



## SELECT BOARD BUDGET WORKSHOP

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 21, 2025

6:00 PM

Acton Town Hall, Room 204 and Virtual

**Select Board Members Present:** Fran Arsenault, Dean Charter, Alissa Nicol, David Martin, Jim Snyder-Grant

**Finance Committee Members Present:** Jason Cole, Stephen Noone, Roland Bourdon, Dave Wellinghoff, Scott Sullivan, Greg Jarboe, Corrine Hogseth, Gang Chen

**Other:** Town Manager John Mangiaratti, Assistant Town Manager Thom Begin, Executive Assistant Lisa Tomy

Ms. Arsenault called the Select Board meeting to order at 6:06 PM. Mr. Cole called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:06 PM. This was a joint meeting with the Finance Committee.

### I. Budget Workshop

Mr. Mangiaratti informed both the Select Board and Finance Committee that budget presentations will follow the current FY26 Budget Book table of contents.

Mr. Mangiaratti answered a question about unfunded pension and where it is managed – most is pulled with the state's investment strategy. Collection rate runs at 99.5%.

#### 1. Town Manager

Mr. Mangiaratti introduced the Town Manager Budget. The Town Manager's Office consists of the Sustainability, Economic Development, and Diversity Equity and Inclusion Offices, and a proposed new Digital Comm. Specialist. The Town Manager Office consists of 5.45 FTEs. Other expenses within the Town Manager budget are Cultural Council and Commission on Disabilities. DEI Director Wanjiku Gachugi highlighted accomplishments from FY25. Mr. Mangiaratti is requesting a total of \$1,831,314, an 8.1% increase. Lauren West from Sustainability Office highlighted their accomplishments in FY25.

Mr. Charter asked Ms. Gachugi about the incident reporting system and requested a list of reported issues and any follow up metrics related to bias.

Mr. Snyder-Grant noted Sustainability funding comes from revolving funds and the work that has been resolved using the funds – energy efficiency funds covers multiple programs, and also through multiple grants.

Ms. Nicol asked about a noted drop in cost of waste disposal and if it is related to composting efforts; mostly related to composting and recycling efforts at the transfer station. She also asked whether there is a specific program planned to meet FY26 goal of working with businesses; outreach to women and minority owned businesses.

Mr. Noone asked about compensation reserves and what contracts are still being negotiated; Police Superior and Patrol. Mr. Noone also asked what led to the legal



budget reduction; Mr. Mangiaratti noted holding monthly office hours to decrease email conversations that add up the cost.

Ms. Hogseth suggested redefining and renaming the role of DEI and increasing communication to the community about the services available. She also asked what Sustainability spends a majority of time on; greenhouse gas inventory, clean energy coaching program, applying for grants and various other projects and joint collaborations with other departments in town.

Mr. Jarboe asked if all are meeting the objective of each office; Mr. Mangiaratti noted his performance review is a key indicator of performance, Ms. Gachugi noted DEI events and number of attendees, workforce diversity increases, equity audit implementation, bias incident reports provide number of incidents, trends, and resolutions, Ms. West pointed to greenhouse gas inventory, climate action plan tracker, and clean energy coaching program tracking. Mr. Jarboe noted distinction between efficiency vs. effectiveness.

Mr. Sullivan asked about the financial risk of the state's revenue shortfall to Acton's budget; exposure locally would be limited to unemployment claim payout.

Mr. Bourdon asked about the plans for the red house; received a grant from MAPC to perform energy efficiency improvements and electrification, house will serve as a model for the public, created a pollinator garden, invasive removal and meadow restoration on the property as a pocket park.

Mr. Cole asked if the DEI Office participates in the exit interview process; no, but there are plans to do so.

## 2. Operations

Mr. Begin introduced the Operations Division consisting of IT, GIS, and Facilities and highlighted their accomplishments in FY25 and goals for FY26, and explained the need for an increase in the general budget.

Mr. Charter noted the current number of FTEs, asked about the elimination of a craftsperson position and the hiring of a project coordinator, and requested the job description; Mr. Mangiaratti noted the difficulty attracting candidates for the craftsperson position and creating a project coordinator position to handle all the vendors.

Mr. Sullivan asked if existing budget compensation will entice new employees; raising the profile of Acton across the state to encourage more people to apply.

## 3. Recreation

Melissa Settapani presented an overview of the Recreation budget, highlighting changes in the FY26 budget including clerical salaries and wages due to the addition of a program manager.

## 4. Libraries

Maria Palacio, Library Director and Assistant Library Director, Kerry Darcy. Ms. Palacio highlighted accomplishments for FY25, and goals for FY26.



Ms. Nicol noted the libraries are doing more with the same budget, and encouraged advocacy for legislative solutions to reduce the cost of digital materials.

Mr. Cole noted personnel services up since last 2 years; Mr. Mangiaratti noted the library is fully staffed as compared to the past 2 years.

Mr. Linz asked if the library has an archive and measures to maintain it; Ms.

Darcy noted an application for CPA funding for storage and maintenance.

Mr. Snyder-Grant asked about breaking out of Misc. software line item; Ms.

Palacio explained that separating from technology and software creates a more accurate picture of expenditures.

## 5. Health and Human Services

Penny Funaiole, HFS Director, introduced the Health and Family Services Division with 17.58 FTEs.

- Community Services and Transportation

Laura Ducharme, Community Services Coordinator – services for residents under 60, only line item is salary, relies on donations from the community and assistance from the state, assists with rent, fuel, food, and various other assistance as needed. Transferred assistance to the AB Resource Center, provided \$150K in assistance from ARPA funding, partnered with MetroWest Legal Services and will be providing free legal services regarding rental units and renter rights to residents.

Transportation Services transferred over to Community Services and ridership services offered to residents were highlighted, including a pilot taxi service that expanded transportation options beyond the fixed route operation, but this ended in October.

Ms. Arseneault asked about the amount of ARPA funding for Child Care subsidies received and how it was expended; the town received \$40K that served 14 families in various amounts to be equitable.

Ms. Hogseth asked about the ARPA funding for child care and when it will run out; the funding ended on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Hogseth asked about other programs funded with ARPA money that now will be transferred to the general budget; Mr. Mangiaratti noted the senior café through a revolving fund as well as childcare and transfer station subsidy programs in the capital budget.

Mr. Martin asked if there was a list to facilitate community donations

- Council on Aging

Sharon Mercurio, COA Director summarized what the Senior Center offers to seniors in Acton, highlighted accomplishments such as the Bistro 30 supplying lunches with multiple options twice a week open to the community, majority of budget is position control, added line item for program supplies. Funding is sourced from Friends of COA and grants that support 2 staff members.



- Health Division

Matt Dow, Director of Environment Health – noted the Department is supported financially through a grant from Northwest Public Health Coalition which supplied a part time health inspector, currently there are 2 FTE and 2 PTE. The Health Department is responsible for 5 budgets – 1 general, 1 enterprise, 3 revolving accounts and all level funded except position control.

Mr. Snyder-Grant asked about compliance on the plastic bag and Styrofoam ban and extra staff time it takes; no complaints in 10 months.

- Nursing Services

Heather York, Nursing Director highlighted 2 budget items - visiting nursing budgets, and public health budget. Home care nursing budget has an on-call budget for staff to be available after hours.

Ms. Nicol asked what amount Friends of Acton Nursing Services contribute annually; Ms. York will get back with the number. She also noted an increase in Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy and asked whether those services bring in more revenue; Ms. York noted that it does bring in more revenue and they are not employees but contracted services

Mr. Noone asked what the nursing revenue is; \$117K as of December 2024

- Veteran Services

James MacRae, Veterans Service Officer – assists veterans and surviving spouses manage state benefits and claims, oversees the Veterans Day and Memorial Day public ceremonies.

6. Public Works

Corey York, DPW Director, Carl Maria, Operations Superintendent, and QinRui Pang, Town Engineer, presented an overview of the DPW Division. Responsible for the maintenance of infrastructure and grounds, collaborate with other departments such as Recreation, Conservation, and Health, maintain rail trails and community gardens, work with Police and Fire for emergency responses, highlighted the completion of the Gardner playground renovation, completion of the rehabilitation of the sewer treatment plant, upcoming reconstruction of the entrance to Woodlawn Chapel funded by a large grant, stormwater management plan, and working on prioritizing complete streets. KPIs include daily monitoring of average daily sewage flow marking trends and preserving historical data, monitoring road paving index, and monitoring salt use during the winter months. Proposing an overall 1.7% increase in DPW budget.

- Engineering

Only increase in budget is salary line item at 3.4% and all the non-salaried line items were reduced by .7%



- Highway/Transfer Station  
Increase in gas and diesel due to rising costs, the overall budget was decreased by 5% in the roads budget, and an overall 6% reduction in special projects. Transfer Station operates under an enterprise fund, increase in electricity consumption, decrease in trash bag due to less acquisition, increase in capital line item due to replacement of a front end loader. Sewer Enterprise fund is nearing the end of the current contract for operations and looking for a new contract beginning in July, and predicting an increase in pricing for material and services.
- Cemetery  
The 1.3% increase is in salary with a 4 person crew and an administration position reduced to part time.

Mr. Snyder Grant asked about shifting the funding of Chapter 90 to include building more sidewalks; Mr. York noted working with a consultant and holding public forums regarding complete streets, working with utility companies to coordinate making repairs and setting paving schedules. Mr. Snyder-Grant asked about use of herbicides to combat poison ivy; Mr. York noted the Tree Warden is responsible for vegetative maintenance and herbicides cannot be used for maintenance in areas adjacent to wetlands

Mr. Noone asked what the peak sewage flow are like; Mr. York noted mostly happen in the spring but will have to get those numbers to him.

Mr. Bourdon asked about the size and efficiency of the replacement front loader; Mr. York noted it is smaller, and has more stringent emission standards and runs more efficiently

Ms. Nicol asked whether Sudbury Road is due to paved; Mr. York noted that Eversource had plans for underground utility repairs and coordinating with the anticipation of the sewer line to the Powdermill Road Apartments, so paving will be scheduled the next round during paving season. Ms. Nicol asked what is the duration for borrowing for the stormwater program– Mr. Mangiaratti said it would be a longer borrowing period compared to buildings and radios.

**Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Mr. Snyder-Grant, to adjourn the Select Board and approved 5-0-0.**

**Mr. Lenz moved, seconded by Mr. Cole, to adjourn the Finance Committee and approved by roll call vote.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:55 PM

#### **Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting**

- Agenda, January 21, 2025
- Finance Committee Question and Answer Spreadsheet
- Town Manager Budget