a question from Mr. Zimbone, Ms.

Fitzpatrick stated that the Board of Selectmen stipend has not increased since 1977, and that not all of them accept it. Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that the salary increase is less than 3%. The FY 2012 salary allocation does not account for salary increases in exchange for moving to rate savers plans, and for transfers from the Classification, Performance and Settlements line. There will be a 1.2% savings from the rate savers plans. Mr. Reilly asked that Ms. Fitzpatrick show how the rate savers plans save money and how costs have changed during the hearing on Townwide Expenses.

Mr. Zimbone asked about the DSR-2 line for Payment in Lieu of Vacation, and stated that employees should take vacations. Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that the budget contains funding for one week of pay per year for two managers in the department to pay them for vacation they do not take in case that is necessary. Mr. Reilly stated that he was disappointed that there were no goals for more cost effective ways to provide services. Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that when the Board sets goals, they are looking at how the Town will move as a whole. Trying to do better service more efficiently is what the Town does every day. Mr. Reilly stated that it should be an articulated goal. Mr. Reilly asked about the DSR2 expense of \$11,000 for the Recruitment and Assessment Center. Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that it provides a useful way to test and judge certain candidates by putting them in realistic situations to see how they handle issues. It was used in the police chief search.

Ms. Fitzpatrick asked to comment about parking. She stated that the Town's lease with the First Christ Church has expired, so that is not in the budget. However, that will not always be the case. Currently, the Library pays \$8,000 per year for parking. She noted also that the MBTA spaces in the center are in a prime location. There may need to be a sliding fee scale of what different parking spaces are worth in Town when the parking issues are worked out.

### **Finance Committee Updates**

Mr. Borrelli stated that there was a liaison meeting with the Schools recently and a School Committee meeting the previous night. There is going to be continuing discussion over the School Department's budget request to determine priorities and the needs.

### **Adjourn**

MOVED: By Mr. Reilly that the meeting be adjourned, there being no further business. Mr. Lunetta seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 8-0, at approximately 8:08 p.m.

Documents: Town of Needham Departmental Spending Requests, Fiscal Year 2013, dated December 14, 2011

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Mizgerd  
Executive Secretary/Staff Analyst

*Approved January 9, 2012*