



Natick Finance Committee

Pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 3 of the Town of Natick By-Laws, I attest that the attached copy is the approved copy of the minutes for the following Meeting:

Town of Natick Finance Committee

DPW Subcommittee

Meeting Date: February 3, 2021

The minutes were approved through the following action:

Motion: XXXX

Made by: xxxx

Seconded by: xxxx

Vote: x – x – x

Date: <date>, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Evans

Clerk

Natick Finance Committee

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MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bruce Evans, Finance Committee
Dirk Coburn, Finance Committee
Julien LaFleur, Finance Committee
Mike Linehan, Finance Committee
Cathy Coughlin, Finance Committee
Jeremy Marsette, Director of Public Works
Tony Comeau, Supervisor Water and Sewer
Art Goodhind, Supervisor Land Facilities & Natural Resources
Tom Hladick, Supervisor Highway and Sanitation Deputy Director
Kenneth Fisher, Supervisor Equipment and Maintenance Division
William McDowell, Town Engineer
Bob Rooney, Interim Town Administrator
Abdul Rauf, Finance Department

AGENDA:

Citizens' Concerns
DPW Strategic Overview
Discussion with the Director of Public Works and Division Supervisors on Public Works budget items for 2021 Spring Annual Town Meeting including but not limited to:
Administration
Municipal Energy
Engineering
Equipment Maintenance
Highway & Sanitation
Land, Facilities & Natural Resources
Water & Sewer
Adjourn

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Bruce Evans

Public Comments

Mr. David Fishman asked what plans the town might have to make sure there are funds available for the improvement of the intersection of Speen Street and Route 135.

Mr. Marsette said that the town has done safety studies of that intersection and there are some mitigation funds from private development to fund some improvements there. Those funds were earmarked for a right turn lane going northbound on Speen Street from Route 135. However, we've also identified that intersection as a high hazard intersection, the listing that Mass DOT keeps which

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makes it eligible for a separate pool of funding through the Boston area (the TIP (Transportation Improvement Plan) MPO. Mr. Marsette said he has been chatting with Mr. Errickson to utilize those mitigation funds to advance design so that we can have enough information to bring it forward to get state funding for intersection improvements. The Speen St. and Mill St. intersections with Route 135 would together be eligible for that that TIP funding. So the town would be responsible for the design and the state or federal government would fund the construction. It's a little ways out but we have an identified plan to move forward.

Mr. Linehan moved to open the meeting, seconded by Mr. LaFleur, voted 4 – 0 – 0

Mr. Linehan = yes

Mr. LaFleur = yes

Mr. Coburn = yes

Mr. Evans = yes

Mr. Marsette presented an overview of the DPW budget ([presentation link](#))

Mr. Marsette said this is a very comprehensive presentation and would not review each slide, but wanted to make it available for all the members of the Committee, especially newer members, to get a good overview and flavor of DPW's responsibilities, its operations and its challenges.

It includes detailed information for your reference for committee members to drill down into the budget and look at the metrics that we used to measure our performance. DPW is comprised of seven different divisions and has 85 employees that are funded within these budgets.

Administrative division

Municipal Energy division (no staff) supports the municipal energy budget and carries all of the expenses for town buildings, fuel, traffic signals and streetlights.

Engineering division.

Equipment Maintenance division, which compared to our peers is a very broad scope of services and that we support the police and fire department vehicles and equipment and maintain all the town's equipment and vehicles.

Highway and Sanitation division

Water and Sewer division

Land Facilities and Natural Resources Division does all of the landscaping on municipal buildings, sports athletic fields, landscaping around school buildings, the Cochituate Rail Trail, parks, and playgrounds.

Staffing

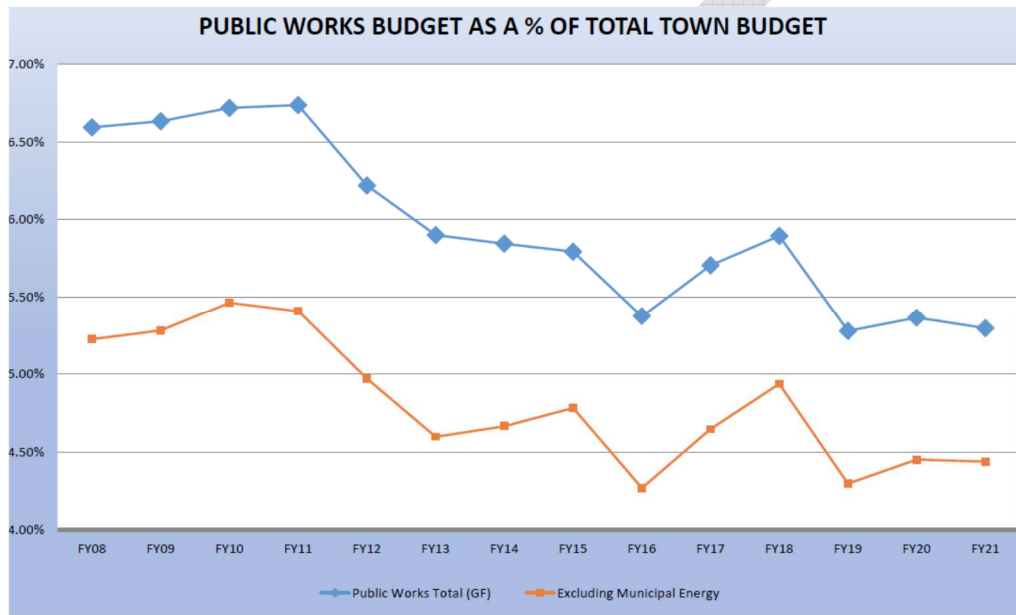
DPW has challenges with our staffing and have a handful of vacant positions. One of the bright spots here is that we're fully staffed in the equipment maintenance garage which had been a chronic spot where we we'd have people come and go. We did an analysis that indicated that, in the past six years, that group hadn't been fully staffed for more than six consecutive months.

One initiative that's funded in the proposed Town Administrator's FY22 budget is a craftsman position to supplement the LFNR division and to focus on playground maintenance and all the added responsibilities that they've seen. You will recall at the Fall Town Meeting, two skilled laborers were

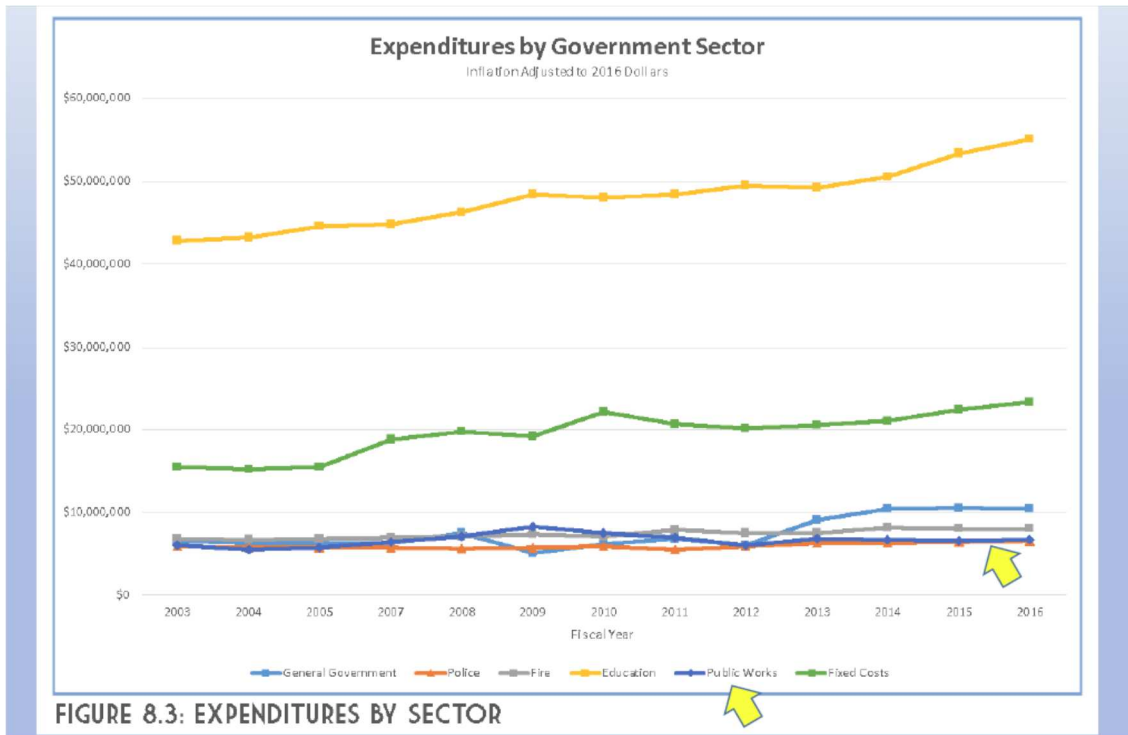
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added to the FY21 budget. We're actively seeking to fill those positions and the challenge we have there is that there's a lot of internal lateral moves that happen. So even though the skilled labor position is an entry level position, some folks don't want to be on the back of a trash truck any more, so they apply and if they're eligible, and meet the CBA requirements, they can transfer. Naturally, that then puts a little crimp on our sanitation staffing or wherever else they're coming from internally. We are required to allow internal candidates to respond if they are interested prior to advertising the job outside so those may be lateral moves or from somewhere else in town, so there is a little delay there as we staff up these positions. So, we're currently down one sanitation driver and a heavy equipment operator who both left town employment.

Public Works as a percentage of Municipal Budget



Since FY08, DPW represents a smaller piece of the budget each year, hovering between 5% and 4.5% when you exclude municipal energy (the orange line in the chart above).



The Natick 2030+ Existing Conditions report shows that the biggest piece of the budget is education, with a steeper slope than municipal departments and Public works is or the deeper blue line shown by the yellow arrow.

DPW Challenges

- COVID-19 Pandemic Continuity of Operations – challenges maintaining core services during the pandemic.
- Staffing Resources:
 - LFNR, Assistant Director, Asset Manager, Administrative Assistant-Highway & Sanitation, Stormwater Engineer
 - Water Operators/Equipment Maintenance Division Water Division turnover. Training/Staff Retention.
- Work Order/Asset Management/Time Tracking
- Regulatory Requirements
- US EPA Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Stormwater Permit Implementation
- MassDEP Poly-fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Drinking Water Standard 2021
- Parks/Landscape Maintenance - project timing for Schools, Cochituate Rail Trail, Dog Park and Park Renovations, playgrounds.
- MGL Chapter 149 Section 6 ½ - Municipal Compliance with OSHA
- Aging Infrastructure – roads (public and private), water/sewer utilities
- COVID-19 Pandemic Continuity of Operations – challenges maintaining core services during the pandemic.

DEPARTMENTAL CHALLENGES

REGULATORY REQUIREMENT

- Implement requirements of new MS4 Stormwater Management Permit – Effective July 2018 **(REG)**
- MassDEP PFAS (Polyfluoroalkyl Substances) Standard - Effective January 2021 **(REG, RISK)**
- Stormwater Management Oversight Committee **(REG)**
- Water/Sewer System Resiliency /Redundancy **(RISK, REG)**
- Department Safety Program **(RISK,REG, BMP)**
- FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE/FINANCIAL BENEFIT

- Improve customer service leveraging technology Online Pay, Social Media, MyWaste, Water Smart **(BMP, FIN)**
- Continue Benchmarking against peers **(BMP)**
- Pursue alternative fuel vehicles **(FIN)**
- ASE / EVT Certified Technicians **(FIN)**
- Engineering Document/Plan Management **(BMP)**
- Update and Reorganize Recycling Center **(BMP)**
- Pilot Program for Co-collection **(FIN)**
- Improve marketing and sale of recyclables **(FIN)**
- Complete Streets Implementation **(BMP)**
- Debris Management Plan - Emergency Response **(BMP)**
- Vegetation Management Plan **(BMP)**
- Complimentary Park/Field Improvements **(FIN)**
- Electronic Annual Water Quality Report **(FIN)**

RISK BY DEFERRED ACTION

- Implement Department wide Equipment Maintenance, Service Call and Work Order system **(BMP, RISK)**
- Implement Staffing Plan **(RISK)**
- Update Department Policies and Procedures **(BMP, RISK)**
- Develop and Administrate Department Safety Manual **(BMP, RISK)**
- Inventory Control System **(RISK)**
- Update EMD Shop Equipment **(RISK)**
- Inspection/Permitting Improvements **(BMP, RISK)**
- Roadway/Sidewalk Asset Management Plan **(BMP, RISK, FIN)**
- Town-wide Tree Inventory and Replacement **(RISK)**
- Annual Water Main Flushing Program **(RISK)**
- Facility Security **(RISK)**

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- Update Water/Sewer Asset Management Plans - 20 Yr Asset Management Plan (**BMP, RISK, FIN**)
- Update Water and Sewer Regulations (**BMP, RISK**)

Legend:

REG – Regulatory Requirement

RISK – Risk by deferred action

BMP – Best Management Practice

FIN – Possible financial benefit

Mr. Marsette said there is an unfunded federal mandate for a drug and alcohol clearinghouse through the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration that puts an increased burden on DPW admin staff and the town HR Department. The program is intended to help states communicate better so that when commercial drivers get a violation, get in an accident, or try to get a license after losing their license in another state this database is available so that there's a better communication flow between the states.

DPW has a comprehensive well-thought-out continuity of operations plan that we put together specifically to address COVID a year ago. It allowed us to look at our core functions – which were “Must-dos” – keeping clean drinking water flowing, curbside sanitation, ensuring sewer was flowing, etc. We had to adjust some operations last spring such as deferring bulk curbside bulk collections and curbside yard waste collections. And, for a time last spring, DPW had creative splits staffing, so that we didn't lose a whole section of employees. Fortunately, we were able to phase all employees back in the summer by changing our office spaces, work environments, and policies such as the number of people who can be in a vehicle, face coverings, and cleaning vehicles on a regular basis. With the exception of late in the fall, we did we have some staffing updates and staffing on water treatment to maintain those operations. Mr. Marsette reports that curb side bulk pickup is back and they were able to fall yard waste collections.

Staffing Resources

- **LFNR Craftsman** – requested to meet increased expectations and to keep pace with repairs to parks fixtures, benches, playgrounds, ensuring compliance with OSHA standards and MGL. This has been an ongoing challenge for DPW to maintain the hardscape at our playgrounds and parks. This person would get certifications and playground safety inspection and do more repairs in-house. As you know, there has been increased utilization of our parks and fields during the pandemic and residents have expectations for the maintenance of these facilities. There also are capital projects nearing completion such as the Cochituate Rail Trail, the dog park and new playgrounds and parks that have recently come on line have stressed the LFNR division. The laborer authorized to be hired at Fall Town Meeting starts to address this requirement.
- **DPW Assistant Director:** As the DPW's responsibilities have increased, the need for an assistant director grows and is needed to assist the DPW Director in conducting day-to-day duties and assist in supervising 83 individuals and seven divisions and to bring Natick's staffing levels to those of comparable surrounding communities. Mr. Marsette said DPW developed a comprehensive safety plan that's, unfortunately, is sitting on a shelf and needs to be implemented. DPW does regular trainings with staff and one of the duties of the Assistant Director would be to implement a very active safety program/.
- **Asset Manager** - support all divisions of the public works department. The asset manager would lead and provide a resource of all public works divisions to help maintain and expand

the use of technologies such as databases, electronic work orders, asset management and more.

- **Administrative Assistant-Highway & Sanitation** - Requested to support the duties of the Highway and Sanitation Division of DPW. As the duties of the department grows, the growing needed for additional help in day-to-day duties, special projects and general support have become a critical need.
- **Stormwater Engineer**- This position will support the Engineering Division of DPW. A significant workload growth is attributable to the Town's EPA issued Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer System (MS4) that regulates the operation and maintenance of the Town's stormwater collection system.
- **Water Operators/Equipment Maintenance Division Water Division turnover. Training/Staff Retention** – There are emerging needs is addressing the water quality requirements (PFAS) so we may need increased staffing or expenses in the Water and Sewer Enterprise Fund to address these issues. If that involves some form of treatment or other, we would likely need additional water treatment plant staff. We have struggled as well with completing our state requirement for backflow inspections - there are thousands of these devices town-wide in private buildings and public buildings and all must be inspected twice per year and is a regular reporting requirement to mess it up. We've also identified the need for possible skilled laborer positions in the Water & Sewer Division.

Of these positions, only the LFNR Craftsman position is funded in the proposed FY22 budget. Detailed descriptions of these positions are in Mr. Marsette's presentation.

EPA MS4 Stormwater Permit

Mr. Marsette noted that DPW is in the midst of determining how to address the challenges of the EPA Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit that's issued to us by the US EPA. This is an ongoing challenge in that each year during this five year permit there are more requirements that the town must follow. This increases the burden placed on Engineering Division staff to ensure compliance. These requirements shift the way we do operations, clean catch basins, the testing, and monitoring water quality and the stormwater outfalls. Coming up shortly is a town-wide phosphorus management plan where DPW has to specify how we'll reduce the amount of phosphorus run-off into the water bodies that are impaired by phosphorus (from streets, town properties and even private properties). And, the PFAS drinking water standard requirement that's on everybody's minds now. Mass EPA announced it this past October and Natick was obligated to start its testing by the end of the first quarter in 2021 (April 2021). However, with our proactive approach to replacing wells, we were replacing one of the wells at Evergreen the north end of town. Before we can bring that new well online, we have to pass the water quality testing including PFAS DPW is providing the public with information on PFAS to help the public understand this and DPW is actively researching alternatives to mitigate PFAS including changing which wells we have online, looking at potential treatment as well as creative ways to operate our water supply. There is a lot more to come over the next several months and we're seeking grants to help fund some engineering work that's required. We've self-funded some engineering work to start this evaluation.

The maintenance and replacement of aging infrastructure – our roadways, water, piping, and replacing those as is a challenge. Despite COVID, all of our planned capital projects for this past year went ahead and we completed a large section of South Main Street, completed work on Washington Avenue, and a number of water and sewer projects without modifications to those timeframes.

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Municipal Energy

- Street Light Management (2,550 lights) - converted to LED lighting a few years back to successfully reduce operating costs.
- Traffic Signal Support and Budgeting (21 Traffic Signals) budget includes the electricity to power them and hiring a certified contractor to help with traffic signal operations. There are complex computers inside and DPW frequently has to outsource the maintenance work or replacement of the computers inside the boxes and cabinets. There's also a new traffic signal on Mill St. that was installed as part of the Kennedy Middle School (KMS) adding to the number of signals requiring maintenance.
- Two buildings and locations were added to the energy budget – the Eliot School in South Natick is coming back into the building inventory and the town had a long-term lease for the Riverbend School that has ended. Now it is fully back (under lease) and under municipal maintenance so that's reflected in the municipal energy budget.
- Monitoring and Tracking Energy Use for all Municipal Facilities (Electricity, Heating Fuel: Natural Gas Diesel/Gasoline Propane)

Engineering Division

Provides engineering support and peer review services for Town Boards, Committees and Departments including

- Construction Inspection and Management
- Capital Project Design and Management
- Stormwater Permit Compliance Management
- Plan and Records Management
- Pavement Management
- Utility Mark Outs
- DPW Permit Management (Street Opening, Water, Sewer, Trench Permits)

Equipment Management Division

- Mechanics and welders who maintain 220 registered vehicles including hybrid cars, cruisers, fire trucks, loaders, sanders, rubbish trucks, plows, sweepers and dump trucks.
- Maintain additional equipment including Bucket Truck, lawn mowers, snow blowers, pumps, light towers and emergency generators (500 total pieces) DPW has backup generators on trailers for our water and sewer infrastructure. The town has over 30 sewer pump station, pump stations and most of which do not have their own backup power, so we have a mobile fleet that is able to go out should that be needed
- Computerized Preventive Maintenance Program
- Vehicle/Equipment Procurement
- Vehicle Insurance Claim Management
- Surplus Property Disposition

Highway and Sanitation

Duties include:

- Roadway Maintenance
- Street Sweeping
- Stormwater Maintenance
- Pavement Markings & Signage

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- Curbside Waste and Recycling:
 - o The PAYT, coupled with the recycling program, has led to a dramatic reduction in the volume of solid waste disposal and that's reflected in a lower overall tipping cost for us to haul it to the Millbury Incinerator. DPW is evaluating the feasibility of moving away from single-stream recycling to <insert reason here>.
 - o the One of the issues that residents have raised recently has been the quality of the "Pay As You Throw" bags and we encourage residents to let us know of any problems (please provide the lot number) so that we can get that information to our vendor to address issues – whether they're defects or manufacturing problems.
- Bulk/Yard Waste Collection
- Monitoring/maintenance of the gas collection system and flaring station at the golf course
- Winter Operations
 - o 10 Sanders Town-Wide (9 zones)
- 55 Pieces of Town Operated Snow Fighting Equipment 25 Pieces of Contracted Equipment (44 Plow Routes)
- Addition of projects nearing completion that will need trash removal Cochituate Rail Trail, KMS, Eliot School, Riverbend School.

LFNR Division Responsibilities include:

- Management of over 165 acres of active parks and play fields (60+ locations) - Irrigation, Mowing, Turf Management, Line Marking
- Maintain Public Shade Trees and Hazard Tree Removal (Town Tree Warden)
- Ongoing projects nearing completion will need to be maintained Cochituate Rail Trail (trash removal only, Friends of Natick Trails are responsible for trail maintenance), KMS, Eliot School and the landscape around that school, plus Riverbend School are being serviced by LFNR.
- Addition of two new parks – East Field, Navy Yard are added to parks that are maintained by LFNR.

Water and sewer division responsibilities include five major sections:

- Water Distribution
- Water Treatment
- Sewer Collection & Pumping
- Metering, Backflows & Data Management
- Capital Improvements

The Division is on call 24 hours per day, 365 days per year

Water Distribution and Treatment

Natick has nearly 200 miles of water mains and about 150 miles of sewer mains, and two reservoirs. From a water production standpoint, Natick has several water treatment facilities that we maintain that provide a local water supply from 10 source wells. All of these facilities are linked to SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition), a computerized system that allows remote monitoring of all of our systems. The sensors in tanks or sensors or flow sensors on pumps can be remotely monitored at the dozens of locations around town to inform us how they're functioning, if the power is down, if there are clogged filters, blockages. This enables us to quickly identify potential problems. It doesn't replace us going out and physically touching each of these locations every work day, which we do, but allows us not to have staff at each of these sites each hour of the day. Twice a year, the town flushes its water mains to ensure hydrant maintenance, water quality, hydraulic

improvements and increased service life. Unfortunately, we were unable to do the spring water main flushing due to COVID restrictions, but were able to do it in the fall.

Sewer Collection and Pumping

Natick has 34 sewer pump stations located throughout the town. Thirty-four pump stations is a higher number than most communities have, but it's a function of our geography and the way that the community was developed. A developer extending a subdivision added a pump station instead of extending a gravity sewer. The town is also geographically divided by Rte. 9, the Mass Pike, the reservoirs, and the Charles River which also contributed to that high number of sewer pump stations. We have an active maintenance program for the sewer collection pipes and actively maintain and replace them to eliminate clean water infiltration into our sewer system. The largest expense in the water and sewer enterprise fund budget is the MWRA sewer assessment. Natick is responsible to get it to the town limits and MWRA takes it from there, conveys it, treats it and charges us \$5.5 million to \$6 million a year to do that. By cleaning and lining our pipes and replacing sewer pipes, we've been able to reduce the amount of flow that goes out of our system. DPW monitors sewer flow at several different locations on a regular basis and those flows are calculated into the MWRA assessment.

Questions from Subcommittee Members

Mr. Linehan asked for clarification on the drug and alcohol monitoring requirement and whether it is required at the department level, rather than at the town HR level. Mr. Marsette said, for many years, the Public Works laborers union was the only union that had a formal requirement for drug and alcohol testing and that was due to the requirement to have a commercial driver's license. So, it's been included in their collective bargaining contract for years now.

Mr. Linehan asked whether the work order system is the same one that the Community and Economic Development department is using for permitting. Mr. Marsette said that platform will be used quite extensively by DPW because our Engineering Division and Water and Sewer Division are closely involved in the building permit and planning board review process – we sign off on building permits and certificates of occupancy. For our own permits (street opening permit, water and sewer connection permits, encumbrance permits), we actively use that software, but that software is mostly for permit management and doesn't really have an asset management function. Mr. Marsette added that DPW has other software programs that we use for asset management, to manage our vehicle fleet, to manage our water and sewer infrastructure and the like. SeeClickFix has an interface with work orders, but it's not that great. SeeClickFix was funded by a grant years ago, and would be part of a separate initiative for DPW to have a unified platform for asset management, all the things that we manage tied into GIS, tracking our inventories and fleet and water sewer pipe infrastructure. And, to have that public facing component, something that would likely replace SeeClickFix.

Mr. Linehan asked what the common sources of PFAS are, what testing was being done at the Evergreen well and what monitoring needs to be done. Mr. Marsette said they were in the fortunate/unfortunate position of being ahead of our peers because they are proactive with replacing our water supply; we had to test that new well, which triggered a new round of sampling of our entire water system. Otherwise, we wouldn't be doing this until April when the new PFAS testing requirement is in place. Doing this in December and January puts us ahead of our peer communities - Wellesley Needham, and others are going to be doing this and they are very likely going to find similar results. Given that we've completed two rounds of sampling (those initial two rounds of sampling were paid for by MassDEP). However, going forward, the quarterly sampling that we would have been obligated to do anyway, regardless of our numbers, is included in our budget.

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Based on our results, we're going to need to do monthly sampling - each of these samples costs \$600 and you have to do them at all the entry points into your system. There's a significant increase we proposed in the Water division budget just to accommodate the quarterly test and, and now we may need to re-visit that for a monthly fee. We still need more data over the course of time to help us come up with some operational changes to reduce PFAS and there are different tiers of solutions that we might do. Our options, short of adding treatment is taking a well offline, or reducing the amount of flow that comes out of it and blending it with one that measures below the contaminant level set by MassDEP so that it goes into the distribution system with a level below the maximum contaminant level. We need to get more data and analysis to figure out what the best course of action is. Over the next couple of weeks, we have one operation that we're going to try and the next round of sampling is in at the end of February and we'll see how that that goes. This is what we've proposed to MassDEP as a starting point and they concur with this approach.

Mr. Evans commended the water and sewer department on the excellent information they have on the town website on this whole issue. It was very well written and the links were superb.

Mr. Linehan asked how Natick's recycling rate compares to other municipalities. Mr. Marsette said Natick's recycling rate is quite high and we are fortunate to have fairly clean (less contamination of non-recyclable material) single-stream recycling according to the company that takes our single-stream recycling. We've done waste audits of what's in our recycling and in our solid waste, with the last one completed 1-2 years ago that helped inform the curbside composting pilot. Our recycling rate is still quite good. Other communities have caught up to us, but haven't been quite as progressive in trying to remove food waste from the solid waste stream. We had had plans to be underway with the second pilot for the removal of food waste from the solid waste stream through co-collection. The idea of co-collection is that, instead of having just one blue bag, you'd have, you'd have four different colored bags - a bag for solid waste, a bag for your food waste, a bag for your paper recycling and a bag for plastic recycling and you would put it all at the curb on the same day. It would be collected in the same vehicle and then brought to a facility and sorted. The benefit is that you're removing food out of your solid waste that will lowering your tipping fee and there is value in the food waste compost that Natick could be compensated for. You're also separating plastics and papers, where some of the paper has higher value compared with the plastics. We had planned to do that pilot and would be well into it right now, if not for COVID. We plan to do this pilot when the time is right after easing of COVID restrictions.

Mr. LaFleur asked what it costs to run and maintain a single traffic light per year. Mr. Marsette said DPW separately monitors the electricity use at each light and energy consumption varies by intersection and some of them have different light bulbs, although most have been converted to LED lights. But the lights are on 7x24 and there are heat elements in the cabinets so things don't freeze in the winter. Further, they use more energy than just the light. They're also using energy in the traffic signal loops that are cut into the pavement, and so forth. The last time I looked the annual cost is \$500-\$600 per traffic light. Cost can quickly increase if we have to call to have something serviced or if a new traffic loop needs to be cut, a bulb all replaced, or the computer inside the cabinet needs troubleshooting. So the energy to operate the light is generally the lower of the costs to operate a traffic light.

Mr. LaFleur said that in walking the nearly completed CRT, he has seen recycling receptacles and asked whether trash receptacles will be placed there as well and how will DPW access those receptacles. Mr. Marsette said the design plans for the project include both recycling and waste receptacles and they are limited to just the lookout or pullout areas. At one point, there were dog waste receptacles in the plan and we asked for those to be removed and have people carry out their

own dog waste as they do on any other street. We won't be able to get a large trash truck on the trail, but will use other smaller vehicles.

Mr. LaFleur asked what the scope of the playground maintenance is for DPW at the various schools. Mr. Marsette said the fiber playground surface (mulch) is actively replaced and the additional LFNR craftsman is focused on maintaining the playground fixtures - the swings, the slides, and the equipment. Mr. Marsette noted that DPW is responsible for the playgrounds as well as the maintenance around the schools (mowing, etc.). This was added to the DPW as part of joint Facilities Management Department that covers the schools and the town.

Mr. LaFleur recapped that MassDEP specified that water needs to be tested where it goes into the distribution system. If multiple wells are feeding a water treatment plant and you're trying to diagnose where this is coming from, do you have to test all the wells and entry points. Mr. Marsette said there are 10 wells and five physical entry points. To comply with the MassDEP regulations, we have to test those five entry points. However, from an operational standpoint, we need to get more testing to test the wells themselves.

Mr. LaFleur noted that DPW is testing out different methods of remediation and you haven't settled on a solution yet, but you said that one of the potential strategies methods might be to close a well. What is the impact of closing a well on the water supply? Mr. Marsette said that the impact of closing a well is one of the things that they are actively determining. There's a safe yield that you can pump out a well before you lower the groundwater table and doing something adverse. The safe yield is an actual tested number of how much you can pump out of a well and there's a permitted or regulatory limit on how much we can pump out of the wells. Elm Bank, one of our well supplies is our most restrictive supply by way of permit on when we can withdraw water. That permit restricts it more than the safe yield would say. So it's a complex issue, in that you've got different sources, different safe yields, different permit requirements, and now a different potential source of contamination that will probably vary over time. So we've got a small snapshot, from one round of testing and conformance sampling and we don't know if this changes seasonally yet, so it's a very small data set that we're working with. And, as time goes on, we'll get a lot more data. From what we've seen thus far, there are certainly some things that we can do in the interim and as we test monthly, we'll see how that translates to compliance. We will be monitoring it monthly because of the levels that we've found and when we are able to mitigate it, we will be able to go back to a quarterly sampling.

Mr. LaFleur asked whether Natick might be better off by going with the getting water from the MWRA to augment our water supply. Mr. Marsette said the PFAS requirement that MassDEP instituted is not a federal drinking water standard, but a state requirement. Massachusetts is one of a small handful of states that have gone forward with this research and the medical impacts are still not fully known yet.

- PFAS is a new testing requirement that Mass DEP requested that all water suppliers (town water suppliers and regional suppliers such as MWRA) test for beginning in April. . This is a new MassDEP requirement that was supposed to take effect in April & Natick took the step to test all wells because they were drilling a new well that they needed to certify & opted to test all town wells. PFAS is a national problem that MassDEP is being proactive in addressing this issue and is one of only a handful of states doing so.
- Natick's water rates are 50% less than our peer communities that get their water supply from the MWRA.
- To cut over to buying water from MWRA, there is a one-time buy-in cost of \$4 million per million gallons purchased. Natick consumes six million gallons per year, so this would be \$24 million.

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Further, the town would need to have a capital project to purchase and install adequately-sized piping from MWRA's aqueducts to Natick's distribution system and go through a Mass EPA (MEPA) permit process. This would involve (possibly, I'm speculating here, digging up roads to make connections to Natick's water supply).

- The DPW Director said that Burlington is an example of a community that moved over to using MWRA and it took them 3-4 years to go through the permitting process and to receive additional flow from the MWRA (Burlington still provides some water locally, so this augments their water supply). Burlington is probably the closest example you can see of a community that's tried to gain entry in the MWRA recently.

- Ultimately, it is an ongoing cost/benefit analysis of whether it is advisable for Natick to continue using our current water system, connecting to MWRA and using their water, or a combination. Note that it's very likely that MWRA will need to address the same PFAS (& other water quality issues) that individual communities will need to address. Reducing or eliminating PFAS is being studied to determine what the most cost-effective way to address this requirement is.

Mr. LaFleur asked if there were any long term challenges around the water sources in Natick. Mr. Marsette said MassDEP is announced that they're going to be revisiting our water withdrawal permits this year (this is being done statewide) through the Water Management Act. Nine of our wells are registered wells so technically are not part of a permitting process. However, Elm Bank is that is permitted through the Water Management Act and each time they update that permit, they try to loop in our registered water supplies. Natick successfully challenged the last permit and we'll see if that holds going forward. My Tony Comeau, Water & Sewer Supervisor said it is 10-year permit with a review at 5-year intervals. Registered wells are grandfathered and that was the whole idea of them since they were in place before the Water Management Act. When the Water Management Act was implemented, they started permitting wells going forward so there's supposed to be a difference between the two, but those lines have become gray. Mr. LaFleur asked whether the Evergreen well would need to be reviewed under the Water Management Act. Mr. Marsette said it is not because it's a replacement of a registered well, but we can bring it online into our system we still have requirements for approval through MassDEP as a public water supplier.

Mr. Coburn noted that before the facilities consolidation, responsibility for playground equipment was fuzzy because funding of construction, upgrades and replacements could come from a number of sources, including fundraising from PTOs. With consolidation, is there a mechanism for community input to constructing, replacing, renovating, or refurbishing playgrounds? Mr. Marsette stated that DPW's focus is everyday maintenance program to ensure that playground equipment is safe for the children and lasts longer. It would not change any potential donations or private efforts that may go into that.

Mr. Coburn asked, with increasing regulation and monitoring and centralized top-down control of our water resources by the state, what are our prospects for keeping substantial local control of the registered water sources. Mr. Marsette said with the understandings that we have from past practice of how we operate our registered wells, and would you know, kind of enter that conversation and do that that way? We are fortunate to have ample supply from our registered wells and don't have to restrict water use, save outside water use restriction in the summer because we have the flexibility and supply in our registered wells. If we have to turn off the Elm Bank supply, which is the permanent supply should we lose some of that flexibility, more frequent water use restrictions may be required.

Mr. Coburn noted that one of the things the DPW subcommittee has discussed over the past few years is the increasing complexity of operations, the increasing complexity of regulatory compliance,

trainings and certifications, standards promulgated and so forth. Does DPW has the management and administrative resources to be on top of all of that? Mr. Marsette said that these needs are reflected in the initiatives that we've put forward in our DPW budget in the last few years. DPW has a department strategic plan (needs to be updated to reflect changes due to COVID), and we have done a lot of comparisons and contrasts and benchmarking with peer communities. Several years ago, Wellesley asked us to partner with them and meet on a monthly basis to review what our departments we do and the resources provided. That discussion helped inform that we do a good job on these things; here are areas where we can improve. Certainly, Wellesley is a different funding situation than Natick, so it's not apples-to-apples, but many of the things that we do are the same. Some of the highlights of the resource comparison, by way of a staffing resource were:

- Natick's Engineering Division and LFNR Division were a fair amount smaller and the duties and scope of service that those two divisions provide was quite similar (the overall number of parks or the overall value of construction projects) was somewhat similar. So that was kind of an interesting tell.
- Natick's Administrative division was smaller given the size and scope of its DPW department. A prior Town Administrator used to call Public Works lean and mean, as a source of pride and we do get a lot done with fewer resources than others. But it begs the question of what we aren't doing that we should be doing

That information informed our strategic plan and budget request to try to address some of those needs. You mentioned the proliferation of licenses - commercial driver's licenses, heavy equipment operators hoisting license, water treatment licenses, professional engineering licenses, certificates for emergency vehicle technician training, etc. All those need to be tracked in some way to make sure that we maintain our licenses. In some cases, DPW employees get a license stipend as part of their collective bargaining agreement to maintain their license, so we need to track this compliance before paying a stipend. There is a lot of effort to track all the services that we supply to residents in an environment with more complicated regulations. Our ability to analyze the data or the capacity to do this work in our interrupt-driven environment is challenging so the requested initiatives reflect what we feel are our pressing needs.

Mr. Coburn asked if there are areas where there is room for improvement or doing something better for operational advantage such as an asset management system. Mr. Marsette said they do use an inventory management system for our garage and maintenance for work orders and so forth. Mr. Marsette noted that it's not so much that DPW lacks the technology, it's a lack of research staff resources to track and maintain the fleet of equipment and vehicles and track replacement parts. This takes a lot of administrative effort that we don't have staff to currently do. We do, however, have a very good handle on the assets with a very complete listing of all the vehicles and equipment of a certain size. When we do a capital replacement, we ensure that it is added to the town's insurance, that they're licensed and have plates, and we have a very formal way to publicly surplus retired vehicles via an online public bidding process that lets us get greater value and contributes to the revolving fund for surplus equipment, rather than trading that equipment in when buying a new vehicle or equipment. Using the inventory and asset management system that we do have, we've made strides to increase automation. Instead of having a paper folder of all the maintenance records for a vehicle, we're entering this into our electronic work order system. There is a lot that the GIS fleet management software can do, but we don't have the staff resources to do all of the things that it could do. One of the budget initiatives is the Asset Manager for the department that would help with maintaining inventories of supplies and equipment.

DRAFT 1

Mr. Evans noted that it's apparent to most of us that DPW has been running a very lean organization over a number of years and delivering a high quality of service, with complexity that keeps growing exponentially. Regarding the staffing needs, you spoke of several tiers of needs - immediate, time-sensitive, and less time-sensitive. When we get harder overall budget numbers from Town Administration there may be money available to fund one or more of these positions so please send us a priority list of your requested initiatives.

Mr. Evans asked where the town stands with MS4 permit compliance. Mr. Marsette said they are in compliance with our stormwater permit. However, each year, EPA adds requirements. One of the big ones coming up shortly is the phosphorus management plan that touches on many different things and even touches on private households on usage of fertilizers that include phosphorus on their properties. We're not using fertilizers with phosphorus on town properties. Each year, there are more burdens and that is why we requested some additional funding for our stormwater consultant to help us with that and we were making headway this winter with our outfall inspections and water quality inspections. The phosphorus management plan, once it's submitted, could actually lead to some requirements for additional capital programs to increase the quality of the water that comes out of our stormwater system, but also the staffing to oversee projects, and the like. We have a pretty good understanding of, of where all of our stormwater systems are; however, it's still a work in progress. Before the new MS4 permit, we were only responsible for roadway drainage. Now, we're responsible for all town, roadways and properties which includes athletic fields, school buildings, and fire stations. All those sites will be required to have Pollution Prevention control plans that need to be drawn up by either staff or consultant. And then regular monthly monitoring is required plans to make sure the stormwater treatment units are cleaned and don't have debris in them and documenting all those inspections. So, we need more resources to help address this issue.

Mr. Evans asked whether there is a phase-in period for MS4 compliance. Mr. Marsette said, in each year of the MS4 permit, the EPA adds requirements. EPA didn't put all of the requirements in year one, but are continually added requirements. We anticipate that some requirements will take more effort and advanced planning and they did place those at the end of the five year permit. We do have to complete the phosphorus compliance by the third year of the permit.

Mr. Evans asked whether DPW is involved in the remediation work at East School. Mr. Marsette said DPW maintains the park, but hasn't been involved in the remediation of that project. I helped oversee the other 21 sites within the community, the existing sites for environmental compliance, and the landfill are good.

Mr. Evans asked whether there may be grants available to help address the PFAS contamination since this is a new requirement from MassDEP. Mr. Marsette said they are very actively looking into that, at a staff level, and our water and sewer consultant is tasked with a number of requests to help with this issue. And, capital, if needed, would more likely be added at Fall Town Meeting. We have applied for grants to help fund \$140,000 worth of engineering studies. If we're unable to get that grant, we've got some means internally to fund that by our regular annual capital appropriations for water. And there is the State Revolving Fund for this activity and indications are that MassDEP is working to get more funding put into the SRF program. That program has been in place for a while and earmarks funds for PFAS treatment and remediation. Those are competitive grants (less) or low interest rate loans (more). We haven't gone after the grants yet because the interest rates have been so low, but if interest rates go high, we will consider applying for the grants. You have to apply for these grants and there are requirements for tracking and monitoring and regular submissions for management of those grants.

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Mr. Linehan moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. LaFleur, voted 5 – 0 – 0.

Mr. Coburn = yes

Ms. Coughlin = yes

Mr. Evans = yes

Mr. Linehan = yes

Mr. LaFleur = yes