



OFFICE OF THE  
Advisory Board  
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March 4, 2014

Present: Ron Mikol, Kevin Walsh, Harold Simmons, Joe Dean, Dana Metzler, Christine Muir  
The meeting began at 7:00 p.m.

Fire Department FY15 Budget

Chief Brian Rich went through the fire department's FY15 budget request. Firefighters currently receive \$10/hour for training; he's bumped it up to \$15/hour for FY15. Water expenses have been high due to the cold weather; Joe asked Brian to contact the Water department for a reduced rate or other deal. Professional and Technical line item covers computer program grants and other companies doing work for us. Communications costs are lower for FY15 because Pepperell line will no longer ring into Groton. Building Repairs contains funds to repair door frames, which are suffering from dry rot and termite damage. Vehicle Supplies covers the cost of fuel, which is currently \$0.16/gallon higher than the highest price last year. (The municipal rebate on taxes goes directly back to the general fund.) Firefighting Supplies has increased because they no longer receive free epipens or AED pads. Dues & Membership costs are likely to increase by \$400 in FY16, so we have a year to plan for that. Replacement equipment includes structural firefighting gear, which costs \$3000/set and is required to be less than ten years old.

Brian told us about a great program he's using to keep track of who's responding to calls and their estimated arrival times. The program also contains a calendar that can alert Brian of supplies' expiration dates, when to replace batteries, etc. It is called I Am Responding.

Brian has three articles for consideration at town meeting. In priority order, they are:

1. \$8000 washing machine specially designed for firefighting gear. Includes installation. Home washing machines can tear safety linings. Residue left on gear can cause cancer and other health problems so sets should be washed regularly.
2. \$48,000 to replace chief's vehicle. Same quote as last year.
3. \$26,500 for a Polaris Ranger 6x6 off-road vehicle. He requested this last year, too, but it didn't get on the warrant for town meeting.

Highway

We have an overrun in Snow & Ice removal this year, which hasn't happened since 2010 when the amount was around \$200,000. This year, it's not as high but will likely run about \$40,000. Although we have less snow this year than last, the plows have to make multiple runs at night because everything refreezes and the roads need treatment. The Road Commissioners pointed out that they have reduced costs since five years ago, by purchasing town equipment (driven by part-time operators) and using fewer subcontractors. They deploy 9 trucks for every storm; 7 are town-owned trucks and 2 are sub-contractors. They don't hire sanders, only plows.

Babin is an outside contractor who no longer plows roads, but does maintain Town Hall and Library sidewalks and parking lots. The Advisory Board questioned whether these costs should come from Highway Snow budget or individual building maintenance budgets.

The FY15 budget request includes 3.5% wage increase for the three full-time employees. Repairs & Maintenance – Vehicle is up 17.8%; the Commissioners said equipment is aging and needs repairing. The Building Repairs &

Maintenance line item should carry about \$10,000 every year to fix things like the roof, soffits, lights, etc. Communications covers radios. We questioned the specifics of Professional & Technical, Public Works Supplies, and Office Supplies, as we weren't sure exactly what those line items were intended for. Memberships include the MA Highway Division which updates highway departments on legislative and OSHA changes. Lease Purchase line item shows \$15,895, as expected; this is year two of a three year agreement. The Advisory Board suggested having a schedule of road paving; the Road Commissioners said that Terry Atwood has a ten-year history of the paving projects, and that completion each year depends on weather and Chapter 90 funding.

The FY15 Snow & Ice Removal budget is the same as FY14.

No articles are expected for the Highway Department. They have been making progress on the salt shed, as approved at last year's town meeting. It will be situated on the current site and will not require the extra grading, excavating, or retaining wall as originally thought. Therefore, a new site plan and design is required. A new price will be established, too. The FY14 funding will get them up to the process of submitting an RFP, but not including the RFP. The article to actually move forward with construction will not be ready for this year's town meeting.

#### FY15 Overview

Ron stated that we can anticipate an assessment from GDRSD at \$498,000 over the FY14 assessment. This reflects about \$760,000 in cuts from the original FY15 proposed budget, and an increase of \$1.1 million to Groton over FY14.

#### Prior Meeting Minutes

The following meeting minutes were approved by all members in attendance on each date: 1/6/2014, 2/3/2014, 2/5/2014, 2/10, 2014, and 2/24/2014.

We adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

*Belinda Melle*  
*Dan S. Stetso*  
*Christie Myer*  
*Harold Kinn*  
*Joseph P. Dan*  
*Kenji Welch*