

In attendance and participating via GoToMeeting were Catherine Iino, Louis Annino, Jr., Eileen Blewett, Regina Regolo, Board of Finance members Robert Rimmer (he left at 6:30 P.M.), Gwenne Celmer, Annie Stirna; Dick Bauer, Chief – Fire Department; Rick Darrin, Jennifer Liptak, Don Offner – Fire Commissioners; and Bettie Perreault, acting as clerk.

1. Call to Order: First Selectwoman Iino called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M.
2. Approval of Minutes: no action was taken.
3. Killingworth Volunteer Fire Company Operating and Capital request for 2021-2022:

Rick Darrin, Chairman of the Board of Fire Commissioners, reported the Commissioners had received and reviewed both the proposed budget and capital plan from the Killingworth Volunteer Fire Company and had reviewed them with Chief Bauer and the KVFC officers. The Commissioners strongly support the requested proposed budget.

Chief Bauer reviewed the proposed budget, line item by line item, noting the following points:

- Preventative maintenance and required annual inspections of all vehicles has been included;
- The Company now operates with 100% paperless reporting, with all records recorded and maintained electronically; two iPads have been purchased for recording reports while on the scene of activities and events;
- Four percent increases have been included in the requested budget for anticipated increases from vendors and suppliers.
- There are more required physical exams for members than normal as a result of catching up from delays during the COVID pandemic and aging of members. Members' annual physical exams are a NFPA requirement.
- Equipment and supplies required by COVID responses will continue to be required for the future; the additional expenses are included.
- The Fire House now has independent internet connection to accommodate the demand from expanded internet use for reporting and other communications.
- Secretarial Services & Supplies have been under discussion for some time, with the time required to address mandated reporting requirements and maintain records increasing substantially. In effect, KVFC needs an HR director for 50+ members; details of the various tasks that were performed were given.
 - Services that are presently farmed out to other vendors/contractors can now be performed in-house with programs that have been installed.
 - Officers are currently spending a significant amount of time performing administrative duties.

- Having administrative/secretarial/clerical services available would allow the Chief and officers to concentrate on Company tasks and duties.

Questions raised included the following:

- How long might reimbursement of expenses from COVID grant funding be realistically expected to continue? Not known definitively at this time.
- Which service is the Fire House connected to for internet? Nutmeg Network is used for some purposes, Comcast for others. Speed of service is a consideration in selection.
- Do the Fire Marshal and Fire Department make the same reports in connection with activities? There is not a lot of overlap, but both are using the same software programs, which simplifies and speeds reporting.
- Has the impact of a changing administrative burden been studied? Has sufficient funding been requested? The Officers believe their request meets anticipated demands but will need to watch as things are implemented, potentially providing a status report next year.

Capital Budget Requests were discussed, and included the following:

- The requests for the up-coming year are those that were on the multi-year capital improvement plan and items that were deferred last year.
- The roof at Station 1 has aged and has begun to leak, and needs to be replaced. Inspection of the underlying structural integrity has not been done.
- A number of items included in the Capital requests “have been kicked down the road” over the years.
- Turnout gear is needed as new members join the Fire Company. Older gear and equipment is used for training, to avoid having new items face the wear and tear of training.
 - Asked if this is a “one-time catch-up” cost, it was noted that this request represents a planned replacement program.
- Members of both the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance posed numerous questions that the Chief and Commission Chair answered.

Capital Expenses – Vehicles: the following was discussed:

- Heavy Rescue Vehicle Truck #89. This vehicle is a 1994 vehicle; KVFC proposes to retrofit it with a new chassis.. The vehicle has seen heavy use, particularly during the COVID pandemic, and is over 25 years old. The project is anticipated to take the vehicle out of service for a year, with other vehicles being adapted to cover needed responses. Mutual aid from other municipal departments is available when needed.

- Brush Light Rescue Truck #86: this vehicle rolls to a lot of responses. Despite serious rust deterioration, it did pass inspection for the current year. With another year of service and age, it may fail future inspections.

Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance members posed a number of questions, all of which were answered. Commissioners collectively advised they were “all for it” on the budget requests submitted.

The benefits package for members of the Fire and Ambulance department was discussed. The Board of Selectmen has been giving the matter consideration and review and requested input and opinion from Fire Commissioners and company officers. Points raised include:

- Statutes now permit changes/expansion of the amount of property tax abatements and the population receiving them.
- The selectmen asked the Fire Commission to consider alternatives to using the full life insurance benefit as a way of rewarding long service to the Company and the town. Possibilities include a one-time payment upon the firefighter’s reaching a certain age after a certain number of years of service. .
- What is sometimes referred to as a “pension” should more accurately be called a “service plan.” The current plan could be enhanced or amended.

The discussion was referred to as a sharing of thoughts and ideas between the boards and commissions, allowing members time to give the matter further consideration. Insurance industry requirements need to be taken into consideration. To move the matter forward, the Board of Selectmen will recommend putting a “place holder” line item in the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year, allowing all time to develop a plan that will attract, retain, and recognize first responders.

The Fire Marshal position was discussed briefly. The official was selected during this fiscal year, with an interim report on how things are working out being considered. Commissioner Darrin advised that as a Commissioner, he “couldn’t be happier with him.” The hours he is working fall within what had been anticipated, the transition from a more-or-less volunteer Fire Marshal to paid official has gone smoothly, he works well with other officials. With required tasks and duties being performed, that office is providing liability control for the Town.

The Fire Marshal has requested funding for a deputy position that would allow a certified professional to cover the office when the marshal is not available. More information and clarification of how this would be handled will be provided.

The Chief was thanked for his input and information at this meeting. Selectwoman Iino confirmed members of the Board of Finance were available for a regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen on Monday, February 22 at 7:00 P.M. and advised she would forward various documents to those members prior to that meeting.

Members of the Board of Finance left the meeting at 7:40 P.M.

Selectmen were advised Parks & Recreation wants to include funding for a pavilion at Auer Park in 21-22. An itemized operating budget request will be submitted.

After consultation and review, items previously included in the Capital Expenditures budget requests will be moved back to the Operating Budget. The two line items are Tree Budget and Town Website.

To be considered at the February 22 Selectmen's meeting will be salaries. Information including a CCM salary survey and a survey of elected officials' benefits as well as the Town's benefits package will be provided prior to that meeting.

Adjournment

Motion made by Eileen Blewett, seconded by Lou Annino to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 P.M. Motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Bettie Perreault

Bettie Perreault
Acting Clerk