

Kingston Municipal Budget Committee
Public Meeting
Kingston Town Hall, also via Zoom
December 1, 2021, at 6 p.m.

Members in Attendance:

Chuck Hart, Chair
Rick Russman, Vice Chair
Marissa Federico, Recording Secretary
Claudine Dias
Stacy Dion
Gary Finerty
Nick Hilfer (via Zoom)
James LaValley (via Zoom)
John Pramberg
Annemarie Roth
Kevin St. James, representative from the Board of Selectmen (BOS)
Trish Tidd
Shaw Tilton

Absent Member: Kim Donahue, Secretary

Also in Attendance: Kathy Chase, Museum
Stephanie Hasselbeck, Chair, Library Trustee
Tom Roughan, Treasurer, Library Trustee

Chuck called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS:

Approval of the minutes from the KMBC meeting held on 11/28/21: MM&S: Stacy noted and Kevin confirmed that there will be 3 elections in 2022 and that there was one election in 2021. Rick moved to approve the minutes as amended. Annemarie seconded. All in agreement.

COLA update: Kevin explained that the COLA will not go through until April 2022, so the COLA amounts were changed. Cindy confirmed that COLA also applies to OT. Also noted, for the Town Clerk's budget, the Town Clerk/Tax Collector will have a 3% salary increase; this figure was removed from COLA and added to the TC-TC salary line (4150-S4).

ARPA update: There are no updates or changes to the projects approved by the BOS. Stacy asked about the IMC software being purchased for the police via ARPA funding; she asked if this was an ongoing cost to be considered in future budgets or a one-time cost; Kevin explained this covers the upgrade and will not become an ongoing budget item. He added that the cost of the new computers/laptop for the police, currently budgeted under Capital Equipment (4210-04), may be able to be paid for via ARPA to bring this line item down; more information will be forthcoming.

Chuck pointed out that he emailed members revenue figures received from Cindy. Also, actuals are updated on the most recent budget received from Cindy.

Library (4550):

Stephanie stated that the Trustees will be meeting again on 12/13/21. She handed out a new budget. She shared that the Trustees have been working diligently to reduce the budget wherever possible. She went through various line items in detail:

- Both PT and FT salaries as well as Pay for Performance have been adjusted downward.
- Bookkeeper: Actuals have exceeded the budget in past years, so there has been an increase in her salary. Stephanie stated she works twice a month for about 3 hours per day (roughly 6 hours per month). This works out to \$43.05/hour. There was a discussion about the terms of the bookkeeper's contract, and it was agreed that the new library director should re-look at this contract.
- IT computer support: Stephanie discussed the Block5 IT upgrade with the BOS. An RFP is in process. They are investigating if this can be covered with ARPA funding. Her hope is with the addition of a new director and possibly an adult services librarian, they will assist with the technology needs of the library. She explained that the previous director contracted with an IT professional; this contract is good through December 2021.
- Building maintenance: The budget has been decreased as the town has agreed to assist with building maintenance. However, there are still some maintenance items that remain the responsibility of the library. Chuck stated that he has discussed this with Rich St. Hillaire, and he agreed that the town can maintain the library without adding to budget line items. John cautioned that this arrangement could make managing maintenance projects difficult as it will no longer be entirely in the library's purview.
- Ground Maintenance: This line item has been reduced due to low spending from prior years.
- Propane: Stephanie confirmed that the cost of propane is the library's responsibility, not the town's responsibility. Higher energy costs are reflected in this budget.
- Security alarm service: The budget was increased after examining the actuals from prior years.
- Telephone/internet: This will not change at this time. When a new library director is hired, the library's telephone/internet plans will be reviewed.
- Water testing: Per Stephanie, the town will assume responsibility for this.
- Insurance/benefits costs are increased after Stephanie's conversation with Cindy. There are 3 FT employees included in the budgeted amount for health/dental insurance. Stephanie shared that the increased health/dental insurance cost is 3.23% of the total increase in the library's budget; in consideration that the library's total budget is projected to be 9.05% higher than 2021, removing the increase in health/dental insurance brings the library's budget increase down to 5.82%.

John asked for clarification on the 3 FT open positions. Stephanie noted that none of these have been filled, but an offer letter is anticipated to be delivered to an applicant for the director position. Among the director candidates, they have potential candidates for the adult services and children's services positions. These positions have not been posted yet, so the proper process would need to be followed before they could be hired. The postings will be done ASAP with the intent to hire individuals for these 2 FT positions in January. Chuck noted that an adjustment can be made to the budget in January in the event that these individuals are not hired as quickly as hoped.

Chuck expressed appreciation for the work Stephanie and the Trustees have done to reduce the budget.

Museum Committee (4589):

Kathy explained that she met with Block5 to review their proposal and scale it back to lower the cost. They will also work with BOS to get their feedback. Chuck expressed concern about the 217% budget increase for 2022. Kathy added that the museum is a small percentage in relation to the town's overall budget. Stacy explained that Block5's proposal involves a change in how the Museum backs up their information to keep it more secure.

There was a discussion about the archivist's duties, and Kathy expressed their archivist is vitally important to the work they do at the Museum.

Chuck asked members about their thoughts on a budget recommendation for the Museum to guide Kathy in her budget planning. Shaw asked about the possibility of grants and/or a warrant article to cover the cost of the technology upgrade. Claudine asked if Kathy could work with the Friends to assist in financing this project; Kathy explained that the Friends already provided a grant in August and was not sure if they would be open to another one for the technology upgrade. Kevin explained that this is really two expenses, one for new computers but also the technology architecture. Trish suggested the cost of the new computers could be separated from the technology upgrade; this would reduce the budget by around \$4,000.

Annemarie, Chuck, Rick, and Trish thought the target total budget of \$12,000 is reasonable, but Gary felt this might still be too high.

Kathy agreed to work with the BOS as well to examine the options.

NEW BUSINESS:

Rick asked if a town-wide energy audit could be done to help the town lower utility costs. Kevin shared a report that was already done by Infinity Lighting. He made copies of this report and handed it out to members. The projected cost of improvements is estimated to be \$65,792 with an annual estimated savings of \$5,156 per year (payback in roughly 10 years).

DEPARTMENT PRESENTATIONS:

Executive (4130):

- *Computer maintenance (4130-04):* Kevin explained there was an error in the previous budget, and \$78,000 is the correct amount for the contract with Block5. This will be annual amount, not a one-time expense. Kevin explained that at the time of the initial RFP for a technology contractor, Block5 was in the middle of the quotes received but has an excellent reputation. Kevin stated when the contract is up, they will go out for another RFP. Now that the town has assessed its technology needs and has setup the computers and software appropriately, the town is in better shape.
- *Computer upgrade (4130-07):* This line item was reduced as the project will be paid with ARPA funds.
- *Contracted services (4130-09):* The budget was lowered after reviewing existing contracts.

- *Tax map updates (4130-27)*: Kevin explained this project is overdue and will likely be done in 2022.
- *Town reports (4130-31)*: Looking at the actuals for 2021, Chuck questioned if the budget for printing town reports was too high. Kevin explained the town did not print as many in 2021.

Legal (4153):

Chuck recommended to lower the budget for legal services. Kevin will discuss this with the BOS.

Personnel Administration (4155):

These costs are fixed and cannot be changed.

Insurance (4196):

These costs are fixed and cannot be changed.

Other General Government (4199):

There is no change to this budget from 2021.

Town inspectors (4240):

Kevin explained that the code enforcement officer position is still not filled. It has been re-posted, but they are having difficulty filling this position.

Street Lighting (4316):

Kevin expected more of a cost savings after changing over the town's lights to LEDs. He will research this.

Sanitation (4323):

Hazardous waste collection (4323-04): There is a consortium of towns, and each town must host on a rotating basis. Kingston must host in 2022. There will be an offset of this cost of anticipated revenue of \$60,000.

Health Department (4411):

- *Water cooler rental (4411-07)*: Kevin believes this line item reflects water provided by the town to residents whose water source was contaminated.
- *Water analysis (4411-06)*: The town must test the water for new systems.

Pest Control (4414):

Kevin explained much of these line items are for the police. The BOS are only responsible for mosquito control (4414-10), of which the budget did not change from 2021, and it is anticipated that by the end of the year, the remaining unspent funds for 2021 will be spent. The listed salary, including the COLA, is for the animal control officer. There was a discussion of the duties of this officer in town and how responsive he has been to residents.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, 12/29/21, at 6:00 p.m. in Town Hall.

Rick moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m., seconded by John.

*****Minutes accepted and finalized without amendments 12/29/21*****