

Town of Dudley

Board of Selectmen, Highway and Cemetery Commissioners
Finance, Appropriation and Advisory Committee

Joint Meeting

Thursday, February 8, 2024

Dudley Municipal Complex

71 West Main Street, Dudley, MA 01571

Room 321A

Selectmen approved 2/26/2024

FAA approved 2/29/2024

Some matters have been taken out of agenda order but were typed up in agenda order for ease of locating information when necessary.

1. Open Meeting, Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance:

The Honorable John Marsi opened the meeting at 6:35pm. He disclosed that the meeting will be recorded. In attendance were the Honorable Mark Landry, Honorable Jason Johnson. Also present were Jonathan Ruda, Town Administrator and Michelle Jervis, Assistant Town Administrator. The Honorable Steven Sullivan and Honorable Kerry Cyganiewicz were absent. The FAA Chair Michael Mayotte called the FAA meeting to order at 6:37pm.

2. Joint Public Meeting with BOS and FAA to hear Department Head's Budgets: Board of Assessor, Veteran's Agent, Water/Sewer Department, Accountant/IT, Library, Board of Health, FAA Reserve, Municipal expenses, Administration and Building Inspector:

- a. Principal Assessor – Lisa Berg came before the Board. Ms. Berg stated that her salary and longevity are level funded. The only increase of 15.17% is the contract increase with vision Cloud Systems. There was a small increase for interim year adjustments. Total increase to budget 3.63%.
- b. Veteran's Agent – Stephen Rogerson came before the Board. Mr. Rogerson stated that now we are a district with Webster he is requesting an increase in his salary as well as his clerk. Along with those increases the parade costs have increased and expenses. The veteran benefits are level funded and the town gets reimbursed 83% for the benefits. Mr. Ruda stated that the salary increases must be negotiated with Webster beginning July 1, 2024. Mr. Rogerson feels his department is doing a great job and he has had some temporary help with Rich Holewa, former VA. Mr. Rogerson feels Webster should be paying more since there are more veteran's and more problems.
- c. Water/Sewer Department – Scott Zajkowski, Chairman of the Water/Sewer Department came before the Board. He stated that at their meeting last night they voted to increase union contract up 10%. He stated that MassDEP requires two primary operator and one secondary operator. Also electricity is very high and there is an increase in propane. The indirects are in the process of being studied by a third-party consultant and there are no large operating expenses. Mr. Ruda stated that his budget memo requested no more than 2.5% increase and there should be a placeholder for the union contract since negotiations will be starting soon. The Webster processing increased 60% with Dudley's share of operating costs for completed fiscal year. He stated for 12 years Dudley paid Webster \$462,000 for sewage. There was a communication breakdown between the two towns and we now meet three or four times/year

discussing the budget. The true up is \$891,274.00 of which we owed them encompassing 10 years. Next year will be a true up for just one year and the actual true up will be a warrant article paid from retained earnings. The rate study will take place next month with a public hearing in April to set the rates for next year. All agreed to review their budget and make the necessary changes.

- d. Accountant – Mr. Ruda stated that our Accountant, Deb Thibaudeau, will be retiring this year. Hope to get an assistant for her and retain her to help. The increase in her budget would be the Assistant's salary. The budget increased 24.67%.
- e. Library – Cheryl Hansen, Interim Library Director, came before the Board. Her spreadsheet showed a few changes, but the totals remained the same. There was an increase in materials but a decrease in CWMARS. The programs are not budgeted since the library gets endowments from the Friends of the Pearle L. Crawford Memorial Library and the Crawford endowment. There is a 2.48% increase in the budget. Finally, Ms. Hansen handed out a spreadsheet of 10 surrounding towns, their populations, their FY24 budget and per capital library spending. Dudley is below the average of 32.19 with the average 38.50. The highest to lowest is Sturbridge, Charlton, Thompson, CT., Spencer, Oxford, Douglas, Southbridge, Dudley, Webster and Sutton. To bring Dudley up to average an additional \$75,000 should be added to the budget. That is food for thought.
- f. Board of Health – level funded for FY25.
- g. FAA Reserve – Michael Mayotte suggested keeping is \$20,000. It is always needed.
- h. Municipal Expenses – Mr. Ruda stated the only line-item increase would be the merit pool, paid partially from HR Expenses in FY 24. There is a 2.50% increase in municipal expenses.
- i. Administration – There is a contractual increase, a decrease in the Conservation/Planning Clerk since it was once a full time position and now part time, an increase in the temp. fill in labor position and the assistant town administrator position has been upgraded. Total increase of 2.5% in the budget.
- j. Building Department – An increase of 2.94% with an increase for the Building Inspector's salary of 2.5% and expenses.

Mr. Ruda stated that the revenue projections will be discussed at our 2/29/24 meeting.

Michael Mayotte motioned to adjourn the FAA at 7:50pm. Ann Gaudreau seconded. Unanimous 5-0.

- 3. **Election Warrants** – Mark Landry motioned for the Board to vote and sign the Election Warrants for the March 5, 2024 Dual Election Warrant and for the March 5th Special Election and the March 5th Presidential Primary. Jason Johnson seconded. Unanimous 3-0.

4. Adjournment:

Mark Landry motioned to adjourn at 7:58pm. Jason Johnson seconded. Unanimous 3-0.

Respectfully submitted.

Michelle Jervis, Assistant Town Administrator

Documents physically identified, discussed, or considered by the Board:

- Departmental budget requests
- Election Warrants