

Approved February 2, 2022

**Advisory Committee Meeting
Zoom Video Conference
Wednesday, January 26, 2022, 6:30 p.m.**

Those present from Advisory Committee included Shawn Baker, Tom Cunningham, Jake Erhard, Jenn Fallon, Neal Goins, John Lanza, Jeff Levitan, Corinne Monahan, Doug Smith, Susan Clapham, Al Ferrer, Wendy Paul, Pete Pedersen, Madison Riley, Patti Quigley.

Neal Goins called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and introduced members of Advisory in attendance.

Citizen Speak

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

Select Board's Boards/Committees/Departments Budget Presentation

Meghan Jop, Executive Director; Sheryl Strother, Finance Director; Tom Ulfelder, Chair, Select Board; Marie Cleary, Lieutenant, Police Department; Jeffrey Petersen, Assistant Chief, Fire Department; Jack Pilecki, Chief, Police Department; Rick DeLorie, Chief, Fire Department; Brian DuPont, Director, IT Department; Lise Olney, Select Board; Beth Sullivan Woods, Select Board; Colette Aufranc, Select Board; Lara Olton, Climate Action Committee; Mary Beth Martello, Director, Climate Action, Ann-Mara Lanza, Select Board were present

The Select Board's FY23 Budget was presented for the departments under the jurisdiction of the Select Board based on the organizational chart. FY23 budget guidelines were reviewed and the FY21 Select Board turnback presented.

Questions/Comments

- Concern was expressed that the \$50,000 for the study of the kitchen and the entry way is not in the Council on Aging (COA) capital budget. It was felt that the COA does a lot for seniors in town and the seniors have supported other projects in town.
 - The Select Board had a discussion on the \$50,000 for the study which was a new project and not in capital budget last year. The building is safe and it is a 4-year-old building. The COA was looking for a visual queue for the entry. Other aspects are being explored with FMD. There needs to be a discussion on how the COA wants to move forward programmatically. They will work with FMD to develop a broader plan. FMD is not able to complete the study at this time due to FMD's workload. At this point it is being deferred. The COA building is a functional building and programs are being delivered and the building is safe. COA is a subsidiary board to the Select Board. Departments put forth a request and not all are granted. The Select Board debated this and the vote was split.
- A comment was made that people like to gather around food and that the COA would like the ability to use the kitchen.
 - Based on discussions with the Health Department and FMD, this is potentially a substantial cost. There is the capability to have food demonstrations at other buildings such as the Recreation building and the Middle School kitchen. The Town must make priorities given the needs in other buildings and the Tolles Parsons is a new building.
- Have we looked at how the town can benefit from the federal infrastructure act funds for Climate related items and PFAS?
 - Yes, department heads are watching for the grant applications when they are available.

- A question was asked if the ARPA funds were put into free cash and if these funds are not restricted.
 - There are different levels of the application of funds; local, county and state level. At local level Wellesley received \$1.5 million to date. \$3 million in total was received and was put towards revenue loss which flows to free cash.
- A question was asked about legal fees and if we have accounted for what will be needed since a supplemental appropriation to cover legal fees was approved at the October 2021 Special Town Meeting.
 - We feel FY22 legal fees are in a good place. It is a conservative budget and we hope we will get back to a standard level of legal fees moving forward.
- Has the IT cyber audit been completed?
 - We are in the procurement process for a cyber assessment which is different than a cyber audit. The town was also awarded a \$50,000 Mass cyber security grant.
- Now that town is thinking holistically about Climate Action does it make sense not to have a board now that team members report to the Executive Director? And if the Select Board is overriding the COA does it make sense to have this board?
 - It is good to have an interdisciplinary view on Climate Action and it is the Commonwealth's goal. We must make hard choices. We have a capital budget process that is very clear and it goes to mandate and needs and the longevity of a building.
 - The COA board, which is focused on the needs of the seniors, is important in a community like Wellesley to determine the priorities and the needs of the population and how the building is being used.
- Can you comment in DE&ZI?
 - We established a DE&I task force and spent \$15,000 for a consultant. We received a \$50,000 earmark in 2022 state budget for phase 2 of the DE&I work.
- How do the projected 2022 increases in interest rates by the Federal Reserve impact our borrowing?
 - We look at all projects brought to Town Meeting with a four percent interest rate. The Finance Director and Treasurer have closely followed the trend of interest rates. As a result, they plan to borrow early and issue bonds for the first half of the school projects. This is being done by February 7. We will have a sense next week of what the interest rate will be and we will watch this for next year. There will be a debt exclusion for a Special Town Meeting in the fall for the Town Hall interior and we continue to evaluate how to reduce that borrowing. It is on the forefront of thinking for the Town-Wide Financial Plan (TWFP) to look two years out.
- How do we see the risk and pressure to the budget of the current seven percent annual inflation rate?
 - We are locked into many contracts with far lower rates of increase. We will see this in negotiations of contracts in the future and we will see it in hiring pressure. Some capital items might be affected. But we are confident of the budget.
- What is the thought process in eliminating the economic development director given the vacant stores in town?
 - It is not being eliminated but it is being merged with the Assistant Executive Director position who has a significant experience in economic development. It's an economic cycle and many stores are coming in. Retail is down everywhere because of ecommerce. Restaurants will provide foot traffic. Evening hours in retail are needed.
- What is the impact to health insurance rates with the new provider?
 - We believe we can absorb it and we are negotiating with the unions now. Rates are based on claims and Blue Cross Blue Shield claims adjusted well and the pricing is favorable to the town.

- Is there the potential to increase the capacity of FMD so they can take on more capital projects and has this been considered?
 - The Select Board can consider this. There are only a certain number of projects that the town can absorb. FMD is a project manager but these projects also involve a public process and this takes time. Adding additional staff doesn't expedite these projects. Recreation did a feasibility study but this is not considered conceptual by FMD. It is a balancing act. It is not just capacity issue but it is also tax impact and need. Considering the Town Hall interior work and we must do the interior on a building that has not had work done in a long time. We just approved large debt exclusions for two schools. We have a long-term capital plan. The Tolles Parsons building is only four years old and was based on programming at the time. There have been significant changes in operations and personnel. It is serving the function as it was designed.
- Is that trajectory of nine years typical for the funding of retirement and pension?
 - Yes, Wellesley is in a good position.
- Are IT backups not a problem for Wellesley?
 - Even though there is not a dedicated person, there is a dedicated process for IT security testing.
- Support was expressed for the COA kitchen and concern expressed that the kitchen is not being fixed.
 - There is a COA kitchen that is suitable for what it was intended. The COA is proposing a full functioning kitchen. We can consider programming changes to support this kitchen over time but we have to consider the impact on the operating budget. We have been in touch with Whitson's to use it as a catering kitchen. We are not walking away from the COA. The Health Department and FMD continue to work with the COA on a solution.
- A comment was made that it might be a good time to reevaluate how FMD can grow to help the town do what it needs to do and that we should relook at FMD's capacity and add to that capacity. The COA building was intended to be built with a functional kitchen and from the beginning it couldn't be used. It does not matter that it is a four-year-old building. It was felt that this can't be dropped just because it is a new building.
- A question was asked about the budgeting of \$20,000 less in legal expenses and a question asked if there is a lull in activities?
 - There is confidence that some of the cases will be resolved and the additional costs will not be needed.
- Has there been an exploration of an alternative fee arrangements for legal fees and is there an RFP process for the hiring of outside legal counsel?
 - We go through an RFP process which was done in 2014. The Select Board has continued to employ the current outside counsel.
- Has this been done for bond counsel and outside litigation counsel?
 - It depends on the case. Some are selected by the insurance carrier and are for specific litigation.
- Concern was expressed that without any controls legal expenses could spiral and that alternative fee arrangements can protect against this.
- A comment was made that it is difficult to reconcile that the Select Board can approve \$50,000 for a CAC consultant when we are fortunate to have climate experts on staff and yet the COA, who doesn't have expertise in the kitchen project, is not given \$50,000 for a study for the kitchen.
- Support for the COA was expressed and it was felt that the details fell through cracks during the construction of the COA building, including the kitchen, and that the Town has an obligation to fix it.
- A comment was made that it is unclear what the CAC consultant entails.

- Has the health of fire fighters with new variant of COVID and given the close staff quarters been an issue?
 - The Fire Department has had personnel with new variant. The Health Department helped with vaccines and rapid test kits are available for staff.
- A question was asked of the Fire Chief if the Quint was purchased.
 - Yes
- Are there any other FTE increases in the Select Board departments?
 - No
- If the capital goal is to be at 6.8% and it is currently \$690,000 over, could another large capital project be pulled out and made a warrant article?
 - At some point we need to prioritize. This budget is addressing significant capital.
- Besides COA and Recreation/Morses Pond are there any other capital items that didn't get funded?
 - Two vans by the Youth Commission. Just because we defer doesn't mean we aren't working on it. We work to prioritize.
- Is there a hazard mitigation plan in response to climate action such as extreme weather events and how this impacts infrastructure and operations?
 - We are confident we will get grant money.
- Will Advisory receive a draft of the TWFP before the Public Hearing?

Town Clerk FY23 Budget

KC Kato, Town Clerk presented the FY23 Town Clerk budget, including a review of election costs for the Town Clerk's office. A review of FY21 and FY22 actuals to date were also presented.

Questions/Comments

- Do you have difficulty getting poll workers?
 - We have many people who are supportive and who have stepped up to help. We were lucky that many college students were home. However, it is a challenge to staff elections and there has been some turnover due to age. Our biggest challenge at this point is that we never know what will happen.
- What is the overall percentage increase for the office?
 - It is over guideline and that percentage increase will be provided.

Discussion – previous presentations/2022 ATM Warrant Articles

Town Clerk

- Support was expressed for small budgets such as the Town Clerk, given the uncontrollable costs and the work that is being done.

ADUs

- A comment was made that the letter received from Building a Better Wellesley indicated that parking was not going to be an issue because people are being replaced in the household. It was felt that parking will be an issue. A question was asked if this could turn into Airbnb's for everyone.
 - The lease term is a minimum of 30 days and this is to address the Airbnb concerns.
- A comment was made that clarification regarding the overnight parking was appreciated.
 - If parking were a problem, police will make judgment call in the moment.
- A comment made that there should be a restriction for students and concern expressed about these being a dormitory surrogate.

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- Concern was expressed about the lack of occupancy numbers and the lack of a definition of caregivers. It was felt that parking is differentially enforced. No support for ADUs as currently written was expressed.
- A comment was made that this has been studied for several years and other communities with ADUs as a housing option were reviewed. It was felt that this is not going to change the appearance of a neighborhood. Individual owners will have to plan regarding parking. There are so few opportunities to increase the availability of this type of housing in town. There will not be a huge number of these. Support was expressed for the ADUs.
- Planning is scheduled to talk about their budget next week and will Advisory be able to ask more questions when they come in?
 - Yes, more questions can be asked.
- Wellesley has a Housing Production Plan and Wellesley doesn't have ADUs like other towns do. It's being created to be available to people to use if they want to spend money to create an ADU on their property.

NRC

- The Perrin Park playground proposal was clarified and there were a lot of trees proposed to be taken away so the playground project was changed.
- Concerns were expressed about active versus passive use and the NRC's focus on passive use. NRC's goals mentioned in their retreat fall short because they are not "promoting" active space. Concern was expressed that the full picture is not being considered.
- A question was asked if the NRC and CAC additional staff could be the same person. A question was asked if the NRC interacts with other departments in town.
 - Both will be full time jobs going forward.
- Clarification was requested about encroachment issues outside the jurisdiction of the NRC as it was stated that the NRC indicated that they are doing enforcement work now.
- Concern was expressed about the return on investment to the town by hiring the NRC person full time after reviewing the job description.
 - The CAC position is research and the NRC position is education and enforcement so that the skill sets are too different to be the same person and it is complicated to blend these two positions together.
- A comment was made that the NRC position not well justified.
 - Clarification was provided regarding the NRC position and that there is a person currently working part time and the request is to make it full time. So, the budget is adding just one half of a FTE position.
- A comment was made that the NRC does not go to properties and leave a ticket. The NRC's approach to enforcement is through education on how to fulfill bylaws of the town. NRC is not seen as enforcers.

Citizens Petition – Worcester Street Zoning

- A comment was made that from a zoning standpoint, the request to rezone these properties makes no sense. Six of the properties are in Wetlands and these are in a single residence district. The surrounding neighborhoods are also in single residence. This will create an island of multifamily in a zone of single family. It was felt that there is no reason to do this from a straight zoning perspective. The neighborhood came to the public hearing and they do not support the rezoning of the properties.

Minutes Approval/Liaison Reports/Administrative Items

Liaison Reports

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DPW/Pete Pedersen – DPW requested to come back to Advisory to discuss PFAS and the Enterprise fund for storm water after the DPW meeting on February 8.

PBC/Al Ferrer – PBC monthly progress reports have been requested.

HR/Wendy Paul– HR is working through updates to the policies. Inflation and the impact on salaries going forward was discussed

Recreation/Wendy Paul – Recreation is holding public hearings on private gain for public use of facilities; there is a placeholder on the warrant.

Schools/Susan Clapham and Jenn Fallon – last School Committee was recapped and included the introduction of the new director of the ELL program; there are two retirement from key administrative staff – Sarah Orloff and Kathy Dooley; Kindergarten registration is February 1; there was a sports and COVID discussion; the budget was discussed; there is a new program adopted at middle school but this needs to be approved by the union; continued work on facilities on permits for Hardy; swing space discussed; track and field lights discussed; moving ahead on bathrooms; in the 2nd quarter financial report there are additional expenses; the Hardy drive will need an easement; MLP taking up the photovoltaics at Hardy and will be decided before April; there is a change to at home testing for COVID and families need to opt in; vaccination levels are very high; DEI narrative for the FY23 budget includes METCO staff and stipends, professional development, books and instructional materials.

Planning/John Lanza – at the Planning Public Hearing Building a Better Wellesley spoke in support of ADUs. The neighborhood group opposing the Worcester Road Citizen Petition also spoke and opposes the rezoning petition.

An observation was made that Town Meeting members might ask many questions on the articles.

Administrative

Deadlines for article write ups were discussed.

Coming attractions

- February 2 – Public Hearing; Planning’s FY23 Budget
- February 9 – School Budget; Citizen’s Petition – Academic Excellence
- February 12 (Saturday) – Discussion and vote on 2022 ATM Warrant articles.

A request was made to meet in person on Saturday Feb. 12.

A comment was made about including prior year Advisory recommendations in this year’s write-ups to maintain continuity.

Minutes

Jeff Levitan made and Patti Quigley seconded a motion to approve the January 19, 2022 minutes and January 20, 2022 minutes and adjourn the meeting.

Roll Call Vote

Jennifer Fallon – yes
John Lanza – yes
Corinne Monahan - yes
Patti Quigley - yes
Tom Cunningham – yes
Jake Erhard – yes
Jeff Levitan - yes
Doug Smith – yes
Susan Clapham - yes
Al Ferrer - yes

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Wendy Paul – yes
Pete Pedersen - yes
Madison Riley – yes
Shawn Baker – yes

January 19, 2022 and January 20, 2022 minutes were approved and the meeting adjourned 14 to 0 at 9:43 p.m.

Documents Reviewed

<https://wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/1352>

- FMD Capital
- FY23 SB Budget Workshop Book for Advisory
- FY23 SB Capital Vote 1/24/22
- SB Departments FY23 Capital Requests
- SB FY23 Budget Summary with FY21 Budget 1/25/22
- Town Clerk FY23 Budget Request