

BROOKLINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Administration and Finance Subcommittee  
**Report on FY2021 IT Department Budget**

The Administration and Finance Subcommittee held a public hearing on Monday February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to review the Information Department budget. In attendance were Harry Bohrs and Dennis Doughty for the subcommittee; Kevin Stokes, Director of the Information Technology Department; and Melissa Goff, Deputy Town Administrator.

The Advisory Committee's proposed operating budget information appears on pp. IV-10 to IV-12 in the FY2021 Financial Plan. However, **these numbers for FY20 do not conform** to the numbers presented through the OpenGov portal, therefore and all numbers referenced in this report come from the portal. We have been assured that in future budget reviews the printed version (if any) and the online versions will be identical.

**RECOMMENDATION**

By a vote of 2-0-0, the Administration & Finance Subcommittee recommends including funding of \$2,124,234 for the Information Technology department in the fiscal year 2021 budget.

In addition, the subcommittee has learned that Mr. Stokes has submitted his resignation and will be leaving his position as of March 6<sup>th</sup>. As of the time of this writing, we are unaware of any written job description, any identified replacement candidates, or any formal transition plan, which we regard as a serious risk.

**Discussion**

The proposed 2021 budget totals \$2,124,234 an increase of \$69,488 (3.3%) over the FY20 budget of \$2,054,746.

Mr. Stokes, the Director of Information Technology (DIT) reviewed the IT Department budget which is essentially flat except for two items: (a) a \$4,488 Personnel STEPS increase and (b) a \$65,000 increase in the software/services budget. This increase covers increased fees to various service providers (most notably Accela and Laserfiche). Under prior years evidently the consulting budget was tapped to cover these increases but this has become untenable, exacerbated by the Department's desire to run a comprehensive risk assessment over the summer.

These increased service fees are in line with prior projections made by the Department during prior budgets as costs have shifted from Capital to Operating as the technology providers move from selling licenses to selling a per-user/per-month pricing model.

There was an extensive discussion regarding the Town's IT security preparedness and the Subcommittee was happy to learn about the coming risk assessment. Before the Town selects a vendor for this assessment Mr. Stokes plans to involve the Schools in this process; the Schools have higher risk due to teacher-provided devices being present on the network and the heightened sensitivity of student data.

Mr. Stokes commented that the biggest “day to day” problem his office faces is electric power reliability, particularly at the high school.

There was a lengthy discussion about the emergence of 5G technology and whether the Town is positioned to extract additional revenues because the number of antennas sited on utility poles will presumably increase. The Town has agreed to attractive terms with several wireless operators; unfortunately the FCC has recently issued a ruling which has led the operators to argue that they should be paying less. This is still under active debate.

During last year’s budget review the Subcommittee expressed concern that the ITAC had not met for some time. This has been remedied and the committee has had two recent meetings.

The Subcommittee is pleased to report that the sound system in Room 103 is scheduled to be upgraded on April 21<sup>st</sup>.

By a vote of 2-0-0 the Subcommittee recommends FAVORABLE ACTION on the budget as presented online.

BROOKLINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Administration and Finance Subcommittee  
**Report on FY2021 Select Board Budget**

The Administration and Finance Subcommittee held a public hearing on Monday February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to review the Select Board budget. In attendance were Harry Bohrs and Dennis Doughty for the subcommittee; Kevin Stokes, Director of the Information Technology Department; and Melissa Goff, Deputy Town Administrator.

The proposed operating budget information appears on pp. IV-3 to IV-4 in the FY2021 Financial Plan. However, **the numbers for FY20 do not conform** to the numbers presented through the OpenGov portal, therefore all numbers referenced in this report come from the portal. We have been assured that in future budget reviews, the printed version (if any) and the online versions will be identical.

**RECOMMENDATION**

By a vote of 2-0-0, the Administration & Finance Subcommittee recommends FAVORABLE ACTION on the Select Board budget as submitted (\$829,576) along with an additional recommendation that the administration present the full Advisory Committee with a proposal (including a job specification) to add an additional senior administrative position in FY21 with the expectation that a similar position will be added in the subsequent budget cycle.

**Discussion**

Ms. Goff noted that every single position in the Select Board office has turned over, with the exception of Kate MacGillivray, who took leave for surgery. Thus, the office has been under considerable extra load.

The proposed 2021 budget totals \$829,576, an increase of \$1,911 (0.23%) over the FY20 budget of \$831,487. This is an essentially level-funded budget with the exception that the Director of Administrative Services position has been redefined.

The Subcommittee discussion was almost entirely around the BFAC recommendation that three additional supporting positions be added. Ms. Goff provided a memorandum, attached, which described the potential uses of two new senior staff but which did not provide formal guidance as to the potential costs.

Ms. Goff agrees with BFAC that more of her attention should be paid to budget monitoring (revenue vs. expense) and less to working on warrant articles. A new analyst could help with performance metrics, data entry that Mr. Cassanova-Davis currently performs, analysis for warrant articles, etc., allowing Ms. Goff and Mr. Cassanova-Davis to focus on more strategic items as per the BFAC recommendations.

The Subcommittee was hesitant to formally recommend the additional staffing until more details could be provided by the Select Board, but as we agree with the BFAC recommendations, we asked Ms. Goff to provide a plan, including a recommended salary range and a job description for the budget review with the full Advisory Committee. The

Subcommittee speculated that it might make sense to phase in these analysts over two budget cycles; obviously this is a matter for the full Advisory Committee to discuss.

By a vote of 2-0-0 the Subcommittee recommends FAVORABLE ACTION on the Select Board budget request of \$829,576 and furthermore recommends that the administration present the full Advisory Committee with a proposal (including a job specification) to add an additional senior administrative position in FY21 with the expectation that a similar position will be added in the subsequent budget cycle.

## **DRAFT COMMENTS ON RESOURCES TO IMPLEMENT BFAC RECOMMENDATIONS**

BFAC has made significant recommendations in the areas of financial planning, management and control. It has identified improvements in virtually all financial and budgetary processes of the Town and has recommended more advanced analyses of programs, capital projects and proposals for legislative action by Town Meeting. We acknowledge the input of the Town Administrator that current resources are insufficient to meet these increased demands.

Currently, the Town's operating and capital budget development is managed within the Town Administrator's office. The Town Administrator employs a Deputy Town Administrator and an Assistant Town Administrator as the professional staff within the department. While both of these management positions have strong budget experience and possess the analytical skills and expertise necessary to implement the recommendations of BFAC, these positions are not exclusively dedicated to budgeting and financial management. The Town Administrator relies upon this management staff to assist him with all responsibilities of the office including, but not limited to, preparing for and following up on weekly Select Board meetings, producing the Town's Annual Report, managing the Town Meeting process including production of the Warrant and the Combined Reports document, supporting the collective bargaining process, Freedom of Information requests, ad hoc committee support, communications and customer service and other timely projects (including for the past several years devoting substantial resources to school facility expansion). The Finance Director supports the budget process, but this position is primarily charged with management and supervision of multiple line financial functions such as tax and revenue collection, accounts payable, investment of the Town's financial assets, accounting and reporting of financial transactions, assessment and billing of property taxes, procurement of goods and services and payroll/benefit payments.

In order to implement the recommendations of BFAC, the Town Administrator asserts that additional resources are necessary including personnel, consulting, and more robust analytical tools. Specifically, the Town Administrator believes that;

Two (2) additional management/budget analysts are necessary for long-term operating budget projections, capital budget planning, performance measurement and program evaluation, financial analysis of departmental budget requests and proposals for legislative action by Town Meeting, and the development and implementation of Financial Improvement Plans (FIP's) designed to address the Town's structural budget gap.

Additional consulting is necessary to produce more detailed evaluation of the Town's capital assets in order to make informed and objective decisions to replace, maintain or expand such assets. Plans similar to the Town's Pavement Management Program which produces a numerical grade for existing conditions and produces various scenarios for capital improvements should be performed on other assets including municipal buildings and park facilities.

More robust and modern technology solutions are needed to produce coordinated and effective financial data and reports that help inform decision makers and the public. It should be noted that the Town has already begun to use new budgeting software in the development of the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget.

The specific nature of these resources requires more analysis and thought, including a review of best practices in other similarly sized municipalities. Finally, the organization and supervision of these resources, especially personnel, will require some fundamental review of current roles and responsibilities.