

<b><u>Advisory &amp; Finance Committee Budget Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes</u></b>		
Sub-Committee: E – Planning and Development & Community Resources		
Meeting Date: 1/18/2023	Meeting Time: 1:00 PM	Meeting Location: Zoom
Budget Sub-Committee Members physically present: None		
Budget Sub-Committee Members attending remotely: Ashley Shaw, Evelyn Strawn		
Budget Sub-Committee Members that were absent: Larry McGrath		

**Purpose of the Meeting:**

The Budget Sub-Committee met with the Department and Division Heads to go over the Select Board’s recommended budget documentation with them.

The Budget Sub-Committee met with the following Town Officials: Lee Hartmann, Director of Planning and Development, Barry DeBlasio, Director of Community Resources, Michelle Bratti, Director of the Center for Active Learning, Kelsey Casey, Library Director, Anne Slusser, Recreation Director, and Roxanne Whitbeck, Veteran Services Director.

There were also three members of the public in attendance.

Ms. Strawn called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM and began with introductions. She then described the process these hearings would follow. She reminded everyone that the meeting was being recorded and would be available for viewing on the PACTV website. The town staff would begin with a presentation of their budgets. She asked that they highlight any changes and future opportunities and challenges. Although revolving funds are voted in a different article, she asked that they comment on those funds as well as any capital requests so that the committee could have an understanding of their overall budgets.

After staff presentations, committee members will ask any questions they might have followed by question and/or comments from the public.

**Planning Department:**

Mr. Hartmann presented the Planning Department budget and highlighted all of the responsibilities his staff has including staffing a number of elected and appointed boards and committees. There are nine staff. The primary change in the budget is due to the negotiated increases in compensation packages in the past year.

The existence of the village center revolving funds was raised. He explained that these are a part of the zoning bylaws. He does not anticipate any expenditures as all parking increases would come through Park Plymouth.

There has been town wide interest in the residential development that is taking place. There is a committee that is working on drafting a scope of work for a new master plan. Once that is completed town meeting would need to approve an expenditure to have such a plan written. An

article could go to town meeting in the fall or spring. Looking at master plans for similar size towns, it could be in the range of \$500,000.

### **Redevelopment Authority**

There is a new director, Paul Nocivelli, who was unable to attend the budget hearing. There is a 3% increase in the budget. This budget is used as a match for state and federal grants.

### **Community Resources**

Mr. DeBlasio gave an overview of his department. He explained that per the town manager's instructions, they had constructed a conservative budget. He also announced that he would be retiring in April so that not including the benefits based on his longevity has reduced the salary accounts.

The committee members and the members of the public in attendance wished him well.

### **Recreation**

There are no new initiatives. The increases are due to contractual agreements. There will be fewer seasonal employees. Also the salary for the Memorial Hall manager will now be funded 100% by the Memorial Hall revolving fund.

Much of the discussion focused on the plans for Hedges Pond. The day camp will be increasing from half day to full day therefore the program will need a permanent shelter. The existing building is in need of significant rehabilitation which would probably cost \$2 million. It is more cost effective to demolish that structure and construct a pavilion. Mr. DeBlasio will be attending the next CPC meeting to discuss these plans with those committee members.

### **Center for Active Living**

The committee reviewed the success of the CAL Café which was a new initiative last year. One of the positive changes is that more men are participating. Also the CAL Express was launched in June which was made possible through a private donation. GATRA now provides transportation to and from the Center.

Some repair and maintenance responsibilities have transitioned to the town but HVAC and CAL Café have remained in the CAL budget.

## **Veterans Services**

The Select Board budget reduced the Veterans Benefits line item by \$100,000 from the division's request. This is usually temporary funding that has been used to help individual veterans and there is a 75% reimbursement from the state. As the veteran population has become younger, there is less demand for this support as they are more focused on VA programs. If there is increased demand during the year, this can be looked at again.

## **Disabilities Commission**

This is a volunteer commission which is funded through parking fines. The chair is Paul McGee. The budget allows commissioners to attend training and educational meetings.

## **Library**

There have been some reductions in the overall budget. IT and facilities management have been transferred to other budgets. The division was asked to reduce one librarian.

A lively discussion, involving the public in attendance as well as the committee members, focused on the geography of Plymouth and the need to be able to serve all of the residents through an outreach coordinator. There was also concern about the library not being open on Sundays. Due to contractual agreements, this would necessitate an additional librarian.

The committee is recommending a \$60,000 increase in the personnel services budget so that an additional position can be funded. See motions below.

## **1749 Court House**

Given the location of the 1749 Court House, it at times attracts a number of users of their facilities beyond the historical aspect. Therefore, the Other Services budget has been increased.

## **Recommendations**

The committee chose to vote each division separately. All of the motions were made by Ashley Shaw and seconded by Evelyn Strawn. Each motion passed unanimously.

See Sub-Committee E report for more information.

Vote:

Division	Recommendation	Ashley Shaw	Evelyn Strawn
Community Planning	\$ 938,565.00	Yes	Yes
Redevelopment Authority	\$ 23,880.00	Yes	Yes
Center for Active Living	\$ 691,173.00	Yes	Yes
Veterans Services	\$ 663,195.00	Yes	Yes
Disabilities Commission	\$ 300.00	Yes	Yes
Library	\$ 2,138,026.00	Yes	Yes
Recreation	\$ 603,246.00	Yes	Yes
1749 Court House	\$ 24,135.00	Yes	Yes

To: Advisory & Finance Committee  
 From: Budget Sub-Committee E  
 Evelyn Strawn (Chair), Ashley Shaw, Larry McGrath  
 Date: January 27, 2023  
 Subject: Sub-Committee E FY2024 Budget Review & Recommendations: Planning & Development

**Budget Summary: Planning & Development**

	Personnel Expenses	Other Expenses	Departmental Equipment	Total
Proposed FY2024 Budget	\$ 749,956	\$ 188,609	\$ 0	\$ 938,565
FY2023 Revised Budget	\$ 722,611	\$ 186,145	\$ 7,500	\$ 916,256
FY2022 Actual	\$ 652,170	\$ 187,994	\$ 0	\$ 840,164

**Department Synopsis**

The mission of the Department of Planning and Development is to coordinate the planning, community, and economic development activities of all Town government agencies. This department provides a comprehensive vision of the Town's long-range goals and endeavors to administer local development controls in fair and equitable manner. The Department is led by Director of Planning & Development, Lee Hartmann.

The nine staff provide support to a number of boards and committees including the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, Affordable Housing Trust, Open Space Committee and the Energy Committee.

**Budget Observations**

Personnel Services have increased \$25,905 or 3.8%. This is due to contractual obligations. Other Expenses have increased \$2,464 or 1.3%. There is an increase to \$29,954 for the Energy Efficiency Budget. These funds are generally appropriated to items such as maintenance of electric vehicle charging stations and increasing energy efficient street lighting. There is no Departmental Equipment request.

**Initiatives & Opportunities**

The Director of Planning & Development continues to stress the value of a new Town Master Plan. Although sections of the Master Plan have been updated in recent years (e.g., Village Steering Committee Master Plans), the overall Master Plan has not been updated since 2006. The Planning Board is working on developing a capital request for a future Town Meeting. They have appointed a Master Plan committee that will be developing a scope of service. It is estimated that such a plan could cost \$500,000. Consideration is being given to moving forward on this plan in incremental steps.

**Recommendations**

The Sub-Committee recommends approval of the Town Manager/Select Board recommended budget of \$938,565.

To: Advisory & Finance Committee  
 From: Budget Sub-Committee E  
 Evelyn Strawn (Chair), Ashley Shaw, Larry McGrath  
 Date: January 27, 2023  
 Subject: Sub-Committee E FY2024 Budget Review & Recommendations: Redevelopment Authority

**Budget Summary: Redevelopment Authority**

	Personnel Expenses	Other Expenses	Departmental Equipment	Total
Proposed FY2024 Budget	\$ 0	\$ 23,880	\$ 0	\$ 23,880
FY2023 Revised Budget	\$ 0	\$ 23,185	\$ 0	\$ 23,185
FY2022 Actual	\$ 0	\$ 22,510	\$ 0	\$ 22,510

**Department Synopsis**

The Plymouth Redevelopment Authority (PRA) is independent of the town and the budget provides partial funding for the PRA's staff and activities. In addition, the town supports the operation of the PRA through the provision of office space and use of Town equipment such as computers, printers, fax and copiers. The budget is managed by the Director of Community Development, Paul Nocivelli. Services provided by the PRA include counseling programs for residents on subjects such as HUD, reverse mortgages, first-time homebuyer, and foreclosure. The Authority also participates in active programs such as the Massachusetts Housing Rehabilitation Agency's Get the Lead Out program and the Plymouth Community Housing Inc.'s affordable housing projects. Staff participate in the Affordable Housing Trust. In addition to the Town's budget appropriations, the Plymouth Redevelopment Authority receives funds from a variety of State and Federal programs, including a HUD grant, and from consulting fees. The town's contribution represents a 25% match for these grants.

**Budget Observations**

The budget chiefly consists of technical services of \$11,670, which provides partial compensation for the executive director, who performs grant and program management services, administrative services of \$12,094 which provide funds to compensate a part-time administrative assistant, and surety bonds of \$116. There is a 3% increase in this years proposed budget.

**Recommendations**

The Sub-Committee recommends approval of the Town Manager/Select Board recommended budget of \$23,880.

To: Advisory & Finance Committee  
 From: Budget Sub-Committee E  
 Evelyn Strawn (Chair), Ashley Shaw, Larry McGrath  
 Date: January 27, 2023  
 Subject: Sub-Committee E FY2024 Budget Review & Recommendations: Center for Active Living

**Budget Summary: Center for Active Living**

	Personnel Expenses	Other Expenses	Departmental Equipment	Total
Proposed FY2024 Budget	\$ 537,023	\$ 154,150	\$ 0	\$ 691,173
FY2023 Revised Budget	\$ 571,344	\$ 166,293	\$ 3,770	\$ 741,407
FY2022 Actual	\$ 393,316	\$ 115,128	\$ 7,752	\$ 516,196

**Department Synopsis**

The Center for Active Living-CAL provides a variety of services to Plymouth's older residents to “provide our community with a safe, trusted, physical and virtual environment where information and access to programs and services foster a healthy and vital lifestyle throughout the aging process.” The department is led by Michelle Bratti, Director of Elder Affairs. Forty percent of Plymouth residents are 55+.

This has been an exciting year for CAL due to the successful launch of the CAL Café. They are looking forward to the possibility of outdoor dining and cooking classes. Since the last report, they have also successfully launched the CAL Express in conjunction with GATRA so that seniors can access transportation to and from CAL. They have provided 2000 rides since last June. This has been funded through a donation.

**Budget Observations**

The overall budget decreased by 6.8% for FY 2024 primarily due to a reduction in both the personnel services and other expenses accounts. There is no Departmental Equipment request included in this year's budget.

**Initiatives & Opportunities**

CAL would like to expand their marketing and outreach. They will be looking at grants to fund this position.

The CAL is transitioning Repair and Maintenance of grounds and equipment (R&M) responsibilities to the town. Due to the complexity of the HVAC contract and specialized costs associated with the CAL Café, \$47,400 remains in the Repair and Maintenance line. This represents a 17.1% reduction.

**Recommendations**

The Sub-Committee recommends approval of the Town Manager/Select Board recommended budget of \$691,173.

To: Advisory & Finance Committee  
 From: Budget Sub-Committee E  
 Evelyn Strawn (Chair), Ashley Shaw, Larry McGrath  
 Date: January 27, 2023  
 Subject: Sub-Committee E FY2024 Budget Review & Recommendations: Veteran's Services

**Budget Summary: Veteran's Services**

	Personnel Expenses	Other Expenses	Departmental Equipment	Total
Proposed FY2024 Budget	\$ 150,665	\$ 512,530	\$ 0	\$ 663,195
FY2023 Revised Budget	\$ 149,339	\$ 612,530	\$ 0	\$ 761,869
FY2022 Actual	\$ 131,230	\$ 420,137	\$ 0	\$ 551,367

**Department Synopsis**

Veterans Services are provided in Massachusetts communities in accordance with MGL Chapter 115, which specifies a program of services to its resident, eligible, veteran population. Massachusetts is the only state in the country that provides additional Veteran support services in this manner. Large communities, such as Plymouth, have a Veterans Agent that coordinates and operates the programming. Roxanne Whitbeck, the Director of Veterans' Services in Plymouth, is also Plymouth's Veterans' Agent. Her primary responsibilities and duties are to advise and assist resident veterans and their dependents about Federal and/or State benefits they are eligible for and in disbursing and administering the State benefits they are eligible for (including financial and medical benefits). The Department has two employees, Ms. Whitbeck and an administrative assistant.

**Budget Observations**

In FY 2023 the Veterans Services benefits budget was \$600,000. The current demand is lower given the loss of some veterans in the past year and less demand from younger veterans who are more focused on accessing VA benefits. Therefore, that amount has been reduced to \$500,000. This amount can be reconsidered during the fiscal year if there is a significant increase in demand.

It is important to note that 75% Veterans Benefits line item is eligible for reimbursement by the state.

**Recommendations**

The Sub-Committee recommends approval of the Town Manager/Select Board recommended budget of \$663,195.



To: Advisory & Finance Committee  
 From: Budget Sub-Committee E  
 Evelyn Strawn (Chair), Ashley Shaw, Larry McGrath  
 Date: January 27, 2023  
 Subject: Sub-Committee E FY2024 Budget Review & Recommendations: Disabilities

**Budget Summary: Disabilities**

	Personnel Expenses	Other Expenses	Departmental Equipment	Total
Proposed FY2024 Budget	\$ 0	\$ 300	\$ 0	\$ 300
FY2023 Revised Budget	\$ 0	\$ 200	\$ 0	\$ 200
FY2022 Actual	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0

**Department Synopsis**

The Department serves as a resource to the Plymouth community to address accessibility, equal rights, and other issues of concern to people with disabilities. Paul McGee is the Chair of the Commission. There are no paid employees.

**Recommendations**

The \$300 is allotted entirely to meetings, education and training. Sub-Committee recommends approval of the Town Manager/Select Board recommended budget of \$200.

**Comments / Other**

50% of the handicap parking violation fines collected by PGDC are forward to a fund that it set up for projects by the Disabilities department and can be used for beach wheelchairs, beach mats, etc.

To: Advisory & Finance Committee  
 From: Budget Sub-Committee E  
 Evelyn Strawn (Chair), Ashley Shaw, Larry McGrath  
 Date: January 27, 2023  
 Subject: Sub-Committee E FY2024 Budget Review & Recommendations: Recreation

**Budget Summary: Recreation**

	Personnel Expenses	Other Expenses	Departmental Equipment	Total
Proposed FY2024 Budget	\$ 577,921	\$ 22,925	\$ 2,400	\$ 603,246
FY2023 Revised Budget	\$ 609,605	\$ 21,750	\$ 11,200	\$ 642,555
FY2022 Actual	\$ 472,677	\$ 20,953	\$ 3,746	\$ 497,377

**Department Synopsis**

The Recreation Division Provides recreational opportunities for the residents of Plymouth, as well as scheduling 28 recreational fields, supervising staff at five town beaches, managing Memorial Hall, and overseeing the operation of the Manomet Youth Center and the Hedges Pond Recreation area. The Department’s director is Anne Slusser-Huff.

There had been a high demand for outdoor activities during the pandemic. There continues to be growth in the number of registrations for their sponsored activities including flag football and at the Manomet Youth Center

The Recreation division has 3 revolving funds: The Recreation Revolving Fund, the Memorial Hall Revolving Fund and the Hedges Pond Revolving fund. These funds are used to pay the salaries of full-time and seasonal staff as well as teaching staff. They can also be used to pay for some capital expenses.

**Budget Observations**

Mandatory minimum wage continues to increase. In order to cope with this increase, the recommended budget has a decrease in the number of seasonal employees that will be hired in FY 24. There have been increases in permanent salaries due to contractual obligations. The funding for the full time Memorial Hall Manager has been shifted entirely to the revolving fund. These changes have resulted in a 5.2% reduction in the personnel services account.

There is an overall reduction of 7.9% in the recommended Recreation budget

**Initiatives & Opportunities**

The town would like to increase the day camp at Hedges Pond from parttime to fulltime. This will necessitate a usable shelter. The proposal is to demolish the existing building and replace it with a pavilion.

**Recommendations**

The Sub-Committee recommends approval of the Town Manager/Select Board recommended budget of \$603,246.

To: Advisory & Finance Committee  
 From: Budget Sub-Committee E  
 Evelyn Strawn (Chair), Ashley Shaw, Larry McGrath  
 Date: January 27, 2023  
 Subject: Sub-Committee E FY2024 Budget Review & Recommendations: 1749 Court House

**Budget Summary: 1749 Court House**

	Personnel Expenses	Other Expenses	Departmental Equipment	Total
Proposed FY2024 Budget	\$ 18,135	\$ 6,000	\$ 0	\$ 24,135
FY2023 Revised Budget	\$ 17,022	\$ 6,000	\$ 0	\$ 23,022
FY2022 Actual	\$ 10,233	\$ 5,483	\$ 0	\$ 15,716

**Department Synopsis**

The 1749 Court House, a free museum in town center, provides residents and tourists a unique opportunity to learn the entirety of Plymouth's history through interesting displays of historic artifacts. It also is the oldest free-standing wooden building and the longest-used municipal building in America. The museum is open from June to October and has 2 part-time employees. It also opens for special occasions such as Thanksgiving celebration and the tree lighting.

**Budget Observations**

The 1749 Court House Personnel expenses rose in FY2023 due to an increase in minimum wage. There is no increase over the FY2023 amount for building supplies/maintenance.

**Recommendations**

The Sub-Committee recommends approval of the Town Manager/Select Board recommended budget of \$24,135.

To: Advisory & Finance Committee  
 From: Budget Sub-Committee E  
 Evelyn Strawn (Chair), Ashley Shaw, Larry McGrath  
 Date: January 27, 2023  
 Subject: Sub-Committee E FY2024 Budget Review & Recommendations: Library

**Budget Summary: Library**

	Personnel Expenses	Other Expenses	Departmental Equipment	Total
Proposed FY2024 Budget	\$ 1,606,321	\$ 522,675	\$ 9,030	\$ 2,138,026
FY2023 Revised Budget	\$ 1,704,525	\$ 537,614	\$ 12,975	\$ 2,255,114
FY2022 Actual	\$ 1,348,071	\$ 536,983	\$ 0	\$ 1,885,055

**Department Synopsis**

The Library Division is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the Main Library and the Manomet Branch. The division is staffed with Librarians, Associate Librarians, Technicians, Pages, a Literacy Coordinator and two Custodians. Staff are overseen by Kelly Casey, Library Director and Kathleen Gomes, Assistant Director.

The library has expanded its lending capacity to include such non-traditional items as crafting equipment including looms, musical instruments, carpet cleaner and a power washer. There is a high demand for these items.

**Budget Observations**

The proposed budget was decreased 7.9% or \$177,088 less than the prior year. Although town meeting approved an additional librarian in order to reduce the use of overtime and move to a seven (7) day schedule this did not happen. The Library was asked to reduce one librarian.

The library's biggest non-personnel expenditure is "Books and Periodicals" which is requested at \$337,497 for FY 2024. This complies with the accreditation requirement that at least 12% of the overall budget must be spent on materials.

**Initiatives & Opportunities**

Because Plymouth is so large the library has been exploring ways to be more accessible to parts of the town that are distant from the two branches. They have been doing outreach at farmers markets and Algonquin Heights as well as books by mail and home drops/swaps. The Select Board's proposed budget did not include a position that could focus on this outreach nor did it include staff that would allow the library to be open on Sundays. The Sub-committee believes that the library should be able to fill an additional position.

**Recommendations**

The Sub-Committee recommends an increase of \$60,00 to the Personnel Services over that proposed by the Select Board. The recommendation is therefore \$2,138,026.