**CHARLESTOWN FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2022 AT 6:30 P.M.**

**CHARLESTOWN PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM**

Present: Richard Carter, Keith Weed, David Richardson (chair), Steve Neil, Bob Davis, Patricia Chaffee, Trina Royce

Select Board: Bill Rescsanski

Public: Sarah Davis

Absent: Nancy Houghton

Employees Present: Patrick Connors, Diane Town

Mr. Richardson requested that approval of previous meeting minutes be postponed until the following meeting. Consensus of the finance committee was reached to postpone. Mr. Richardson stated that the police and communication budgets would be reviewed in the present meeting. Chief Connors presented his most recent budget. Chief Connors discussed the increase in salaries in the police department budget. He stated the difficulty in finding prospective officers at present. Chief Connors stated he budgeted for 2023 seven (7) full-time positions, with five (5) presently filled. Mr. Richardson stated that with the current year there was a 10% increase in salaries, and in the proposed 2023 police budget there is an 11% increase. Chief Connors discussed the present evaluation schedule to be on an employee’s anniversary date. Chief Connors identified personnel as the largest expense for the police department. Mr. Carter questioned the budgeting for two additional officers. Chief Connors stated that the previous year’s budget had two additional officers but was later decided to hold off hiring in order to decrease town expenses. Mr. Richardson pointed out on page #9 for “Reimbursable Special Detail” as substantially more than budgeted. Chief Connors stated that the town of Walpole has requested Charlestown police presence when they are short-staffed. Chief Connors identified the line item for “Software Support” as being the police department server. Chief Connors stated that he would speak to Charland technology about getting clarification on the exact costs related to software expenses. Chief Connors stated that the town level-funded the prosecutor for this budget. Chief Connors stated he has ordered ammunition from 2021 that has yet to be delivered, and when it arrives he will receive the bill. It was reflected that the department would need ammunition for any candidate that may attend the academy. Discussion took place regarding Chief Connors’ hopes to send officers to conferences and trainings in the coming year. Chief Connors reflected to Mr. Carter the operational rationale of not having routine patrols. Chief Connors described the equipment that needed repair under the line item of Radio Communications. Ms. Chaffee reviewed the contributions necessary in applying for grants. Chief Connors reflected how he requests the contribution to the Drug Task Force each year, and each year it is not approved. Discussion was held regarding body cameras on police officers.

The Finance Committee then switched focus to the proposed 2023 Communications Budget. Chief Connors stated that this past year was a difficult year for dispatch, given the extra coverage that was needed. Chief Connors identified the mistake on the line item for Dispatch Tower; in that the rental fee is $2,500 but the 2023 budget lists the requested amount at $5,000. The Radio Communications line item on was clarified as being for the tower equipment that is installed on the police department building itself. Mr. Rescsanski requested that Ms. Town check the figures associated with FICA and Medicare.

Chief Connors discussed the police-related items listed on Capital Outlay. Mr. Richardson asked Chief Connors to get back to Ms. Town within two weeks with revisions of the budgets. Chief Connors stated that employers are having difficulty in finding new workers. Mr. Richardson thanked Chief Connors.

Ms. Davis was present and has requested to become a member on the Finance Committee. Mr. Richardson asked if anyone was against Ms. Davis’s request. No one voted against, but Bob abstained. Ms. Town will present to the Selectboard Ms. Davis’s request of being part of the Finance Committee. Mr. Richardson asked Mr. Rescsanski which budgets should be considered for review at the following Finance Committee meeting. Mr. Richardson asked if Code Enforcement and Mr. Weed could be scheduled for next week. Mr. Richardson stated to Ms. Town that they would talk and that next week’s agenda would be finalized in the interim. Discussion commenced regarding the nature in which salary increases would take, until which Ms. Chaffee clarified that the Finance Committee had previously agreed to not weigh in on how raises would be processed. Mr. Neil asked where the Finance Committee was at with quotes for insurance. Ms. Chaffee and Ms. Town stated that the figures in the budget on insurance were up to date. Mr. Neil then commented that dental line items appeared to have undergone significant increases.

Mr. Weed motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m. Ms. Chaffee seconded the motion. All voted yes.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jordan Cannon, Recording Secretary