BOARD OF SELECTMEN

P.O. Box 372
West Brookfield, Massachusetts 01585

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 31, 2022

PRESENT: Mrs. Diane Vayda; Chairman and Roland Sickenberger, Clerk
ABSENT: Mr. David Pierce; Vice-Chair
ATTENDEES: Fire Chief Clayton Edwards and Fire Captain Richard Lapierre

Called meeting to Order at 6:06 PM

FIRE DEPARMENT – FY 23 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Chief Edwards and Capt. Lapierre were in attendance this evening to discuss their proposed FY 23 budget. First, to address the concerns of Mr. Madden as outlined in his letter dated January 14, 2022, in which he (Madden) posed the questions regarding two of the firefighter's rate of pay. Chief Edwards explained that Lt. Lewis was only budgeted for in FY22 (by Mr. Madden) at 4.57 hours per week and as an Officer, he should have been budgeted at 5 hours/week. Ms. Ballard graduated from the Fire Academy thus raising her from $13.53 to $15.39. Both were calculated with a 2% increase for FY 23. It is fair to note that once a firefighter attains a certain level of certification or has completed course work, the pay rate goes up. Capt. Lapierre questioned why the town can pay a teenager who is shoveling snow a higher rate than an entry level firefighter. Chief Edwards stated that this is by far one of the best groups of firefighters the department has had in his memory. Capt. Lapierre also stated that since the beginning of the new calendar year, he has broken them into groups: (i.e., Group 1 is on this week, Group 2 is on next week, etc.). That way they all know who will be responding.

Currently, there are 17 positions including the Chief. Ms. Vayda stated that she is not opposed to the three (3) new recruit positions.

With regard to their expenses; equipment went up $2,500, other expenses went up $500. Ms. Vayda suggested that they provide proof that costs went up for these line items as the questions will be asked.

Mr. Sickenberger felt that it is his budget and as long as he stays within the approved amount, decisions should be at his discretion. Unfortunately, other than going on past practice, the department does not have any discernible method of a pay structure. The Board stated that at least one member will attend their budget hearing when they go before the Advisory Board. Both Chief Edwards and Capt. Lapierre thanked the Board for their time.

AFSCME – COUNCIL 93

Mr. O'Donnell was not able to be in attendance this evening due to the recent blizzard. He has asked that he be placed on an upcoming agenda to discuss several concerns that the members have. One being that of having pay stubs (and checks for those who are not direct deposit) available at the town hall as it was past practice. That method changed when COVID-19 closed the building down. Some members feel that

in light of the building being back open and business getting back to normal, a return to some of the policies that were in place should be considered once again. Ms. Vayda had a conference call with our Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer on Friday and they stated that they are moving towards all employees doing their own timecards via an online portal. They are also moving towards implementing timecards.

In addition, the Chief of Police provided a letter to the board regarding his Administrative Assistant, Kelly Hitt. There was an error in her Grade/Step when she was hired, to which the town owes her approximately $12.63 for FY 21. In addition, the Chief was unaware that the AFSCME contract was ratified so for FY22, she is owed an additional $293.00 (July 1, 2021 to present). He will be submitting the corrected payroll on the next cycle. With no objections, the following motion was made:
Motion to pay Ms. Hitt the monies owed for FY 21 at the correct Grade/Step and to further pay her the retro pay for FY 22 (July 1, 2021 to present) at the rate of $18.54 made by Mr. Sickenberger; second: Ms. Vayda – unanimous. (Note – the monies owed for FY 21 may need to be done either at the upcoming STM or in May during year end transfers)

NEXT MEETING DATE: February 1, 2022 – 6:15 PM (Zoom-w/Advisory)
February 8, 2022 – 6:30 PM – STM to begin at 7 PM

Motion to Adjourn made by Mr. Sickenberger; second: Ms. Vayda – unanimous at 7:09 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Acerra

Rebecca Acerra
Executive Secretary

Roland Sickenberger, Clerk

3-22-22

Date Approved