

Final Minutes February 3, 2021 Meeting General Government Subcommittee Town Clerk and Board of Registrar's Preliminary 2022 Budgets

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM by Phil Rooney Chair of the subcommittee. Diane Packer was present to detail the 2022 Budget Town Clerk and Registrar Budget information.

Members present were Bill Grome, and Chris Resmini. Absent was Jerry Pierce. Davis Coffey, and Julian LeFluer.

Diane had previously responded to questions submitted to her prior to the meeting and they are detailed below. At 7:07 Diane began her presentation by providing an overview to his responses.

Response to FINCOM Questionnaire

1. Please briefly describe how the Covid pandemic has changed the way you have managed your workforce and changed your overhead spending during 2021

The 2021 Town election will be the 4th election that we have managed and run during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Town Clerk's office has been down 1 staff person since mid-October as someone is out on medical leave. That has put an enormous strain on the rest of the staff. The presidential election was the largest turnout that we have had for any election in the past 12 years. Adding to that was vote by mail and in person early voting. Presidential election years are always difficult and require extra staff/help as well as additional resources, however this year was compounded by the pandemic and the closure of the building. We were very fortunate to have had many extraordinary people who were able to help. Again, the process of mailing out ballots was more difficult than expected as the volunteers and staff had to be social distanced. We were able to use many of the meeting rooms to accomplish this as there were no meetings and the building was otherwise closed to the public. Just to understand we mailed out over 16,000 ballots for the 2020 Presidential election.

A secondary effect for the Town Clerk's office is that we are making appointments for customers to complete services for which they would just walk in and complete in person. We are asking customers to do as much as possible on-line as well as other contactless options. This has increased the time and cost (postage, stationary etc) of processing daily requests.

Town Meeting was held remotely in the Spring, Fall and for the Special. Virtual meetings are considerably harder to manage and to complete the record of TM. The Clerk was unable to attend in person during the Fall and the Special (10 sessions) because of the requirements and obligations of the elections.

2. The Preliminary 2022 Budget submitted for our review - have you actively participated in the preparation of the salary and overhead spending information? Do you have concerns that

the budget submitted does not reflect your needs for 2022? If yes, please detail those needs and why you are concerned.

Yes and I do not have any concerns regarding the needs.

3. In 2021 what has been the biggest challenge for your department with respect to staffing or spending? Please detail why.

Presidential elections are always challenging and this year was even more difficult because of Covid-19 restrictions and changes in election law to accommodate the pandemic. It was an enormous effort which required the help of many volunteers and poll workers. This included mailing out ballots, processing them when they are returned, handling in-person early voting and processing ballots on Election Day. In addition, before the end of FY 21 there will have been 4 virtual Town Meetings (including one which would have been postponed from April to July).

4. In 2021 have you experienced staffing reductions due to retirement or resignations? Were you able to fill those vacancies? If no, are they provided for in the 2022 Budget? If no, why not?

In October 2020 we had a staff member go out on indefinite medical leave about 3 weeks before the presidential election. At that time we had a volunteer offer to help out. She came in every day- all day through the election. This volunteer chose not to get paid but rather donated all of the hours to the property tax work program for seniors who were unable to work as a result of the pandemic or departments which were not able to accommodate those "volunteers". Since then we have hired someone part-time to help with the clerical responsibilities. We will replace the employee if they do not come back but we are currently waiting for the situation to resolve.

5. The 2022 Budget contains an addition to staff. Please provide a brief summary of what has changed in daily operations that now requires the addition. A brief narrative of responsibilities this individual will perform and an understanding of how these services were provided before this addition.

The addition to the staff is an assistant Town Clerk. The office has become increasingly busy with a number of mandates from the State. I am working on a job description to bring to the personnel board. It is likely that there will be 2 retirements in the office within the next year and it is important to start succession planning. Some but not all of the responsibilities will include maintaining the clerk's web page, continuing and improving the process of maintaining the Charter and by-laws. The person in this position will also be responsible for making sure meeting minutes are posted in a timely fashion, for those (many) committee's without a paid staff person. This person will be able to help with Town Meeting and election requirements. There is little doubt that mail in voting is going to continue as an option for voters. Over the next year the Town will have to go through a redistricting process as well. The Assistant will be able to complete projects related to indexing and maintaining vital records and other permanent records.

6. Please provide to us context for Town Clerk by category of overhead spending for 2022 and personnel dollar increases of more than 3% versus 2021. (Salaries Management, Salaries Operational, Salaries Operational O/T, and Travel)

The increase 74% increase in management salaries is related to an addition of an Assistant Town Clerk position. In terms of increase in operational salaries- the number in the book for FY 21 was incorrect and that operational salary line requested in FY 22 is flat compared to FY 21. The request in overtime is decreased as it was increased for the presidential election.

7. The reductions in the Registrars budget, are they all directly associated with reduction in number of elections?

Yes

Diane provided the following additional clarifications and information.

- Covid 19 required the department to adopt new processes and procedures for election activities. Some of these changes were extensive with respect to mail in ballot processing. It took more time to coordinate and count mail in ballots. This added to election staff. Mail in ballots had to be recorded prior to mailing, labels applied, and collated v for precincts. The ballots had to be mailed. When returned, they had to be kept separate, logged in, and treated as an absentee ballot until counted.
- The upcoming March election will be impacted by Covid
- The Registrars Budget is solely related to number of elections.
- The staff addition for an Assistant Town Clerk is a recognition of the increase in tasks performed by the Town Clerk. These increases are the result of new legislation as well as changes to existing requirements that result in more complexity. The assistant will help with respect to succession planning.
- Due to the indefinite medical leave of one of the staff, the part time help to assist with clerical responsibilities is a temp position. They work less than 20 hours per week. When employee returns, the temp will not be required.

Diane addressed budget spending changes as follows;

- The 2021 information presented for Salaries Operational Staff Town Clerk was in error. It should have be a figure of \$161,765. The 2022 Budget is flat vs. 2021.
- The reduction in Travel for the Town Clerk department reflects the impact of Covid. Unable to attend conferences (they are cancelled)
- The reductions for Registrar spending budgets related to Postage, Salaries OT, Operational Staff and Food are directly related to the reduced number of elections.
- The reduction of Registrar spending for Salaries Other is related to time spent recording minutes for Town Meetings. These costs are directly related to number of meetings and nights spent to complete meetings.
- There was an error in the amount presented for Salaries Management for Registrar Budget. Diane will follow up and correct number. She believes it should be flat versus 2021.

Diane completed her discussion at 7:35.

DRAFT