

Kingston Municipal Budget Committee
Public Meeting
Kingston Town Hall
November 28, 2021, at 6 p.m.

Members in Attendance:

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

Absent Members: Nick Hilfer
James LaValley

Also in Attendance: Ellie Alessio, BOS/ZBA
Tammy Bakie, Town Clerk/Tax Collector
Paul Butler, Parks and Recreation
Lesley Hume, Chair, Friends of the Museum
Brad Maxwell, Trustees of Trust Funds, Cemetery
Graham Pellerin, Chief, Fire Department

Chuck called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS:

Approval of the minutes from the KMBC meeting held on 11/14/21: MM&S: Rick moved to approve the minutes as written. Annemarie seconded. All in agreement.

The meeting on Wednesday, 12/1/21, will begin at 6 p.m. instead of 5 p.m. due to members' work schedules.

Chuck explained that the library will not be making any additional changes at this time, and they are waiting to meet with the BOS. In light of the fact that the meeting on 12/1/21 is the last KMBC meeting with department heads, he encouraged Annemarie to reach out to her library contacts and encourage them to attend the meeting.

Chuck also spoke with Chief Briggs and clarified the amount of the Chief's salary, the COLA calculation, the purchase of new bullet-proof vests, and the purchase of computers/laptop and the IMC Mobile Software. The software has been confirmed by the BOS as eligible for ARPA funding, so the \$11,250 cost of this software has been removed from the budget. A placeholder of \$500 was put in this line item (Computer 4210-05) pending further discussion with Chief Briggs. It was confirmed with the BOS that the purchase of 2 new computers and one laptop are not eligible for ARPA funding and need to remain in the budget. Rick suggested re-looking at the heating costs (4210-22) as the Police Station had 2 energy-efficient furnaces installed, and since that time, there has been no reduction in the amount budgeted for heat. Chuck confirmed with Chief Briggs that the purchase of new Tasers will be funded via the Detail account and therefore is not included in this budget. It was recommended that the Chief attend the meeting on 12/1/21 to further discuss the budget.

Stacy is continuing to work with the Museum on their budget. Lesley, the Chair of the Friends, attended tonight's meeting to present a new budget. She will return with other Museum Board members to the 12/1/21 meeting to further discuss these changes.

In reference to ARPA funds, the BOS have approved projects for the Town Clerk/Tax Collector (printer/counterfeit machine, \$11,097, Office Equip 4150-21) and the Police Department (IMC Mobile software, \$11,250, Computer 4210-05) to be paid through ARPA funds, so these items will be removed from the budget. Kevin emailed guidelines to KMBC members about how ARPA funds can be used. Shaw asked Kevin if general assistance/social services can come from these funds; he will look into this. Kevin emphasized that caution must be used in utilizing these funds for line items that will carry over to future years as it will appear as a spike in funding in future years. Ellie added that in reference to the General Assistance (4442) budget, Ellen's budget is forward-looking in light of the fact that it is anticipated that less aid from outside sources will be available. She noted the ARPA funds can help with projects to ensure the town is ready in the event of another issue like the pandemic.

Chuck reiterated that it is hoped that the town's budget be reduced overall from the original 10% when the budget process started. We are now at 9%, but the hope is to reduce this further to avoid the adoption of a default budget by the taxpayers. Last year's budget, a 7% increase, narrowly passed.

Ellie shared that the BOS are actively working on measures to keep town personnel due to high attrition rates in recent years; that is one reason why we are seeing higher budget figures this year. John mentioned that last year, the budget vote was very tight; he is worried that the budget will be voted down, and a default budget would be adopted. Ellie stated the BOS is aware of this and plans to educate voters on the importance of the increases included in this budget. She added that we are not sure what the default budget will be as contracted salaries are already set. She stated the BOS are trying to do a better job of letting taxpayers know what the town needs going forward. Both she and Kevin noted that the BOS were cognizant of the 7% increase in the 2021 budget and utilized unspent funds returned to the general fund to reduce the tax rate for 2022.

NEW BUSINESS

There was a discussion among various members about the role of the KMBC in the budget process. Kevin explained how unspent funds are returned to the general fund and how tax rates are calculated. There was also a discussion about revenue figures to offset spending. Consistency in pay raises was discussed as well.

DEPARTMENT PRESENTATIONS:

Fire Department (4220):

Chief Pellerin stated there were changes to his budget that were discussed with Jim, who was unable to attend this meeting. He went through his budget line-by-line:

Full-time Salaries (4220-S2):

- Chief Pellerin's salary is \$84,223, and he has a contracted 2% raise for 2022. His salary needs to be backed out of the COLA figure.
- The BOS approved a raise for one full-time firefighter in October. That raise is reflected in the budget. This firefighter is also receiving a COLA.

Other line-item changes:

- *Overtime Salaries (4220-S3):* Increased to \$50,000 per Chief Pellerin.
- *Secretary/EMT Salaries (4220-S4):* Increased to \$57,000 per Chief Pellerin. The Chief explained that the secretary is also an EMT and handles billing for Comstar. This individual received a raise in 2021 and will be receiving a COLA.
- *Per Diem Salaries (4220-S5):* Increased to \$170,000 per Chief Pellerin.
- *Oxygen (4220-15):* Decreased to \$500 per Chief Pellerin.
- *Protective Clothing (4220-16):* Decreased to \$12,500 per Chief Pellerin.

Chief Pellerin explained that the town's pay rates are still lower than comparable/surrounding towns. He is trying to retain firefighters. He noted that the budget for ambulance supplies (4220-01) has gone down as a result of the warrant article that passed in early 2021 for the replacement fund. In reference to Comstar (4220-04), this reflects the fees charged by Comstar to collect money owed to the Fire Department for the use of ambulances; these fees are not fully offset by the money charged for ambulance services. For rolling equipment (4220-19), the Chief noted there are 2 trucks that were scheduled to be replaced in the coming years, but the trucks right now are in good shape. His hope is to delay the replacement of these trucks so that more of the cost can be covered with impact fees. Regarding telephone/internet (4220-23), some of the increased budget for a phone upgrade may be eligible for ARPA funding. He noted that the new station will have an emergency system to allow communication in the event of a catastrophe; the cost of this is included in the phone telephone/internet budget.

In reference to the new fire station, Chief Pellerin expects the new station to be used in May/June. The utility figures in the budget are estimates from the contractors. The new station is double in square footage, but the numbers for propane are estimated to be less in the new station due in part to inefficiencies of the current station. Per Kevin, the new station will have LED lighting, which will lower electricity costs. The Chief stated he will talk with the engineers to ensure their numbers are tight.

Parks and Recreation (4520):

Paul stated that many of the costs of these programs are offset with fees charged to participants.

- *Part-time salary coordinator (4520-S1)*: Kevin explained that the BOS voted unanimously for Paul to increase his hours to 20 hours/week. He will not increase his hours until June of 2022. He plans to expand programming for adults, in particular seniors.
- *Part-time salary (4520-S2)*: Paul explained there is no figure here as the salaries come out of the revolving fund.
- *COLA (4520-S3)*: COLA was removed per Paul.
- *Halloween (4520-04)*: Reduced to \$500 per Paul.
- *Senior events bus (4520-18)*: Reduced to \$3,000 per Paul.
- *Summer field trips bus (4520-10)*: Reduced to \$6,000 per Paul. He stated last summer, there were special events at the Recreation Center rather than travelling to a field trip.
- *Telephone/internet (4520-16)*: Paul believes the budget is \$2,064 per Cindy, but this needs to be verified.

TC-TC (4150):

Tammy said she has a good-quality scanner that can be used by the Museum Committee.

- *COLA (4150-S9)*: Decreased to \$4,701 by Tammy to remove overtime figure from the COLA budget.
- *Office equipment (4150-21)*: The copier/counterfeit machine cost of \$11,097 was removed as it will be paid through ARPA funds. A placeholder of \$100 was budgeted (same as past 3 years).

Elections and Registrations (4140):

Both Claudine and Chuck recused themselves from this discussion as they serve as Supervisors of the Checklist. Rick facilitated the discussion.

Tammy explained that there will be 3 elections in 2022, whereas there was one election in 2021. This is reflected in higher budgets for election food (4140-10) and election programming (4140-12). Kevin stated that the BOS voted and agreed to increase part-time salaries (4140-S2).

Trustees of Trust Fund [Salaries (4150-S1), Bookkeeping (4150-S2)]:

Brad stated that there are currently 4 trustees, but hopefully there will be a new member after the March election. He increased the salary for the bookkeeper since he does very good work for low cost.

Cemetery (4195)

Brad explained that all Millstream line items are reimbursed to the town via a trust. He also explained that the revenue for plot fees and burials offset much of the costs associated with the town's cemeteries.

- *Contracted services (4195-03)*: This is still done by a landscaper without a contract. The fall cleanup has not been done yet. Brad stated the actual expenditures at this point are \$13,586. He stated he has tried to find a landscaping company to contract with but is having a difficult time due to widespread staffing shortages. There was a discussion about possibly lowering this line item based on actual expenditures. Rick suggested that Rich could be contacted to provide this service rather than a contracted landscaping company.
- *Improvement (4195-06)*: Brad explained that the well hand pumps need to be replaced with more durable models.

ZBA (4191):

Per Ellie, the ZBA did not meet for 10 months as there were no applications. They are now receiving applications and are meeting again. She explained that costs are usually offset by applicant fees. There were no changes from prior years' budgets.

Kim stated that for the record, the ZBA was not listed on the posted agenda.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, 12/1/21, at 6:00 p.m. in Town Hall.

Rick moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 p.m., seconded by John.

Voted as final on 12/1/2021