

FY 2024 Budget Questions & Answers
Finance Committee

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TOWN ADMINISTRATION		
123 Town Manger	Galvin: In the town manager’s report reference was made to a refusal by FEMA to pay 596K in Fire Department expenditures. What were the expenditures? Why wouldn’t they pay? How does the town plan to address this issue? (Reference page 4)	O’Donnell/Chief Targ: The expenditures in question were to keep the Fire Department staffing at 10 per shift during the pandemic. The funding used for overtime to fill vacant shifts. FEMA changed their opinion on the eligibility of funding additional shifts in April 2022 after two years of operations. Had we known in 2021, we could have utilized CARES Act funding to pay for a portion of the expenses. However, that program ended on 12/31/21. The town has filed an appeal to FEMA’s decision and is working with local legislators to hopefully resolve the deficit. We also have a request for ARPA as a placeholder in case we do not receive additional funding. Regardless, we must address the deficit once a conclusion has been made.
123 Town Manager	Galvin: In the town manager’s report it was stated that two paramedics were funded through ARPA money. This goes contrary to an early town manager’s memo not to use one time funding for hiring. What are the circumstances surrounding this hire and how will it be compensated when the ARPA money runs out?	O’Donnell: The town has been working towards hiring an additional 8 FF/Paramedics since 2018. Using the ARPA funding was a way to staff the final two FF/Paramedics immediately and then build in the incremental cost each year into the Fire budget, which equates to about \$35,000 per year. This practice has been consistent with staffing other new public safety positions where we hire a new employee on January 1 to spread out the incremental cost over two years.
123 Town Manager	Galvin: In the town manager’s report reference is made to the hiring of a full-time driver for the Council of Aging rather than part	O’Donnell: The Council on Aging provides transportation for services for older residents,

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	time. Why was this decision made?	individuals with disabilities, and residents experiencing financial hardship. The COA and Town Manager’s office sought ARPA funding to hire a full-time van driver in December 2022. The part-time drivers were working limited hours and the van dispatcher was working consistent overtime to handle the demand from residents in addition to working his normal hours. This was not a sustainable option for the employee. We recommended hiring a full-time driver to provide consistent transportation coverage for our residents and lessen the demand on the dispatcher.
123 Town Manager	Galvin: In the town manager’s report there is reference to a “Sustainability Coordinator.” What function would this position execute that could not be done now by the facilities director or by state oversight?	Heideman: The Sustainability Coordinator was initially a grant funded position split between the town of Westford and Carlisle. This position is looking at carbon reduction and energy efficiency measures both internally and externally for both towns. The Sustainability Coordinator is the primary liaison the to Clean Energy and Sustainability Committee and is working closely with them to develop and manage the town’s Climate Roadmap to make sure we are carbon neutral by 2050. The Facilities Director position is focused on the maintenance and upkeep of our buildings.
123 Town Manager	Nilsson: Does the TM salary line reflect the anticipated salary of our new Town Manager?	O’Donnell: Kristen Las has a proposed change to the Town Manager budget to reallocate \$5,000 of the unused salary line to office supplies to

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		replace some furniture, the chair, hutch, glass board, and other supplies to get what the department may need. We're recommending that this be done with a budget transfer in May to free up the operating funds. The other \$5,000 is to go to the Training line for the town manager's office and town staff. This is reflected in the FY24 Budget Adjustments document.
132 Town Finance	Galvin: Does the revenue received by the town's various enterprise services get retained by the enterprise accounts or does it go into the general fund for distribution to other departments?	O'Donnell: The enterprise revenue is retained within each enterprise fund. The revenue does not go to the general fund.
141 Assessors	FitzPatrick: What is the maintenance expected on the new electric vehicle?	Heideman: We anticipate that this new electric vehicle will require minimal maintenance other than brakes and tire replacements every few years as needed. We will also have annual Inspection stickers. The vehicle comes with an 8-year manufacturer battery warranty. Naser: Based on on-line information; the cost is about \$.06/mile, estimating 200 miles a month, 12 months; so about \$150-\$250 per year.
145 Treasurer / Collector	Galvin: In the FY22 Treasurer Collector's report, tax liens seem to be increasing. Do you anticipate an increase in liens this year? What is the current state of the real estate market and how do you see this impacting revenue if at all?	Collins: Tax liens were \$1,271,135 on 6/30/22 which was .015% of our commitment total. This is a one tenth of one percent increase over FY21. Today the tax lien balance is \$958,301 due to 8 accounts that were paid off and 3 foreclosures. The uncollected balance for FY2022 bills (not yet in liens) is made up of 83 bills and totals \$300K. Some of that balance will be collected before

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		year end and some will end up in tax liens. The total is in line with what I have seen historically. Deferred balances have been rising slowly and I expect that trend to continue. There is no evidence that the real estate market has impacted collections to date.
151 Legal Services	FitzPatrick: Is the PFAS litigation all in Water Enterprise? What are the actual to date expenses for FY23?	Cronin: The PFAS litigation is something that we opted into a multi-district litigation. There are no expenses on our end.
152 Human Resources	FitzPatrick: Is advertising still required to be done in the traditional sense (i.e., in the paper)? Why the increase?	Hicks: We advertise job advertisements through the MMA website, Indeed (free), the town website (free), the town listserv (free) and the town Facebook page (free). We have had 129 job postings in FY22. We do not advertise in traditional newspapers.
155 Technology	FitzPatrick: What is included in the network and server support increases?	Wells: The increase in Network Support (530400) is because of a forced change from Cisco about how they license their software (in our case that means our share of the new phone system). They have switched from purchased perpetual licenses to an annual licensing model. That will have reduced our capital projects slightly, but it just moves the burden to annual budgets. The increase to Server Support (530490) is because we are changing our server backup software to a more modern platform. It is more expensive than the current vendor but is supposed to be faster (we have always struggled to get our backups done overnight) and also

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		allows easier restoration of files. The product we were on also seems to be no longer 'mainstream' and we don't want to get left on a moribund platform with poor support.
161 Town Clerk	FitzPatrick: Why would election workers not be budgeted similar to the FY22 level?	Dubey: We budget based on the number of elections scheduled each year.
161 Town Clerk	FitzPatrick: Please remind me why Postage is increased in the current year and carried into the future budgets.	Dubey: Mail in voting. We send out the ballots to the voters who request them. This is very popular.
175 Planning Board	Galvin: In the Planning Board report, reference is made to a 10K expenditure for planning studies. What does this entail? Can you provide an explanation about the Graniteville Neighborhood plan? What is it and how was it developed?	<p>Morrisette/Giniewicz: The Land Use Management Department (LUMD) initially requested \$25,000; however, this value was adjusted downward to \$10,000 by the Town Manager due to overall budgetary concerns. Although the LUMD consistently applies for planning grants through the Community One Stop for Growth Program, and routinely seeks District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) from NMCOG, our regional planning agency, many planning grants require a 10% match.</p> <p>Unfortunately, while we apply for many grants, the timing is such that we generally do not know which grants or technical assistance we may secure by the time that we must submit our draft budgets. In fact, we normally do not receive notice about many state grants until sometime in the Fall.</p>

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		<p>Currently, the town benefits from a \$75,000 grant from the Housing Choice Grant Program to assist with addressing the requirements for MBTA Communities (multi-family housing) pursuant to new Section 3A of M.G.L. Chapter 40A, which will require a \$7,500 match.</p> <p>Additionally, we anticipate that follow-up actions (amendments to bylaws and regulations) will be required based upon the pending Tree and Invasive Species Inventory and Management Plan (with Tree Planting Plan) which is the outcome of an Action Grant awarded through the state’s Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program.</p> <p>With respect to the Graniteville Neighborhood Plan, there are several identified barriers that could prevent meaningful redevelopment to 12 North Main Street and other significant portions of this historical neighborhood: Environmental/contamination; Zoning; Nitrogen sensitivity/septic constraints; Infrastructure; and other physical constraints such as proximity of railroad tracks/bridges.</p> <p>A Neighborhood Plan developed with residents and other Graniteville stakeholders could serve to accomplish several things:</p>

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		<p>How can this historic neighborhood best be revitalized? What kinds of uses would the neighborhood and town like to see? Are there options for addressing septic constraints? Does the community have a preference for the future of the Graniteville Materials Quarry? A successful Neighborhood Plan could potentially be used to leverage and secure additional grants for planning, infrastructure, or the cleanup of contaminated properties like 12 North Main Street.</p> <p>Subsequent to the submission of our draft budget, the LUMD secured additional technical assistance from NMCOG to conduct a brownfields inventory with a focus on the Graniteville Neighborhood, and will include elements of a Neighborhood Plan.</p> <p>Additionally, the Planning Studies line item could be used to assist with other planning initiatives including, but not limited to, revising the Site Plan Review section of the Zoning Bylaw, defining and regulating more uses in our Zoning Bylaw, and addressing additional action items called out in the town's Comprehensive Master Plan.</p>

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199 Public Buildings	Galvin: Please explain the expenditure for Pest Management which has gone up from 4.5K to 9K in one year?	Goodwin: The additional expense for Pest management is due to some expanded pest management coverage in the some of the town buildings that have had minimal or no coverage in years past. These additional requested funds are also due to the addition of a termite treatment plan to be implemented at Town Hall.