

State of Rhode Island

County of Washington

In Hopkinton on the twenty-sixth day of February 2024 A.D. at 6:00 p.m., a budget workshop was held in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 1 Town House Road, Hopkinton, RI 02833 to discuss the proposed FY 24/25 budget.

PRESENT: Michael Geary, Scott Bill Hirst, Stephen Moffitt, Jr., Sharon Davis and Robert Burns; Town Manager Brian Rosso and Town Clerk Marita Murray. Also present: Finance Director Elizabeth Monty.

EMA/PUBLIC WELFARE

Ron MacDonald, EMA Director was present. This budget was level funded.

EDUCATION

Mr. Rosso advised that he had revised the Education page and the increase was approximately \$916,000 to education expense. He updated the figures due to the School Committee adding \$437,000 back into the budget in order to keep the Kindergarten at the Hope Valley Elementary School for this upcoming year. We are now at \$22,431,366 and Hopkinton will receive another \$271,000 in State aid, so the total impact of the education expense will be \$643,183. It was noted that the town would need to apply to the Auditor General's Office for an exemption in order to exceed the 4% cap. Mr. Rosso noted that over the past few years, we have been able to keep our budgetary increases solely to the impact of Chariho. Hopkinton's tax rate increases have been directly correlated to Chariho's increase. We have been able to offset our town-wide operational municipal budget with revenues and have had no municipal increases for the past several years, which we will try to do again this year; however, this was very difficult given contracts and inflation. The current mill rate is \$14.66 which would increase to \$15.17; a fifty-one cent increase, forty-nine cents of which is from Chariho. On a \$350,000 house, with a mill rate of \$14.66 the annual tax bill was \$5,131 and if the mill rate is \$15.17, the annual tax bill will be \$5,309.50 or an increase of \$178.50 per year. All three towns had a decrease in enrollment, but Hopkinton's decrease was less than the other two towns, so it is almost like an enrollment increase. Our

percentage of the total enrollment went up from the prior year. Councilor Moffitt asked what the number was before the School Committee added the \$437,000 back into the budget and Mr. Rosso stated that the latest change added thirteen cents to the mill rate and the increase on a \$350,000 home would have been \$133 per year. The impact of keeping Kindergarten at the Hope Valley Elementary School was \$45 per Hopkinton taxpayer.

POLICE

Captain Mark Carrier was present. Mr. Rosso noted that there was a salary increase of 3% due to their contract negotiation. There was a decrease in their pension rate and a slight shift in the medical coverage. The police budget only increased \$1,400 if you do not factor in salaries. Councilor Geary asked how long they kept their cruisers and Captain Carrier explained that the labor contract only allowed them to keep front line vehicles to 125,000 miles and then that vehicle became a detail car. It was noted that when they purchase a new cruiser it is with a three-year lease through a financing company. There was discussion about getting extended warranties on the cruisers. It was noted that they receive one car per year, which has minimal impact to the budget. Councilor Hirst asked how many cruisers the police department had, and Captain Carrier suggested six front-line cars and approximately five detail cars. Councilor Geary noted that Homeland Security was giving vehicles away and Captain Carrier explained that at the moment, this program was suspended.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Mr. Rosso noted that the CIP had a police cruiser. One payment is phasing out and they will be starting a new lease. There is a little increase due to prices of vehicles and interest rates. Their second item was for 6 new shotguns for the front-line cruisers. Councilor Burns asked what they did with the old shotguns and Captain Carrier noted that they were pretty beat up and they use them for parts.

Councilor Geary noted that with Chief Palmer retiring, would the Department be short an officer. Captain Carrier noted that they were one officer heavy because they had hired the two new recruits. If everyone moves up they will have just enough.

DISPATCH

Mr. Rosso explained that all increases were contractual. This budget was level funded.

ANIMAL CONTROL

Samantha Bowen was present. Mr. Rosso noted that the animal control officer was part of the dispatch union, and the increases were contractual. They had to increase the heating line and electricity went down slightly. Councilor Burns asked Mr. Rosso to explain Ms. Bowen's rate increase and Mr. Rosso noted that she had hit the five-year step and received an increase which was based on tenure, plus there was an annual 2% increase. There was discussion about the Animal Control Officer carrying a weapon. Ms. Bowen noted that no Animal Control Officer in Rhode Island was allowed to carry. The ACO in Westerly carried but he was self-insured. Captain Carrier explained that the Westerly ACO carried a taser. In order to carry a taser you had to be trained through the Police Municipal Academy. She could be armed with a repellent and if there was a contentious matter a police officer would go to a call with her.

RECREATION

Recreation Director Mary Sawyer was present. Mr. Rosso explained that he had separated the part-time wages to be more granular. There were contractual increases and a decrease in electricity. There has been a bump in revenue for playground, basketball and camp expenses and revenue. The total impact of the contractual salaries is just over \$12,000; however, they have offset that with revenue, and it actually brings the department to an increase of \$9,500. Mr. Sawyer added that she applies for grants annually which total approximately \$14,000. Councilor Burns asked what non-employee compensation was and Ms. Sawyer noted that it was for instructors such as for tennis, volleyball, yoga, etc. There was also discussion about setting up permanent porta-johns and holding a food truck event.

TOWN MANAGER

Mr. Rosso handed out his salary breakdown and noted that he had a copy of the meeting minutes for when the salary was advertised. There were discussions in FY21 about setting the salary at \$115,000 which was determined by the Council

on June 21, 2021. In 2022 when he signed the contract, the salary was determined to be \$115,000 and then there was a 2% increase every year. He did note that there was a typo in his contract regarding the dates and noted that this was the last year of his contract. His salary was FY22 - \$115,000; FY23 - \$117,300; FY24 - \$119,646 and FY25 - \$122,038.92.

FINANCE

Elizabeth Monty was present. Mr. Rosso explained that there was a decrease in department expenses of \$55, but other than that, this budget was level funded.

The workshop was closed at 7:15 p.m.

Marita Murray

Town Clerk