

Stoneham Finance and Advisory Board
Monday, January 30, 2017—7:30pm
Stoneham Town Hall Hearing Room

ATTENDEES:

Patricia Walsh, *Chair*
Hilde McCormack, *Vice-Chair*
Thomas Dalton, *Secretary*

Stephen Dapkiewicz Angelo Mangino
Julianne DeSimone Robert Verner
Stephanie Hayes

GUESTS:

Thomas Younger, *Town Administrator*
Don Piatt, *Town Accountant*

MINUTES:

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:31pm, informing the board that Mr. Younger and Mr. Piatt were present as guests of the Board to discuss the provisional department head budgets for Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18).

The Chair began by asking if Mr. Younger or Mr. Piatt anticipated any major adjustments to these budget requests. Mr. Piatt responded in the affirmative, citing his expectation that the budget estimates might decrease after revising revenue estimates and belt-tightening in some departments. Mr. Younger added that in the future, the budget process will begin in August or September of the previous fiscal year. Additionally, he hopes to produce a comprehensive “budget book,” which will cover all the budgetary specifics and will be made available online and physically before Annual Town Meeting.

The Chair invited Mr. Younger and Mr. Piatt to present the Board with their summary of FY18 Local Aid from the Commonwealth, which was compiled based upon the Governor’s budget proposal made to the Legislature.

Chapter 70 aid is projected to increase by 4% from FY17 to a sum of \$4,221,300. Mr. Younger acknowledged that the Legislature usually increases Chapter 70 funding in the final budget, so Chapter 70 aid will likely increase even more. Unrestricted General Government Aid is projected to increase by 3.9% to \$3,712,808. This sum is unlikely to change. Other Revenues, including revenues from state-owned land, veterans benefits and library funding, is projected to decrease by 14.2% to \$306,672. Mr. Younger hopes to increase Other Revenues from the state. The net projected increase in state aid from FY17 to FY18 amounts to \$250,450.

In terms of assessments: The Town’s expenses regarding the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, and Stoneham students attending charter schools are projected to increase by 0.7% to approximately \$1,571,327. This sum may be

altered by the number of Stoneham students who will attend charter schools during the Fiscal Year.

Next, Mr. Piatt discussed significant figures in the preliminary budget report for FY18. The budget for Planning/Board of Appeals/Conservation is being increased by \$5,650 from FY17 to cover MAPC dues, which were previously paid out of the wetlands fund. Police uniform costs were reclassified from the Police Department personnel budget to the operating budget, and the Police Department budget will be increased by \$60,000 to cover \$25,000 in public safety equipment and various other increases. The Substance Abuse Coordinator salary will be included in the budget, as well as a Budget Analyst salary for the Town Accountant's office to assist the Town Accountant. Mr. Younger also expressed interest in funding and hiring an assistant building inspector, the cost of which will hopefully be covered by the permitting costs of the incoming residential projects in town.

Further, Mr. Piatt confirmed that departmental budgets will be finalized by February 15, 2017. The vocational school budget may still change, but the Superintendent of Schools will confirm. Mr. Verner inquired whether all communities pay the same rates per student to the vocational schools, and Mr. Younger said he would find out.

Mr. Younger cautioned the Board to remember that the revenue estimates do not include new growth, new receipts, or water and sewer revenues yet. He also asked the Board to consider possible approaches to the \$500,000 remaining trash fee shortfall. Mr. Mangino asked Mr. Younger whether the trash fee shortfall had been handled at October Town Meeting, and Mr. Piatt clarified that the article at that Town Meeting only covered the shortfall for FY17.

Mr. Younger also informed the Board that the Stoneham Arena's fee structure for FY18 is still in discussion. The Chair asked if privatization was still on the table, and Mr. Younger said that the main emphasis has been on fee collection. Mr. Verner asked how fees are being paid now, and Mr. Piatt stated that fees were still paid directly to the Arena. The Vice-Chair expressed concern that the Arena continued to collect cash, but Mr. Piatt suggested that there is no real need to stop cash collection on-site, given that the Arena has established practices for handling cash. Mr. Mangino stated his view that the privatization of the golf course set an excellent precedent for the privatization of the Arena, but Mr. Younger held that because of the condition of the Arena facility, privatization is unlikely to be advantageous or profitable for the Town.

Mr. Dapkiewicz asked for more details on the revenues from the golf course, and Mr. Piatt described strong revenues for the course and the Town. Based on current revenues (approximately \$817,000), the Town will receive 22%, or \$217,000. Mr. Dapkiewicz further inquired about the Town's obligation to cover the costs of upgrades to the irrigation systems, and Mr. Piatt estimated an annual cost to the Town of \$42,000.

Mr. Mangino inquired about an apparent decrease in the Veterans' Service budget from FY17 to FY18, and Mr. Piatt confirmed that the decrease was at the request of Mr. Devlin, the Veterans' Service Coordinator. Mr. Devlin calculated his request based on the number of clients estimated in FY18 with a \$10,000 cushion and was confident that his request would be adequate.

The Chair confirmed that the final budget will be submitted to the Board of Selectmen and Finance and Advisory Board on February 15, 2017.

Next, the Chair asked the Board to review the meeting minutes from the January 10 Tri-Board meeting and asked for brief discussion of the Board's impression on that meeting. Mr. Dalton remarked that the meeting was helpful for obtaining immediate feedback from members of the Board of Selectmen and School Committee. Mr. Verner raised his concerns about potential tax increases in the case of a self-funded High School renovation or rebuilding. The Chair agreed and suggested that her three most pressing fiscal concerns for the Town are the Arena, school renovations, and trash fee. The Vice Chair moved to accept the meeting minutes from the Tri-Board meeting, Mr. Dapkiewicz seconded the motion, and the Board assented unanimously.

The Chair asked if any member of the Board had miscellaneous topics they wished to raise before the meeting ended. Mr. Verner asked if the High School renovation was a "need" or a "want" project? The Chair responded that the project is an absolute need, and Mr. Dalton added his view that the condition of the facilities are incompatible with a sincere desire to keep Stoneham Public Schools competitive and the Chair added that the condition of the schools has an important and meaningful impact on property values in the Town.

The Chair also remarked that she continues to work with Mr. Younger and the Chairs of the Board of Selectmen and School Committee to coordinate a monthly meeting of the Tri-Board chairs. Finally, Mr. Verner moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Mangino seconded the motion, and the Board assented unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Thomas Dalton, *Secretary*