

Kingston Municipal Budget Committee
November 4, 2020 - Town Hall

KMBC Members in Attendance:

Chuck Hart, Chair
Rick Russman, Vice Chair
Kim Donahue, Secretary
Marissa Federico, Recording Secretary
Gary Finerty
James LaValley
John Pramberg
Annemarie Roth
Stanley Shalett
Kevin St. James, representative from the Board of Selectmen (BOS)

Absent KMBC Members:

Ray Donald
Heather Hanlon

Other Parties Present:

Chief Don Briggs, Police Department
Glen Coppelman, Planning Board
Ellen Faulconer, Human Services
Evy Nathan, Conservation Commission
Shaw Tilton, Conservation Commission

No members of the public were in attendance.

Chuck called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Old Business

Approval of Minutes

Rick moved to approve the minutes from the meeting on 8/26/20. Jim seconded.

New Business

Kevin explained at a high level the reasons for increases in the budget provided by the Selectmen, the largest being the carryover of salary increases from last year.

Chuck reviewed the handouts provided to members.

Department Presentations

Police Department

Chief Briggs reviewed his department's budget line by line.

Kim noted that the telephone expenses for the department are overbudget now and were overbudget last year. She asked the Chief why the budget is not increased for 2021. Chief Briggs stated he is working with Cindy regarding contract information, and this number may increase.

Kim also asked about capital equipment as the budget is higher than the actual spending as of 10/30/20. Chief Briggs believes this money is already spent and will verify the figure to see if it is incorrect. Chuck stated that in the new year, the actual figure from 2020 will be provided.

Chuck asked if part-time officer salaries have been included in the budget, and Chief Briggs stated they are.

Chuck asked if the prosecutor is contracted. Chief Briggs stated she is, but the nature of her job has changed due to COVID with more telephonic or video hearings rather than in-person hearings.

Animal Control

Chief Briggs explained that mosquito control is not part of his budget. Kevin explained that there is an RFP out for this, and the bids are due in a month, so the number may change. Chuck stated this money is usually spent, even though at this time it is not reflected in the actuals.

Chief Briggs explained that the telephone expense related to Animal Control is due to a stipend provided to the Animal Officer, who uses his private phone for work purposes.

Chief Briggs asked for a straw vote to buy 2 cruisers for the next year. He explained these need to be ordered now for next year. Ellen added that the KMBC's straw vote is only for funding in the budget, not permission to buy; the vote is just a good faith option to show that the money will be allowed in the budget, not that it is approved to be spent.

Motion: Rick moved to have a straw vote on this issue. Chuck seconded.

Chuck: Aye.

Rick: Aye.

Kim: Aye.

Gary: Aye.

Jim: Aye.

John: Aye.

Annemarie: Aye.

Kevin: Aye.

Stanley Shalett: Nay, expressed concern that money is being approved to be spent before the budget is approved.

Conservation Commission

Evy and Shaw reviewed their budget.

Shaw explained that the public education funds are currently coming out of the supply budget but should be considered public education instead, so in the 2021 budget, this expense has been moved into the public education budget.

Shaw also stated that the actual expenses for milfoil testing and treatment as of 10/30/20 do not accurately reflect what has been spent. In a past warrant article, the Conservation Commission was

allowed to roll over unused funding rather than transfer it to the general fund. The state partially funds this, and he has the invoices from SOLitude Lake Management and is awaiting the detail of state reimbursement of these expenses. He is unsure what the current balance is in their account. Chuck will check with Cindy to find out the current balance in this account. Shaw also stated he will look into this and provide further detail about expenses and state reimbursement.

Jim asked Shaw for historical expenditure data for the past 3 years. Shaw will look into this and reiterated that state reimbursement fluctuates.

Planning Board

Glen reviewed the 4 line items that have increased:

- Contracted Services: Although most of the research costs incurred by the Planning Board for an application is passed onto the applicant, there are times when additional research is needed that assists the Board in making a decision. There are multiple upcoming large building projects that will likely need additional expert opinions. This additional research will have no revenue offset.
- Engineering Consultant: Similar to Contracted Services, this is relation to additional work done by the town engineer that cannot be billed back to the applicant. This spending will have no revenue offset.
- Legal Ads: With the expected high number of upcoming building projects, more public notices will be issued, but revenue will offset this as the cost is passed on to applicants.
- Recording Fees: This reflects the cost of required changes at the Registry of Deeds, but this cost is usually offset by revenue from applicants.

Kim noted that the actual expenditures were not provided. Per Ellen, the invoices for the town planner cannot be paid until a new contract is signed; that is in process, so the actual figures should be available soon.

Human Services

Ellen presented regarding the Human Services and General Assistance budgets. She noted that in the past few years, the budget has gone down, but with COVID, more calls are anticipated. She also noted that the Part-Time Salaries are up 4%, which was not reflected on the figures provided to the Board; the figure was adjusted from \$14,621 to \$15,206.

Ellen explained there is minimal funding available from the state to the town, but the town helps people initially until they can be set up with the state or federal government for long-term aid. She stated there is extensive paperwork for applicants, and there are safeties in place to protect the town in holding applicants accountable for future payments to electric companies, banks, etc. She works to try to find other programs for applicants so they are not solely dependent on the town. Ellen also explained that if her department is overbudget, the needed money comes from another department, although the BOS must approve any expenditures.

Stan asked if the state offers towns a specific amount, but Ellen stated that is not the case.

Ellen also stated there are many private agencies that have stepped up to help residents which lowers the cost to the town. With uncertain funding, it is unclear how long this additional aid will continue. Once the government-mandated eviction prohibition ends, it is anticipated that people with unpaid rent will be in crisis.

Jim asked how increases were determined. Ellen stated she used a reference book for average rent/mortgage numbers and utility costs for the area.

Ellen stated the BOS has formed a COVID fund that may be available if she goes overbudget, but Ellen is hopeful these numbers will hold.

Historic District Commission

No one was present from the HDC, but Jim spoke prior to this meeting with Virginia Morse regarding the proposed budget. Jim relayed the information provided to him by Virginia. The budget requests level funding. No Board members had any questions.

Chuck stated the next meeting will be on Sunday, 11/15/20, at 6:00 p.m.

Chuck concluded the meeting at 8:11 p.m.