

**Final Minutes January 26, 2021 Finance Subcommittee Meeting
Discussion with Karen Partanen Preliminary 2022 Budget
Recreation & Parks**

Karen began her presentation at 7:45. Karen Partanen had previously responded to questions submitted to her prior to the meeting and they are detailed below. She provided an overview to her responses.

Present at meeting were Chris Resmini, David Coffey, and Bill Grome. Absent was Jerry Pierce.

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

COVID required a significant amount of my time to be spent leading staff in a direction that they were not familiar with. My department exists to offer face-to-face programming to our community so we had to do an immediate 180 in order to engage the community virtually. While making this change I continued to offer our services to other departments who may have needed assistance in providing the immediate essential services to our residents. We were able to provide assistance to the collector's office for a period of time to assist with the phone calls. Majority of my budget is in salaries so overhead spending was reduced in items such as training and program supplies but fortunately, salaries stayed constant.

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, I actively participated in the preparation. With the new initiative of the teen center staff support and DPW's initiative of another position, which can assist with playgrounds, yes, my budget meets my needs at this time

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

Majority of what my department offers to our community is supported through program revenue. "Typically", Full time staff does all the program planning and hiring of part time staff to execute programs through revenue raised. Since the pandemic, program revenue was drastically reduced

and Full Time Staff needed to program and execute themselves...which would often leave gaps in offerings.

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?**

N/A

5. **The 2022 Budget contains a significant addition of dollars for Operational Staff. Please provide a brief summary of what has changed in daily operations that now requires these additional dollars. Dues and Memberships budget has increased significantly versus the prior year budget. Why is this increase necessary?**

Operational Staff increase is the new initiative for Teen Center Staff. This initiative was in the FY21 budget but was eliminated due to the pandemic. This program is critical to our community in order to offer an avenue for our youth to be involved in something, who are otherwise disengaged due to various reasons (not interested in sports, aren't involved in school groups...) Our center gives them an outlet to hang out with other kids rather than being home alone or getting involved in undesirable activities on their own.

Dues and Memberships increase is \$1,500 for 3 movie licenses so we are able to show free outdoor movies to our community and an additional \$438 to cover the cost of the video monitoring of Camp Arrowhead.

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

Will do, I am prepared (see question 5)

7. **Last year we were informed by you about the deterioration of the physical structure for Parks and Recreation. Please update us concerning the current status.**

These concerns still exist although; I am pleased and optimistic now that capital funding was approved in the spring at the Town Meeting for a Space and Building Needs Analysis, which is to include the Cole Center.

Karen provided the following additional clarifications and information.

- The recreation staff came in to assist tax collector's office to answer phones and assist in resolving questions from taxpayers.
- As a result of Covid, the department developed new outside activities such as Family Field Days held on Cole Field with appropriate spacing. The event was a success and was funded by sponsorships.
- New virtual activities were created to meet children's needs. These activities included fitness classes, story time, and drawing/coloring.
- The staff visited special needs people to do outdoor curbside activities with them.
- The department has funds for pop-up drive in movies. Finding suitable locations for proper Covid spacing creates challenges to holding these events.
- The department has a Memorandum of Understanding that details Camp Arrowhead responsibilities. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation must approve any maintenance performed at the camp. The approval process at times makes maintenance activity by our resources delayed.
- Karen informed us the increase in costs for Dug Pond refers to renewal of a three year treatment service contract that had increase built into the contract.
- Karen stated the increases for operating supplies is related to the addition of a document control system.
- Karen stated the increases in Technical Staff costs were related to merit increases.
- Karen stated the increase in operational staff is due to three part time employees.

Karen concluded her presentation and answering questions at 8:15.