



Town of Medway

FINANCE COMMITTEE

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Wednesday, January 10, 2024 – 7:00 PM
Town Hall, Sanford Hall
155 Village Street

Members Present: Sue Segarra, Vice Chair; Ellen Hillery, Clerk; Bruce Carbone, Chris Lagan and Jim Sullivan.

Absent: Brian Cowan, Chair; Nick Fair; Will Lane, and Michael Schrader.

Staff Present: Carol Pratt, Finance Director; Jessica Sinclair, Human Resources Coordinator; Jonathan Ackley, Building Commissioner.

Others Present: Glenn Trindade, Chair, Select Board; The Sunshine Group: Jess Peck, Director; Mark SanClemente, Assistant Director; Barbara Ohanian, Former Director.

At 7:01 PM Vice Chair Segarra called the meeting to order with five members present: Sue Segarra, Ellen Hillery, Bruce Carbone, Chris Lagan and Jim Sullivan. Members Brian Cowan, Nick Fair, Will Lane and Michael Schrader were absent.

At this time, Ms. Segarra explained the committee's initiative of inviting various groups and municipal departments to share information on their duties or mission, current projects, past successes and future plans. Tonight's meeting will include presentations from Human Resources, Building Department, and The Sunshine Group.

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”.

Human Resources – Jessica Sinclair, Human Resources Coordinator

Ms. Jessica Sinclair stated she has been with the Town of Medway since October of 2022. Some of her duties and responsibilities include:

- Working with employees: past, present and future
- Posts open positions on the Town website as well as social media and industry-specific sites

- Conducts interview in conjunction with the Assistant Town Manager
- Prepares welcome packets for each position as it is filled
- Works with IT to get email accounts and privileges set up
- If appropriate for the position, she arranges for municipal vehicle
- Conducts exit interviews to discuss why they are leaving the Town of Medway
- Manages insurance and benefits in general
- Handles Open Enrollment which is different for current employees as opposed to retirees
- Conducts salary studies of other communities to keep the Town competitive in wages
- Oversees contract compliance, attendance issues and paid time off as outlined in agreements
- Coordinates FMLA leaves for employee

Responding to a question from Ms. Segarra, Ms. Sinclair stated she worked in a corporate environment thought not in Human Resources. The big picture is different; here she is working for the people, not a corporation. Here she is the only one in the department, adding that the Assistant Town Manager helps when she needs it. Every day is a little different.

As to the number of people involved as part of her responsibilities, there are 170 employees on the Town side, and approximately 350 in the schools including teachers, paraprofessionals, administrative assistants, custodians and others.

Mr. Lagan asked about employee turnover. Ms. Sinclair responded that the most challenging department in that regard is Public Works as there are always openings. Police and fire are next. She acknowledged that turnover is affected as sometimes an employee does not stay long as they are often unprepared for the type or level of work involved in a particular position, i.e., manual labor. Overall, current salaries are fairly competitive.

At 7:10 PM Ms. Sinclair concluded her remarks.

Building Department – Jonathan Ackley, Building Commissioner

The following information was received: Building Department Snapshot outlining the department.

Present: Jonathan Ackley, Building Commissioner.

Mr. Ackley reported that he has been working in the Building Department for six and a half years, and has served as Building Commissioner the last year and a half. Before that, he gained experience in construction and carpentry.

Some highlights of the departmental summary:

- There are three full-time and six part-time inspectors as well as an administrative assistant; full-time employees are himself, Deputy Building Commissioner, and Zoning Compliance Officer.
- The department is responsible for compliance with various codes such as State Building Code which includes Mechanical, Energy, Fire Alarm, Sprinkler and Accessibility Codes
- The department reviews permit applications for building, occupancy, plumbing and electrical permits and issues said permits if approved.
- Annual inspections of schools, restaurants and churches; multi-family dwellings every five years
- Provides zoning enforcement for the Town in adherence to local zoning bylaws
- Annual inspection of all equipment that weighs or dispenses goods as defined by the state such as gas pumps, scales in various stores (jewelry, grocery, etc.) so that people are being treated fairly

- Issue sign permits and enforcement of Sign Bylaw
- Participates in Site Plan review, often with fire department as they have oversight with sprinkler systems and other fire suppression equipment
- Identify and work to remediate unsafe and abandoned structures

Responding to a question from the committee, Mr. Ackley stated that FY24 revenue is tracking pretty close to the previous year, adding that it has been a busy year. Large projects are revenue drivers; Glenbrook Way and a Main Street project have been under construction and are now finished. There are often a lot of components to a development project that require numerous permits. The department is involved early in large projects, usually when the filing has been made with the Planning Department. If there are things that need attention, that's the time to point out specifics, and the department follows up with the developer to make sure corrections have been made in the plans.

Responding to a question from Mr. Carbone, Mr. Ackley stated that permit fees is what generates revenue, adding that a large project will have large fees, but smaller ones have less. Mr. Ackley pointed out that a project such as 39 Main Street could throw that figure off. The battery storage facility will also throw that off. He clarified that they usually consider the last few years when projecting future revenue as it is usually relatively consistent aside from the large projects. Given the pandemic, there are fewer years with which to forecast.

Permit application review is done in the office, for example, for residential structures. Typically, half of their time is in the office, and half out in the field. He noted that Medway's commercial fee structure is the same as it was in Norfolk where he used to work. Residential fees are similar.

At 7:21 PM Ms. Sinclair and Mr. Ackley exited the meeting room.

The Sunshine Group – Jess Peck, Director

The committee reviewed the following information: (1) Summary of program outlining services and budgetary needs; and (2) Spreadsheet showing budget breakdown.

Present: Jess Peck, Director; Mark SanClemente, Assistant Director; Barbara Ohanian, Former Director; Glenn Trindade, Chair, Select Board.

Ms. Peck pointed out that the summer group is something that not all communities have available, evidenced by the fact that some of the families travel a distance to get to Medway. She described it as a six-week summery program for children with or without disabilities. The activities are beneficial for all parties, and also provides respite care for families. The goal is for all participants to shine; the children experience confidence in all their activities.

Mr. SanClemente emphasized that the program teaches kids that there are differences from one person to another, and all persons should be respected. The program is open to children ages 4 and up, and provides structured daily routines and identified expectations. Necessary accommodations are built into those activities. How can a child with mobility issues play soccer or a field game? We make sure they are included as much as possible.

Some highlights of the presentation:

- Staff is trained in how to work with children and various needs they may have.
- Training involves a lot of visual cues, timers, and other tools to help maintain structure and success.

- Staff works with Medway Public Schools in making sure needs are met.
- Student to staff ratio is important; many children need 1:1 support.
- Medway Public Schools often sends students with Individual Education Plans to coordinate with any summer school program they may be enrolled in.
- Occupational, physical and speech therapists often come in.
- There is an IT program for older students; the program is supported by the high school or middle school. We can teach them social skills and how to interact with people.

At this time, Ms. Peck shared comments from a survey conducted at the end of the summer:

- “The program has been transformative. We have two children in the program, and every child feels important. You harness each one’s individual spirit. More importantly, the children have had fun.”
- “Our son looks forward to it every year. It is a lifesaver for us as it has helped our son out of his depression.”
- Another child, age 7, “loved the cotton candy, going swimming, getting snack, and the playground.”

The program is designed for children age 4 to high school where social skills become more important. Additionally, some older kids are hired as staff members to develop some life skills. It was noted that many of these student counselors later go into the fields of education and social services. The program also helps to prepare young children for going to kindergarten.

There were 68 students in the 2023 program; there were over 100 before the pandemic. Applications are steadily increasing from last year. To avoid turning students away, they may need more staff.

Ms. Peck emphasized that the program could not run without the support of the Town, and they are grateful for that support. The annual budget consists of \$50,000 for staff, \$19,000 for transportation, and \$4,000 for supplies. It was noted that the admission fee is intentionally kept low to avoid being a barrier for families. Scholarships are provided through donations.

There are budgetary constraints in all three areas and the budget is consistently overspent. Ms. Peck spoke briefly about having to make decisions about replacing books, the snack shack or other big ticket items. They have had to cut field trips, and down to one bus for transportation. This means that some students are on the bus for over an hour in the morning. She clarified that they have worked hard to stay within the budget, but right now they are having to cut areas. It was noted that they also have kids who could have benefitted from additional staff which would result in a lower staff-to-student ratio.

Responding to a question from Mr. Carbone, Ms. Peck stated that the program does not run on a rain-or-shine basis. If there is a severe storm, they have to cancel the program for that day as they do not have a covered outdoor space. Cancellation is challenging for the families who have to make other arrangements, and also for staff who miss a day of work.

Out of the 68 students in the 2023 program, 23 had identified needs and 11 required 1:1 staffing. Those staff have to be qualified staff, not a high school student. They are working on hiring staff who have previous experience in a school setting. It is important to note that while they need to increase staff, they have to be qualified staff. Ms. Peck stated that the program is losing qualified staff to higher paying jobs. To help combat that, the minimum wage for staff positions was increased.

Mr. SanClemente has been with the program for about 8 years. Ms. Peck is a special educator in the public schools, and Mr. SanClemente serves as 1:1 staff.

Discussion followed. The committee found the write-ups very helpful and informative, and not just a line item in the municipal budget. Mr. SanClemente emphasized that “this is our program” and they turn the park into a bubble of activity during the summer. Mr. Trindade stated he learned a lot about the program when he joined the Select Board (at the time it was the Board of Selectmen), and discovered serious financial issues. He now serves as the liaison to the group. The staff is very dedicated; a lot of the kids who have been in the program go onto social services or teaching positions. If more money can be budgeted, please support that action at Town Meeting. Not only is a new tent needed, it will not be enough for all the students. On hot days, they need shade for everyone.

Approximately 90% of the students in the program are from Medway. Word of mouth is helping to spread the word to surrounding areas. Responding to a question from Ms. Hillery, Ms. Peck stated that students do not necessarily “age out”, and they never turn kids away. She shared the following example: one ten-year-old might just want to play while another ten-year-old might want to try being a counselor. Some kids could serve as staff member and learn job experience. Other kids might not know how to hold a broom or some other seemingly simple task.

Staffing is important to help keep kids in the program area. A 43-year-old attendee came back to serve as staff person; she had been in the regular program for all her life.

Discussion followed during which it was noted that staff is careful not to have to turn families away. They provide a valuable program and do not want to just be a popular summer program. For example, if there were 200 applicants, how do they choose the ones who need it the most? Mr. Carbone suggested getting the Town’s Director of Communications involved, adding that publicity could potentially lead to generosity and increased donations. On the subject of using space at local schools, Ms. Peck responded that they want to make sure that the location is a positive environment, and not have the program in the same place as the school they attend which might make it less positive. Oakland Park has the necessary space as well as bathrooms. Regarding outside funding sources such as grant and scholarships, Ms. Peck stated that the program currently does not have a partnership with any entity that could provide such support.

Discussions concluded at 7:54 PM. Mr. Trindade, Ms. Peck, Ms. Ohanian and Mr. SanClemente exited the meeting room.

Discussion –FY2025 Budget and ATM Calendar Review

The following information was received: FY2025 Budget and 2024 Annual Town Meeting Calendar.

Present: Carol Pratt, Finance Director.

Ms. Pratt reported that departmental budgets have been turned in. This year department heads were asked to submit a short- and long-term goal statement as well. The individual budgets are reviewed in conjunction with the overall municipal budget. There is currently a deficit of \$750,000. Following the Town Manager’s initial review, the deficit was lowered to around \$200,000. They will be meeting with department heads in the coming weeks. They will wait another month to assess health insurance costs and currently project an increase of 5%. They would like to lower that to 3%.

The debt budget includes a few projects such as the design of the track and field replacement at \$250,000 and a police radio system for \$460,000. There could be other things that may necessitate borrowing.

The assessment from Norfolk County Retirement System has been recalculated.

Ms. Pratt emphasized that salary negotiations and collective bargaining agreements are still in the works. If the agreements with salary increases are completed in time, they would like to include them in this budget, but that would have to be concluded before Town Meeting to approve the budget.

Once the budget adjustments are made, they can prepare the budget books for the Finance Committee.

It is anticipated that the cost of the track and field replacement is \$2.165 million. They will address elementary school roofs one at a time, i.e., one this year, another next year.

Mr. Lagan reported that he and Mr. Carbone met with the Fire Chief recently. Brief discussion followed on Chief Lynch's request for an increase in personnel. Community is growing, more senior citizens, and calls have increased significantly.

Miscellaneous

Chairman's Report – This report was postponed.

Clerk's Report – Ms. Hillery reported the Finance Committee Reserve Fund still has its original balance of \$100,000. The Committee's regular budget has a balance of \$768.50.

Liaison Reports – Mr. Lagan expanded on the discussion with the Fire Chief. He noted that while there was no discussion on the building itself, the current equipment doesn't fit. The chief's main concern is adequate staffing.

Review of Meeting Minutes

The committee reviewed draft meeting minutes from December 13, 2023.

Ms. Hillery made a motion to approve the minutes of December 13, 2023, as amended; Mr. Carbone seconded. No discussion. VOTE: 5-0-0.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Finance Committee will be on Monday, February 12, rescheduled from February 14 so that members could enjoy Valentine's Day with their loved ones.

Adjourn

At 8:24 PM Mr. Carbone made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Sullivan seconded. There was no discussion. VOTE: 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanette Galliardt
Night Board Secretary