

Auburn Finance Committee  
Minutes of the Meeting – March 8, 2023

Members Participating: Anne Cavanaugh, Kevin Kennedy, Ed Coleman, Patrick Jones and Michael Marshall  
Not Participating: Diane Byrne and Trevor Sansoucy  
Also Present: Town Manager Ed Kazanovicz and Chief Financial Officer/Town Accountant Karen Harnois

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M. by the Chair Anne Cavanaugh.

The Chair announced that this open meeting of the Finance Committee is being conducted both in-person and remotely, consistent with Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022, which suspends the requirement of the Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a publicly accessible physical location. Further, all members of public bodies are allowed to participate remotely as long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting.

For the public to join the meeting remotely, by telephone call 1-786-535-3211 access code 991-599-357, join by computer: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/991599357>.

All supporting materials that have been provided to members of this body are available on the Town’s website. The public is encouraged to follow along using the posted agenda.

The Chair noted that the meeting was being recorded by Auburn Cable Television.

Chair Cavanaugh confirmed that all members that were participating remotely were present and could hear her:

- Kevin Kennedy - Here
- Ed Coleman - Here
- Patrick Jones - Here
- Michael Marshall - Here

Town Officials:

- Town Manager Ed Kazanovicz - Here
- CFO/Town Accountant Karen Harnois - Here
- Adm. Assistant Sharon Kwiatkowski - Here

Each vote to be taken in the meeting would be conducted by roll call vote.

Ms. Cavanaugh gave an overview of the meeting agenda.

The Finance Committee considered the FY2024 Budget for #01210 Police Department.

Police Chief Todd Lemon and Deputy Police Chief Scott Mills were in attendance.

The Deputy Chief gave an introduction to the FY24 budget. He said that the budget reflected cost of living increases negotiated by the unions and the Deputy Chief salary for the full year. He added that there were modest increases in other accounts and an additional Police Officer to start January 1<sup>st</sup>.

Police Chief Todd Lemon spoke about the challenges with respect to the communications personnel due to the design of the current station and Mass General Laws with respect to monitor prisoners. Chief Lemon said that the Dispatch job is intense and comes with high levels of stress and he has been dealing with a revolving door of dispatchers and has decided with the town administration that it was time to address the problem. The Chief discussed plans developed with Fire Chief Stephen Coleman to deal with the problem of retaining staff and to enhance dispatch services and working conditions for quality of life.

Town Manager Ed Kazanovicz said that his recommendations included two (2) full time dispatchers to be funded 100% in year 1 by ambulance proceeds, and then weaning off ambulance proceeds over three years. It will be re-examined next year and some of the funding may come from Tax Levy.

Mr. Kazanovicz said that the Police Department requested 2 full time officers that could not be accommodated, but he had agreed to one full time starting January 1, 2024.

Mr. Kazanovicz noted that salary increases appear greater than normal in the FY24 salary line items (including Overtime) in all departments because last year's appropriations did not include union increases that were in negotiation. Those increases were carried in the Reserve Account.

Mr. Kennedy noted the modest increase in the budget and asked if changes in policing like police reform laws would cause additional costs going forward.

Chief Lemon replied that the policies have been updated to include best practices overall and they have worked with the unions on accreditations. He said that POST

(Mass Peace Officer Standards and Training) has been inserted in the recent collective bargaining agreements as a condition of employment, but they are not sure about the future cost impacts.

Chief Lemon also spoke about problems with the communication systems and IT challenges. He advised that he would need to come back to the Finance Committee in the future for transfers for funds to fix the communication systems. The Chief said that he would like to hire another Traffic Officer to increase the time officers could be on the street.

Mr. Jones asked about the salaries for the 2 additional dispatchers. Deputy Chief Mills responded that the salary range would be \$56,000.00 - \$60,000.00. Chief Lemon explained the daily challenges with the call volume and dispatch services.

Mr. Marshall asked about overtime. Ed Kazanovicz said that \$200,000 was appropriated in Police, and \$110,000.00 in Dispatch Services for a combined total of \$310,000.00. Last year the total overtime in Police was about \$307,000.00 including transfers. He said that this amount would go up because wages are increasing due to contract negotiations.

Chief Lemon stated that he felt confident that, unless something totally unexpected happens, the 2 dispatchers would address the issues. He said that it was a good thing overall for public safety.

Mr. Kennedy asked Chief Lemon if the 2 impact shifts will change minimum manning or will he have to fill those shifts with Overtime. Chief Lemon replied that the impact shifts are to supplant minimum manning and will improve quality of life for dispatchers. Minimum manning has to be 2 dispatchers.

Mr. Marshall asked if the new police officer would be a Traffic Officer or School Resource Officer.

Chief Lemon replied that in a perfect world he would have both. But initially the new officer would be a School Resource Officer.

The Town Manager said the he would not be making recommendations concerning the \$1,006,000 in unobligated funds now, but there would be another chance to revisit priorities and departmental needs before the fall town meeting.

The Chief said that there are a total of 41 sworn officers in the department, 30 Patrol and Sergeants and Lieutenants, one Police Chief, 1 Deputy Police Chief, 9 full time

Dispatch and 2 full time Clerical, 3 part time Dispatchers and one Communications Director.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of a total budget appropriation of \$4,708,132.00 for #01210 Police Department, as presented in the recommendation of the Town Manager for FY2024 (Motion made by Mr. Kennedy; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) roll call vote: Mr. Kennedy, Yes; Mr. Coleman, Yes; Mr. Marshall, Yes; Mr. Jones, Yes; Ms. Cavanaugh, Yes – passed 5 to 0.

The Finance Committee then voted to recommend approval of a total budget appropriation of \$871,728.00 for #01215 Public Safety Dispatch, as presented in the recommendation of the Town Manager for FY2024 (Motion made by Mr. Kennedy; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) roll call vote: Mr. Kennedy, Yes; Mr. Coleman, Yes; Mr. Marshall, Yes; Mr. Jones, Yes; Ms. Cavanaugh, Yes – passed 5 to 0.

The Finance Committee reviewed the CIP for the Police Department.

Mr. Jones remarked about HVAC (Defer/ARPA Study) in the CIP for FY24 and asked if we should wait on this because the clock is running out on allocating American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

Mr. Kazanovicz said that if we use ARPA funds for the HVAC we will amend the CIP.

Ms. Cavanaugh asked about the \$215,000.00 for Police Vehicles and how many cars were in that figure and how many vehicles there were at the Auburn Police Department. Chief Lemon said that he doesn't have those figures and he explained the system for taking the older cars off patrol when necessary to be used for details or other less intensive functions to get as much use as possible out of all the police vehicles.

The Finance Committee considered the FY2024 Budget for #01220 Fire/Rescue Department.

Fire Chief Stephen Coleman was in attendance and gave an overview of the Fire/Rescue Department budget request for FY2024.

He discussed increases for contractual obligations and non-contractual items. Ed Kazanovicz advised that the percentage was inflated by the Select Board's and Town Meeting's approval for 4 additional firefighters for one-half year.

Chief Coleman discussed the application for a SAFER Grant for 8 firefighters. His budget had requested 4 in case the grant was not awarded and, if not awarded to Auburn, he

may request 4 firefighters at the fall town meeting. The Chief said that these requests were an effort to increase the minimum staffing levels as recommended in the staffing study. The study had recommended 13, but he would be able to go with 12.

Mr. Kennedy asked where Auburn was with other towns as far as staffing and if they would depend on Auburn as fully staffed to help them.

Chief Coleman stated that call volume this year exceeded 5,000 and outside of Worcester Auburn is the busiest fire service in the area. He said that all towns are in this situation, and that Auburn couldn't do what it does without Mutual Aid. He said that it's a critical part of the network.

Chair Anne Cavanaugh asked how many towns relied on Call Firefighters. Chief Coleman replied that there were not many, and those that do are not strong departments. He said that there were 1,800 fire-related calls without EMS needed.

Chief Coleman said that the department has 47 fire staff – 44 full time firefighters, the EMS Coordinator, Deputy Fire Chief, and Fire Chief. There are also 2 administrative staff. Chief Coleman said that 2 ambulances are staffed 24-7 and the third 9 hours per day.

In FY2022 Ambulance Receipts were approximately 1.2 Million to date and have been used to purchase ambulances, to provide EMS operations and the Coordinator, for the 2 new full time dispatchers and the fleet mechanic.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of a total budget appropriation of \$4,570,424.00 for #01220 Fire/Rescue Department, as presented in the recommendation of the Town Manager for FY2024 (Motion made by Mr. Kennedy; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) roll call vote: Mr. Kennedy, Yes; Mr. Coleman, Yes; Mr. Marshall, Yes; Mr. Jones, Yes; Ms. Cavanaugh, Yes – passed 5 to 0.

The Finance Committee reviewed the Fire/Rescue CIP. Chief Coleman stated that the vehicles were all annual lease payments. Replacing Engine 3 was the only new item.

The Fire Chief advised the committee that the department has been left money from a town resident's estate that has now been settled and the bequest will be enough to pay for a fully-equipped ambulance.

The Finance Committee considered the FY2024 Budget for #01291 Emergency Management Department.

The Town Manager explained the role of the Emergency Management Department. He pointed out that the request and recommendation were level-funded from FY2023.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of a total budget appropriation of \$17,500.00 for #01291 Emergency Management, as presented in the recommendation of the Town Manager for FY2024 (Motion made by Mr. Kennedy; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) roll call vote: Mr. Kennedy, Yes; Mr. Coleman, Yes; Mr. Marshall, Yes; Mr. Jones, Yes; Ms. Cavanaugh, Yes – passed 5 to 0.

The Finance Committee considered the FY20254 Budget for #01199 General Services.

Town Manager Ed Kazanovicz addressed the General Services budget and pointed out that the administration increased some costs at the last fall town meeting for Gas/Oil/Diesel. He said that insurance costs are uncertain and there are some factors that may change. The Town is going to seek multiple quotes for insurance.

Ms. Cavanaugh discussed the potential for collaborative bids for fuel. Ed Kazanovicz discussed the Electricity Account and he advised that there were \$160,000.00 of net metering credits.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of a total budget appropriation of \$1,702,889.00 for #01199 General Services, as presented in the recommendation of the Town Manager for FY2024 (Motion made by Mr. Kennedy; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) roll call vote: Mr. Kennedy, Yes; Mr. Coleman, Yes; Mr. Marshall, Yes; Mr. Jones, Yes; Ms. Cavanaugh, Yes – passed 5 to 0.

Chair Anne Cavanaugh asked if there any questions on the minutes of February 15, 2023. There being none, the Chair accepted the minutes of February 15, 2023 as presented.

At 8:12 P.M. the meeting was adjourned (Motion made by Mr. Kennedy; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) roll call vote: Mr. Kennedy, Yes; Mr. Coleman, Yes; Mr. Marshall, Yes; Mr. Jones, Yes; Ms. Cavanaugh, Yes – passed 5 to 0.

Submitted: Sharon A. Kwiatkowski  
Adm. Assistant to the Town Manager

The following documents were part of the Finance Committee’s meeting of March 8, 2023 and are retained in the Executive Officer of Town Manager:

- March 8, 2023 Agenda
- FY2024 Budget Requests (Operating and Capital) – Police Department; Public Safety Dispatch; Fire/Rescue Department; Emergency Management Department and General Services
- Minutes of February 15, 2023