



## FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING OF MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2023

**IN ATTENDANCE: CHAIRMAN JOE FREITAS, VICE CHAIR MATT CHABOT, MICHELE HAMILTON, AND TABITHA MCCROHAN**

**The Finance Committee will continue to ensure discipline, fairness, and transparency in the budget process by seeking budget input from all concerned. Inviting all departments and supervisors to a final public hearing on the FINCOM FY24 budget recommendation.**

Chairman Joe Freitas called the meeting of March 20, 2023, to order at 6:00 pm.

Chairman Joe Freitas requested a motion for the approval of minutes dated February 27, 2023, and minutes of March 13, 2023. Each set of minutes had minor errors and the corrections were made and signed off by the Chairman Joe Freitas.

The motion was made by Tabitha Mccrohan and seconded by Matt Chabot. Roll call vote to approve the minutes of February 27<sup>th</sup> and March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, with corrections made, the committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

Also, it seems that our minutes for February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023, signatures are not showing as approval and a request was made to pull the minutes and resend with signatures.

This meeting is set up for the Fire/EMT and Public Safety buildings budgets. Chief Scott Fournier was introduced to represent the departments.

First, Chief Fournier provided information regarding a Federal Assistance to Firefighters grant for SCBA gear (self-contained breathing apparatus) and a grant to replace one of the current tankers.

The grant for the SCBA cylinders (air packs), was written for \$403,319.00 and this would leave a balance of \$19,205.67 as the town portion. A second grant was written for the tanker for \$900,000, leaving the town share at \$42,857.14.

Chief Fournier indicated that he has put in these grants for several years and have been denied. The criteria to receive the grant are primarily town population, school population, etc. Also, most of the dispatch calls are for the ambulance, Berkley has low fire calls.

Fortunately, we are looking to replace the graphite bottles only. The new bottles are designed to hook up to the old masks.

Also, another issue is turning out gear. It is approximately \$10,000 per person for head-to-toe gear. The equipment is guaranteed for about 10 years, and we are looking at a staff of about 45 employees.

Emergency Medical Services there is a \$42,570.00 and the major increase is due to contractual obligations. The total amount is approximately \$29,520.00.

Town of Berkley EMT is running with 2 personnel on the ambulance and runs for 12-hour shifts. The night shift has one EMT on site with one on call. If a call comes in and the ambulance is dispatched, the on-call person is called and meets the ambulance at site.

An increase of \$10,000.00 for overtime was discussed. We currently have 4 new employees that are taking advantage of training opportunities, and this has caused a dip in the funds for overtime. Chief Fournier said that the line-item overtime for this year was not sufficient, and they are currently out of funds.

Also, the software increases of \$4,300.00 (up to \$11,800.00), this increase is to be for installation of the Harper payroll system, which will make the departments compatible with Town of Berkley payroll systems.

EMT department useless levels off with the user fees. Medicare pays the low end of services, and the private sector pays the higher cost. Fortunately for Berkley the ambulance fees are on the higher end in the private sector.

Another increase that was questioned was the finance line item of \$10,000.00. This extra cost is paid out of the ambulance funds and has a minor impact on the taxpayer. The Finance Committee was advised that there is one more year on the existing contracts.

The remaining increases are standard economic increases and needed for keeping the department's day-to-day operation going.

The Fire Department budget changes include contractual obligations. The salaries for temporary call men are an increase of \$10,000.00. The purpose of this increase is to incorporate personal, by keeping ahead of minimum wage curves and training. It also includes \$5,000.00 for items associated with the Harbormaster.

R and M vehicles increase for E-3 major repairs and \$1,000.00 for ancillary expenses.

Another increase requested was for the EMA Of \$500.00. This program is designed for establishing a Community Emergency Response Team to assist with EMA functions such as shelter emergency, fire ground assistance and event assistance.

The remaining increases are standard economic increases and needed for keeping the department's day-to-day operation going.

Chairman Joe Freitas requested that Chief Fournier review and put together a budget for the Public Safety building. The purpose of this request is that we are in transition of Town Administrator.

Chief Fournier reviewed the last two years of budgets requested and gave us a full budget with a total of 10,611.00. The increases we are reviewing are standard economic increases and needed for keeping the department's day-to-day operation going.

Chief Fournier also provided a detailed capital Budget Request Form for items that are considered big items/one-time purchases. This year, the fire departments applied for a grant to replace tanker 2. Hopefully, we will be rewarded with it. The grant will not cover the full amount but pays a substantial amount.

The Capital Budget request for the Public Safety building is the electronic Door locks. The current locks on the building are malfunctioning and need replacement. The replacements cost about \$23,388.00.

In other business this evening was a brief discussion on the assessments received from Bristol Plymouth Vocational High School at a \$1,272,974.00. We are looking into just exactly what is includes

Also, the assessment of \$86,416.00 and tuition of \$137,888.00 with 16 students now.

Chairman Joe Freitas announced that he just became aware that Somerset Berkley High School was presenting their budget on Tuesday March 21, 2023. We have no time to post for us to attend as a committee, Joe and Matt will attend as concerned citizens.

Chairman Joe Freitas called for a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Tabitha and seconded by Matt to adjourn at 8:26 pm. Verbal roll call taken; the committee voted unanimously to adjourn.