



Town of Medway
FINANCE COMMITTEE
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Wednesday, December 13, 2023 – 7:00 PM
Town Hall, Sanford Hall
155 Village Street

Meeting Summary

Members Present: Brian Cowan, Chair; Sue Segarra, Vice Chair (7:11 PM); Ellen Hillery, Clerk; Bruce Carbone.

Absent: Nick Fair; Chris Lagan, Will Lane, Michael Schrader and Jim Sullivan.

Staff Present: Carol Pratt, Finance Director; Sandy Johnston, Director of Communications; Derek Kwok, Health Director; Erin Mallette, Regional Animal Control Officer; Courtney Riley, Director, Council on Aging.

Others Present: Historical Commission: Jeanne Johnson, Co-Chair and Paul Russell, Vice Chair.

At 7:03 PM Chairman Cowan announced that a quorum of members would not be present and therefore an official meeting of the Finance Committee cannot be called to order. However, as the official agenda items requiring a vote cannot be considered, those in attendance can hear the presentations of the invited guests. The summary of these presentations will take the place of meeting minutes when approved. All other agenda items will be postponed until the next meeting.

Invited Discussions – “What We Do”

This is an initiative by the Finance Committee to learn more about what various departments, boards and committees are charged with, their duties and responsibilities, and “what they do”.

Communications Department – Sandy Johnston, Director of Communications

Ms. Johnston reported that she has been with the Town six years and loves that every day is different. Her responsibilities include updating both the Town website and the school district website. Each department is in charge of their own page; she is available to help if necessary. She works with the Town Clerk’s office to get meeting minutes posted, though some groups post those themselves. She is working with Information Technology to get the website upgraded with more ADA compliance and other initiatives. This may be up and running mid- to late-summer.

Other responsibilities and duties:

- Looking into creation of a Customer Service position to field comments and requests to the appropriate department.

- Work with local media outlets to coordinate contacts regarding events and other Medway news. The Medway Community Farm was featured on a recent Chronicle episode.
- Writes press releases and works with Boy Scouts, Medway Community Farm, and other groups when they have events or projects; coordinate the final copy or report, and then out to media.
- Social media – maintains Facebook site for Town and all of the school district's channels. When something like a bomb scare occurs, she coordinates messages to all public safety outlets.
- Strives to help all departments work together relative to communication; cross-pollination means info can be shared across several outlets for increased exposure.
- Every two weeks she publishes a Community Bulletin containing community events and programs.
- Starting in January each year, she likes to promote upcoming events, but also add things from the previous year. There is a section about new hires in municipal government.
- Public outreach is critical -- people want to talk about things like trash pickup, how to promote their business, and all kinds of questions. She works closely with the schools about substance abuse and underage drinking.
- Attends many Medway events such as Medway Day, parade.
- Learned how to do film editing for videos which she will use when working with the schools on videos featuring various programs.
- A new holiday video composed by town staff will soon be prepared.
- She will be a workshop presenter at the Mass Municipal Association conference in January about Using Data in Communications.
- Fun Fact – Ms. Johnston is four classes away from Masters' Degree in Communications.

Responding to questions from committee members, she stated the Community Bulletin is posted bi-weekly on Town and school websites. Brief discussion followed on where residents could see her work, i.e. link to various things from the main Town website.

At 7:21 PM Ms. Johnston exited the meeting room.

Animal Control – Erin Mallette, Regional Animal Control Officer

Ms. Mallette reported she has been in her position for nine years, two of which were part-time. Her mission is to protect animals as well as health and safety of residents with regard to animals.

Her job duties and responsibilities include:

- Leash law violations, reports of rabid animals, endangered wildlife, licenses and permits, return of stray dogs, issue appropriate violations and fines, investigate complaints of barking or bites.
- Transporting animals if necessary, usually responding to emergency situations such as auto accidents. Education owners on pet ownership.
- There is one full-time officer and a part-time individual who covers weekends. Medway provides the office space.
- Last year there were 615 calls for service in Medway.
- She attends court hearings when necessary.
- Her office has created a Facebook page to aid in reuniting owners with pets as well as promote educational programs and events for residents.
- She is on call 24/7, and usually alternates weekend duty with the part-time assistant.
- They work closely with the Police Department.

Responding to a question from a member, Ms. Mallette confirmed that the Town purchased a vehicle for this department six years ago. It currently has an odometer reading of 120,000 miles and will need

to be replaced in the next year or two. When asked about items the department could use, she responded that the biggest item is the vehicle, and otherwise the department's needs are being met.

At 7:27 PM Ms. Mallette exited the meeting room.

Board of Health/Health Department – Derek Kwok, Health Director

Mr. Kwok stated the Health Department's mission is to promote a healthy community and a healthy environment for public health through a number of various activities. The Health Department inspects private wells, private art establishment (tattoo), recreational camps, keeping of animals such as chickens, solid waste haulers, and septic systems. They have the authority to enact local regulations such as body art establishments.

Other duties and responsibilities include:

- Responding to complaints such as housing, rental complaints
- Issuing permits and respond to complaints associated with those permits throughout the year
- While there is no state regulation on body art, Medway regulates it
- Inspect barnyards and make sure there is no disease among those animals
- Tobacco sales are regulated by the state, but Medway also has one which is stricter

Some duties are mandated and performed throughout the year:

- Pool inspections once a year, but there are not many public pools. Private pools are not inspected
- Every restaurant is inspected twice a year. For new development or new restaurants, we want to make sure it is designed for success
- Title V inspections (septic systems)
- Work with Walpole VNA for a variety of services
- The Health Department has nothing to do with nail or hair salons as they are regulated by the State, and there is no local regulation
- Distribute health information along with educational programs
- Deal with EEE and West Nile Virus during the warmer months
- Through a state grant, Medway joined a collaboration of 9 communities which includes services of a health worker and nurse
- Involved with beaver dams and impact on neighborhoods when areas are flooded

At this time, Ms. Pratt reported that the Health Department is receiving funds for opioid education and enforcement, adding that Mr. Kwok is to set up a committee to determine how those funds are used.

Responding to a question from the committee, Mr. Kwok stated his education was in Public Health, adding that much of what he does is learned on the job. He holds certifications in various areas including Title V inspections.

Regarding restaurant inspections, it's not a pass/fail scenario. The inspector lists the things that need to be corrected, and checks back to make sure those corrections are still in place going forward.

Ms. Segarra noted that she likes the way the Health Department's webpage is set up as it tells how the Board of Health is set up. Mr. Kwok responded that there are three elected positions on the Board, as well as two that are appointed by the Select Board. Regular meetings are held to review new permit applications or complaints; Board of Health members offer recommendations toward resolution and are helpful in drafting new regulations.

At 7:44 PM Mr. Kwok exited the meeting room.

Council on Aging – Courtney Riley, Director, Council on Aging

Ms. Riley explained that the Medway Senior Center is open to any senior age 50 or older, not just those who live in Medway. Various classes, lectures, and other events happen at the center on a regular basis. There are two meals a week for lunch, and one for breakfast. Breakfast is done by volunteers, while the lunch is handled by a chef.

Ms. Riley added that the senior center also handles Health and Human Services for the community with two part-time outreach workers. These individuals help with all kinds of things such as help with food stamps, fuel assistance, aging in place, and transitioning into safer environments. They also work with the Health Director on water quality, safety and quality of living issues. They also work with police and fire on various issues or concerns.

Other responsibilities and activities:

- According to 2010 census, there were 2,003 seniors in Medway; the 2020 census reported 3,389.
- The center deals with people ages 50 to 100.
- They are able to work with the resources they have, noting that the unexpected such as a pandemic can have an impact.
- Aging in place will continue to be a concern for some. There is a wait list for senior housing.
- ALS, Parkinson's and other afflictions are things they deal with.
- The Senior Tax Work-off Program has 80 applicants.
- 250 people come through center weekly.
- Staff met with 350 people last year for a variety of issues.
- In 2023 there were 1,200 Dial-a-Ride trips with the van for medical appointments or trips to the grocery store; it runs twice a week. The staff who operate this service are not medically trained.
- When the center gets calls from residents who have no food, heat or other emergency, it is the center's duty to help fix the situation. They connect with all departments.
- Volunteers are important. Some are assigned through the Work-off Program, some are not. There can be very specific needs with regard to volunteers. We couldn't do what we do without them.
- We watch out for cognitive issues in seniors, who should give up driving, signs that they are not doing well, etc.
- Home visits are conducted under certain circumstances.
- A nurse comes in once a week.
- The Veterans Agent also comes in once a week.

Ms. Riley emphasized that there is a good team for awareness between police, fire, and other groups. We may need more staff in a few years but good for now.

Referring to the photos of outdoor exercise equipment that were sent out, she explained that the cost of \$50,000 was provided through a grant. This is to help seniors keep fit; walking groups have also been formed. Through another grant, they will be able to redo the front outdoor area as a social area where people can sit outside comfortably.

In conclusion, Ms. Riley stressed that the center is important, especially for those seniors who have no family nearby. Center activities get people out of the house and keep them active. She noted that the center is working well within its current budget, adding that grants have helped a lot. They are trying to determine what services might be needed in a few years, such as the café being open five days a week. There may be new residents who will have specialized needs which may mean more outreach to go out on calls.

At 8:04 PM Ms. Riley exited the meeting room.

Historical Commission – Cher Hamilton, Co-Chair and Paul Russell, Vice Chair

Ms. Hamilton explained that the Medway Historical Commission, formed in 1977, has been in charge of historical buildings and landmarks in town. When demolition requests are submitted, the commission evaluates the property and its history. If the decision is that the building should be preserved, a public hearing is held. Various bylaws speak to this process. Currently the commission meets once a month.

Recent projects include obtaining informational historic signage for existing historical structures such as the Jacob Ide house and one located at the dog park. There are a couple dozen left on that list. We are able to fund these using CPC funds as well as our own budget. The commission did come to the Finance Committee for funding to complete the Traffic Signal box project. Brief discussion followed.

Mr. Russell reported that the commission also arranged for the installation of granite benches at all three cemeteries; light poles were installed there as well. The Evergreen Cemetery has been accepted in the National Register of Historic Places.

Continuing, Mr. Russell stated that two phases of gravestone restoration at Evergreen have been completed, and the third phase has been financed and planned. First phase of gravestone restoration has been complete at Oakland Cemetery.

Other activities included:

- The yard at the Garnsey House, one of the first houses in Medway, has been fenced off to protect the property.
- Flagpoles installed at park.
- Some Civil War gravestones were installed where none existed. The federal government provided funding, and local landscapers installed concrete bases for the gravestones.
- Working to get the Jacob Ide House on the National Register.

Ms. Hamilton emphasized that many people do not understand that there is a significant difference between the Historical Society and the Historical Commission. The Society houses artifacts where the Commission is in charge of preserving the buildings and has nothing to do with artifacts.

A house has to be 75 years old to come under their jurisdiction. The demolition delay is currently up to 18 months. The oldest house in Medway may be from 1710 or so. We want to protect the streetscape without sacrificing modern convenience and interior design.

Fifteen houses built in the 1700s still stand in Medway, and the commission would like to have them all designated as historic sites. We first have to determine the eligible criteria, then approach the property owners if they are interested in beginning the process. "Once a house is gone, it's gone." There are currently no tax breaks for those with homes of this age. Brief discussion followed.

Discussions concluded at 8:20 PM. Ms. Hamilton and Mr. Russell exited the meeting room.

All other agenda items were postponed until the next meeting on Wednesday, January 10, 2024.

*Respectfully submitted,
Jeanette Galliardt*

Night Board Secretary