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**COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND TAXATION**  
**WEDNESDAY, March 15, 2023 7:00 PM**  
**School Committee Conference Room, Stoughton Public Schools District Office**  
**31 Pierce Street, Stoughton, MA 02072**  
**PUBLIC HEARING**

**Agenda items may be taken out of order at Chairman's Discretion**

1. Mr. Vaughan Enokian, Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM .

2. Mr. Enokian asked all to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Mr. Anzivino made the motion to open the Public Hearing, seconded by Mr. Lurie. The motion passed.

Present: Vaughan Enokian, Chair, John Anzivino, Vice Chair, Dianne Dolan Secretary, Elliot Hansen, Chet Collins (left at 9:24pm), Robert Desmond, Laura Gunn, Adam Iacabucci, David Lurie, Dr. Jess Miner (arrived at 8:15pm), Mark Struck, Joel Wolk (left at 10:45pm)

Absent: Eric Anderson, Kerry Marrocco, John Walsh

4. Article 26 General Fund Operating Budget (FY24) Mr. Tom Calter  
a. Town Manager

Mr. Calter spoke to a common theme that of matching job titles to job descriptions. He said at some point in the past, the town had adopted job descriptions recommended by the State. He said they do not work for Stoughton. He said the town has engaged the services of Jack Dolan as consultant. Mr. Calter spoke of the challenges to hiring personnel, indicating that the Police Department has 10 vacancies. He said the private sector pays more and permits hybrid schedules. In addition, Mr. Calter said hiring at a level below six figures is difficult. He said using better technology, on-line permitting will reduce man-hours.

Mr. Calter complimented the town's staff, saying Stoughton is fortunate to have such talented people. He said at present, many staff members are willingly assuming broader duties.

He spoke to structural deficits in the healthcare, water/sewer, solar management. He noted that improved management of the solar program would benefit the town.

Ms. Laura Gunn, Finance Committee said she appreciated the resourcefulness in maximizing the talent available. She asked what happens when one of these talented people leaves. She asked are there other solutions such as on-job training.

Mr. Calter said that is possible and noting Mr. Marc Tisdelle is shadowing the job of town manager.

Mr. Lurie asked if appropriations could address staffing shortfalls.

Mr. Calter said hiring has to stay within the budget. He said because of the police vacancies, the town pays overtime.

Mr. Enokian asked for clarification of increase to Mr. Tisdelle, \$30,000 and increase in the Select Board secretary to \$65,000.

Mr. Calter explained that Mr. Tisdelle is doing both the Engineering job along with assisting the town manager. He said the secretarial increase is an attempt to match salary to the duties and the value of the person. He commented that there had been a quick turnover in the secretarial position recently. Mr. Calter explained the DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) consultant is a state recommendation.

Mr. Anzivino expressed concern that 20% of Mr. Tisdelle's time will not be spent in the engineering department. He said the Finance Committee should receive more clarity relative to job descriptions matching salary and duties performed. Mr. Anzivino asked the benefit to having the DEI consultant.

Mr. Calter said this is a new area for the town, and a trained person is needed.

Mr. Desmond noted that the budget was up by 18%.

Ms. Dolan asked how the increase would be funded.

Mr. Calter said based on projected revenue and by closing some open positions that will not be filled this budget cycle.

b. Human Resources Ms. Deanna Chatsko

Mr. Wolk asked if the position of DEI should be in the Human Resources budget.

Ms. Chatsko responded originally it was, but it was determined preferable to place the position under the town manager.

Ms. Chatsko said her budget is almost the same, some increases in advertising. She said the hand-out explained the responsibilities of the department now reduced from 3 to 2 people at a savings of \$30,000. She said she assists with negotiations.

Mr. Calter added that negotiations are the responsibility of the town manager, but Ms. Chatsko acts as liaison with town counsel.

Mr. Anzivino asked about the new title listed without dollar amount.

Ms. Chatsko responded this position received a stipend last year and this year is moved to the department of Auditing and Analytics, so the stipend was rolled over into the salary line (\$10,500 stipend of \$3,000 plus \$7,500).

Mr. Calter pointed out a new hire would cost \$80,000 plus health care benefits.

Mr. Anzivino cautioned that all salary increases should be footnoted, with clear explanations as to why and how for the town meeting representatives.

Ms. Chatsko said she has worked in the town for 30 years, and soon a replacement will have to be trained.

Mr. Anzivino asked what training was being done now.

Ms. Chatsko responded that there isn't enough time. She said some training is done online.

Ms. Gunn asked if more problems are being created.

Ms. Chatsko said I learned on the job and added that she hasn't taken a full vacation. She praised the work efforts of Tracy Pereira.

Ms. Gunn said we need to look long-term.

Ms. Chatsko said some duties may be fulfilled by the new assistant school superintendent.

Mr. Anzivino asked about job descriptions.

Ms. Chatsko said there is a book available, but it is being updated.

Mr. Desmond said the packet indicated that the department was saving the town money. He asked if there was still a credit union. Mr. Desmond asked the progress on mandating direct deposits.

Ms. Chatsko responded yes there is still a credit union and said there is progress on mandated direct deposits.

c) Procurement page 14 Ms. Fran Bruttanitti

Ms. Bruttanitti said there are four aspects to the budget: advertising, training, travel, and dues.

Mr. Wolk asked the number of construction projects.

Mr. Calter interjected the number is not finalized, because he is directly involved with vendors, requesting competitive prices.

d) Central Purchasing p. 10 Ms. Bruttaniti, Ms. Trisha Shropshire

Mr. Iacabucci asked about the budget increase for phone service.

Ms. Bruttaniti explained this line item covered the land lines, fax lines in the town hall.

Ms. Shropshire added that the monthly cost was for maintenance of cell phones.

Mr. Anzivino noted the increase in advertising costs.

Ms. Bruttaniti said procurement and legal ads are mandated for specific newspapers.

Ms. Cynthia Walsh recognized that better pricing is available from the Patriot Ledger but stated that few Stoughton residents read this particular paper. She asked how people get information.

Mr. Anzivino responded that the finance committee publishes in the Suburban Shopper because it goes into every household free-of-charge to the resident.

Ms. Stephanie Carrara announced that Bond Counsel has given permission for legal notices, public hearing notices to be advertised in the Suburban Shopper.

Mr. Lurie asked for the information in writing.

Ms. Carrara noted that it is difficult to get "tear sheets" from the Patriot Ledger.

e. Assessor p. 11 Ms. Shropshire

Ms. Shropshire said she has been helping out in the wake of the billing issue with the property taxes. She asked that funds for appraisal services be returned to the original level of \$15,000 and not \$5,000.

Mr. Calter said the original request was ok, until the Assessor left. He said problems now identified need to be fixed. He said there is a 4-person staff: department head, secretary, data collector, full time administrator. Mr. Calter said the two retirees have agreed to come back temporarily to help.

Mr. Enokian asked if the \$20,000 requested was for the temporary assistance.

Mr. Calter responded yes.

Mr. Wolk inquired about the Assessor's Board.

Ms. Shropshire said there are 2 members, one vacancy.

Ms. Dolan asked if the funds set aside for the department were not used could they be directed elsewhere.

Mr. Struck asked about the dollar amount for training at \$725.

Ms. Shropshire responded that the new hire, Ms. Lena Williams was being trained by the retirees.

f. Town Clerk Ms. Stephanie Carrara

Mr. Desmond and Mr. Struck recused themselves from this discussion.

Ms. Carrara passed out a document explaining her disagreement with the decision of the town manager to change the request for a full-time employee to part time. She said in the past there have been 5 employees in the office. Ms. Carrara explained the expansion of duties to the department, additional responsibilities to the Select Board, the town Moderator, to the administration of elections, licensing. She noted that online permitting is available and will increase revenue. She remarked that staff is currently training. She expects 5 elections next year, increased days for early voting, one day to be a Saturday. She said the department will involve in the Code of Conduct. Ms. Carrara asked that the part time be restored to full-time, a change from \$25,000 to \$50,000.

Mr. Lurie agreed with the expanded workload and expressed his support for the request.

Mr. Lurie asked if current funds could be returned due to the resolution of the health care problem.

Mr. Calter responded no, the town remains in structural deficit relative to the health care program.

Mr. Lurie asked if something could be done to increase participation in elections.

Ms. Carrara said less voter participation last year occurred because it was a redistricting year. She said a committee "Get out the Vote" has been formed. Notices, and flyers are being prepared.

Dr. Miner asked the rationale behind reducing the position to part time.

Ms. Carrara said it was a decision made by the interim town manager.

Mr. Anzivino offered his support.

Ms. Walsh added her support, citing times when no one answers the phone in the town clerk's office.

Mr. Bob Mullen, town moderator said he supports the request due to the high demand, keeper of the records, voting by mail, posting of legal notices.

Ms. Lisa Lyons, resident, supported the request stating that the department is short-staffed.

It was determined to discuss 19, Article 51 New Voting Machines (Mr. Struck recused himself from this discussion) together with 4f Town Clerk

Mr. Wolk inquired about the purchase of voting machines under Article 51.

Ms. Carrara responded current machines are 20 years old. She said ES&S manufacturer, quoted \$71,575 which she rounded up to \$75,000. She said representatives of the company had come out and spent 3 hours explaining the operation.

Mr. Enokian asked if this company would provide everything needed.

Ms. Carrara said yes, but perhaps she would not need everything suggested.

Ms. Gunn asked the life span of the voting machines.

Ms. Carrara responded 20 years usually.  
Mr. Hansen asked about security.  
Ms. Carrara responded there is always a police officer present.

Mr. Lurie asked about the handling of the ballots. Mr. Enokian suggested a return to the budget discussion.

Ms. Carrara said she would invite the company to send representatives to town meeting to fully inform town meeting representatives.

Mr. Hansen asked if double counting could occur.

Ms. Carrara responded no due to the format of the voting ballot.

Ms. Lyons, resident suggested that the town should not purchase voting machines now considering the financial status. She said at 30,000 population, the town was not too big to do a hand-count. She said paper balloting is more secure.

g. Town Treasurer/Collector page 12 Ms. Paula Nute

Mr. Desmond asked the number of employees, the number of taxpayers in the arrears. He asked the time frame before determination to sell a property. He stated that the town has only auctioned 5 properties and the process should be reviewed to trigger revenue into the town.

Ms. Nute said the list of possible properties is being reviewed.

Mr. Anzivino said he believed the line item for land purchases should be increased. He said the line had been cut to \$20,000 from \$50,000.

Ms. Nute said she agreed to the reduction but would expect the funds to be restored. She said FY21, 22 parcels were considered for land-taking.

Ms. Dolan asked about the department.

Ms. Nute responded 2 people were responsible for sending out 11,000 real estate bills, 30,000 invoices for vehicles, and billing for water/sewer.

Mr. Lurie asked if receipt of payments could be quicker.

Ms. Nute said payments are faster now that Covid is ending. She said the town collects 98.7% of payments requested.

h. Historical Commission p.46 \$800 budget- no comment

i. Select Board p. 5 - no questions

Mr. Enokian announced that the budget for IT would be discussed with Article 47, request for Datacenter Infrastructure Upgrade Project

j. Information Technologies and Article 47- Ms. Shropshire

Ms. Shropshire said her budget was substantially unchanged. She said she is always reluctant to come to the Finance Committee to request funds. She said she researches all avenues and applies for grants to cover costs. She said for this item the search had been unsuccessful. She said the current location of the IT department, in the town hall basement is subject to temperature changes.

Mr. Wolk requested a breakdown of the purchase. Ms. Shropshire said a detailed report would be emailed to him.

Mr. Struck inquired about moving to the Police room. Ms. Shropshire stated that it would be more efficient.

Mr. Enokian asked if \$150,000 was the total cost.

Ms. Shropshire said yes, it would include upgrade at the police station, servers, and switches.

Mr. Wolk asked if the computer was under state contract. Ms. Shropshire responded yes.

Mr. Mullen, town moderator spoke in favor of the article. He said he wanted to give a shout-out to Ms. Shropshire and thanked her for her efforts relative to the website.

k. Town Counsel p.3

Mr. Anzivino asked if the practice of providing additional service to the staff was still in place.

Mr. Tisdelle responded yes, and it was effective.

Mr. Wolk asked the name of the town counsel. Mr. Calter responded Mead, Tallerman

l. Auditing and Analytics this budget has been rolled into the town accountant budget.

5. Article 26 General Fund Operating Budget FY24

a. debt service (excluded)

b. debt service

Will wait for Bill Rowe to be in attendance.

c. health insurance/medicare taxes p.51

Mr. Calter said after meeting on the plan design, substantial savings had been found.

Ms. Chatsko said 4.9% had been presented to Gallagher, consultant on health care.

She explained that the increase to the subscriber had been reduced from 28.6% to 23.51% (final number at 25% at the end of March.)

Mr. Enokian asked for a copy of the changes in the design plan.

Mr. Calter noted changes in co-pays and deductibles. He said the town had accepted the recommendations from Gallagher Insurance Consultant.

Ms. Chatsko remarked that staff will be educated on how to get care with less cost.

She said staff will receive information on telemedicine, on avoiding walk-in clinics. She said there will be meetings with union leaders informing them on ways to keep costs down.

Ms. Chatsko said the town had had a healthy trust fund, \$2,000,000. She said no one saw this deficit coming. She said the agreement to have 3 companies, and the refusal to accept recommendations from Gallagher contributed to the problem.

Ms. Walsh, 1096 Park Street commented that health insurance is complex and asked will people have help making decisions.

Ms. Chatsko said yes, the service is available.

d. town-wide Expenses and Insurance p. 52 10% increase

e. unemployment p.53 no comment

f. retirement p. 52 10.6% increase

- g. transfers out p.53 no comment
  - h. crossing guards p.22 budget returned to line item Crossing Guards from joint costs.
  - i. school resource officers p. 24 budget will be moved to the Police budget out of joint costs. Mr. Wolk asked if these were regular police officers, Chief McNamara responded yes.
  - j. benefits management moved to H.R. page 19
  - k. Public Health Subsidy p.53 amount \$45,000 from town budget, \$300,000 from ARPA
  - l. Cedar Hill Subsidy- none
  - m. Sewer Fund Subsidy p.53 \$513,857 structural deficit (caused by no increase in rates) Mr. Calter said the objective is to erase this deficit by FY24.
  - n. Any Other Joint Cost Matters - none
- 6. Article 3- Accept and Contract funds for Town Road no comment
  - 7. Article 4- Apply for and Accept Federal/State Funding no comment
  - 8. Article 5- Disposal of Town Property no comment
  - 9. Article 13- Reauthorization of Revolving Funds  
In response to a question from Mr. Iacabucci, Mr. Anzivino responded that revolving accounts are used when expenses exceed revenues.
  - 10. through 16. Articles 14 through 20 Collective Bargaining no information, no discussion.
  - 17. Article 21 Supplemental Fiscal Year 2023 departmental budgets no information
  - 18. Article 47 discussed with 4j (IT) of Article 26

Mr. Anzivino made the motion to continue the public hearing until Thursday, March 16, 2023, 7:00 PM, School Committee Conference Room, Stoughton Public School, District Office, 31 Pierce Street. Mr. Hansen seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Anzivino made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Dr. Jess Miner. The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 PM.



