

**Final Minutes February 8, 2021 Finance Subcommittee Meeting
Discussion with Susan Ramsey Community Services Administration & Council on
Aging (COA) Preliminary 2022 Budgets**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by Phil Rooney Chair of the subcommittee

Members present were Bill Grome, Chris Resmini. Absent were Jerry Pierce, David Coffey and Julian LaFluer.

Susan had previously responded to questions submitted to her prior to the meeting and they are detailed below. At 7:10 Susan began the meeting by providing an overview to her responses.

FinCom Questionnaire Responses

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 Facilities Department manages Overhead expense for the Community Senior Center. The building closed to the public March – June and opened by appointment only July to present resulting in a reduced reliance on heating/cooling, electrical & water and decrease demand on disposables such as paper goods, cleaning supplies etc.

General Fund Personnel expense – one position (CSC Administration – Special Assistant to the Director) was impacted during COVID-19. The position coordinated the CSC rental program & special projects. The rental program ended March 2020 and the employee reassigned to a department in need of support. The employee resigned in July 2020. The rental program at the CSC is expected to resume in FY22. The position is included in the FY22 CSC Administrative budget.

The Council on Aging decreased its work force (2 part-time receptionists & 1 part-time driver) due to a shift in service delivery. The 3 positions are not funded by the General Fund.

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.

The Finance Department prepares salary/tax/fringe benefit information and the Facilities Department accounts for overhead items in its budget planning. I did meet with the Finance Department to review the CSC budget and personnel.

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

Access to technology (laptops and remote access to office phones to place outgoing calls) was the biggest challenge facing the department during March – June. Laptops were not available for each staff member, and access to office phones unavailable. The IT Department responded quickly to the CSC's request for additional equipment and tech support. To date the IT Department has provided all resources needed for staff to work from home. Three staff members covered the CSC building daily from March through June 30. On July 1 all staffed returned to the CSC with the exception of two part-time staff who continue to work remotely.

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?

One resignation in FY21 (July 2020). The position was not filled as the job responsibilities are not needed until FY 22 – the anticipated return of the rental program at the CSC. The position is in the FY22 budget.

5. The 2022 Budget for Council on Aging contains an addition to staff. Please provide a brief summary of what has changed in daily operations that now requires this addition.

An additional Social Work position received approval at the Annual Fall Town Meeting FY2020 to address the emerging needs of children, families and adults resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. (Incidents of food insecurity, financial hardships, shelter needs, mental health stressors, caregiving stressors and crisis situations.)

6. Please be prepared to provide context by category of overhead spending for 2022 and personnel dollar increases or decreases of more than 3% versus 2021.

The Human Services Personnel line increased by 50,000 as a result of the AFTM FY20 as noted above.

The COA Travel in/out of State line increased by \$1,500 to accommodate professional development funding for the divisions 3 social work positions.

Susan provided the following additional clarifications and information.

- All departments were able to maintain a high level of service during the Covid crisis. The departments adapted their service models that introduced new practices and caused increases in steps required to meet client needs. These new practices will be detailed in each department's minutes.
- Susan detailed the following with respect to the Community Services Administration and Council on Aging Budgets.
 - The Council on Aging (COA) is operating on an appointment only basis. This is working effectively.
 - The COA launched an online newsletter and has been successful in providing information to individuals.
 - The COA secured grants for transportation services to seniors over 60 using cabs. Cabs offer more protection versus bus transportation during Covid. As

mentioned in question answers senior transportation services by Senior Center were suspended due to Covid.

- The biggest impact senior are experiencing is the loss of social contact. To alleviate this impact, the center staff have instituted pop-in visits to seniors. They visit a senior or facility and conduct Covid compliant visits. They may also call a senior on the phone to chat.
 - The Fall Town Meeting approved the addition of a social worker to the budget. This new position will require a higher skill set to meet new demands for services. They will also supervise the existing two social workers.
 - Housing affordability continues to be a growing issues for seniors. The cost of living (rents/purchasing/taxes) is ever increasing. The COA continues to advise seniors concerning abatement programs. There is a new Property Staff Exception Committee studying new benefits for seniors. One item being studied is accessory apartments for seniors (allowing adult children to share residences with the senior). There are approximately 7,000 people over 60 years of age. This is more people than under 18 years of age.
- The Community Services Administration 2022 Preliminary Budget is flat.
 - The COA has been assisting the Board of Health using Senior Center Staff in administrative functions for Covid activities.
 - The significant increases and decreases to the Council on Aging 2022 Preliminary Budget are as follows.
 - Human Services Salaries are increasing by 21.9% to staff the new social worker position approved by Town Meeting.
 - Dues & Memberships are increasing by 61.4% to meet costs for updating staff credentials/licenses and fund memberships for new social worker.
 - There are no dollars for Consulting Services in the 2022 Preliminary Budget because in past years dollars were budgeted and never spent.

Susan concluded her part of the presentation and answering related questions at 7:25.