



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

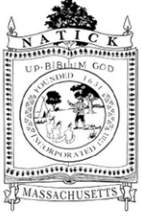
Meeting Date: February 23, 2021

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

DRAFT



TOWN OF NATICK

Meeting Notice

POSTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF M.G.L. CHAPTER 30A, Sections 18-25

Natick Finance Committee

PLACE OF MEETING

Virtual Meeting accessed via Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85844305049>

Meeting ID: 858 4430 5049

Passcode: 409248

One tap mobile

+19292056099,,85844305049# US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

DAY, DATE AND TIME

February 23, 2021 at
7:00 PM

Notice to the Public: 1) Finance Committee meetings may be broadcast/recorded by Natick Pegasus. 2) The meeting is an open public meeting and interested parties can attend the meeting. 3) Those seeking to make public comments (for topics not on the agenda or for specific agenda items) are requested to submit their comments in advance, by 2:00 PM on the day of the meeting, to the Chair: phayes.fincom@natickma.org. Comments will be posted on NovusAgenda and read aloud for the proper agenda item. Please keep comments to 350-400 words. 4) The Chat function on Zoom Conferencing will be disabled.

Posted: February 18, 2021 11:45 AM

MEETING AGENDA

1. Call to Order
 - a. Pledge of Allegiance & Moment of Silence
 - b. Advisement of Pegasus Live Broadcast and Recording for On-Demand Viewing
 - c. Review of Meeting Agenda and Ordering of Items
2. Announcements
3. Public Comments
 - a. [Committee policy & procedures available via this link and also at the meeting location](#)
4. Meeting Minutes
 - a. Review & Approve Meeting Minutes for January 19, 2021 and February 16, 2021
5. Town Administrator's FY2022 Budget - Public Hearing
 - a. January 4 Preliminary Budget update
 - b. [Fire Department](#)

- c. [Police Department](#)
 - d. [Emergency Management](#)
 - e. [Parking Enforcement](#)
 - f. [Public Works](#)
 - g. [Water & Sewer Enterprise Fund](#)
 - h. [Water & Sewer Indirects](#)
 - i. [Affordable Housing Trust](#)
6. Committee and Subcommittee Scheduling and Process
 7. Adjourn

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Linda Wollschlager, Chairperson
Bruce Evans, Clerk
Todd Gillenwater, Vice-Chairman
Dirk Coburn, Member
Jeff DeLuca, Member (arrived 7:05 PM)
Bill Grome, Member
Julien LaFleur, Member (arrived 7:05 PM)
Mike Linehan, Member
Jerry Pierce, Member
Richard Pope, Member
Chris Resmini, Member
Jim Scurlock, Member

MEMBERS ABSENT:

David Coffey, Member
Cathy Coughlin, Member
Phil Rooney, Member

Town Administration

Mr. Bob Rooney, Interim Town Administrator
Mr. John Townsend, Deputy Town Administrator – Finance
Mr. Abdul Rauf, Finance Department
Chief James Hicks, Police Dept.
Mary Lee Watkins, Police Dept.
Lt. Leo Fitzpatrick, Police Dept.
Chief Michael Lentini, Fire Dept.
Mr. Jeremy Marsette, DPW Director
Mr. Ken Fisher, DPW, EMD Supervisor
Mr. Tom Hladick, DPW, Highway & Sanitation Supervisor
Mr. Anthony Comeau, DPW Water & Sewer Supervisor

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Linda Wollschlager, Chairperson.

Announcements - None

Mr. Evans moved to open the public hearing on the Town Administrator's January 4, 2021 Preliminary FY 22 budget, seconded by Mr. Linehan, voted 10 – 0 – 0.

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. Pierce = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = yes	Mr. Resmini = yes
Mr. Grome = yes	Mr. Scurlock = yes
Mr. Linehan = yes	Ms. Wollschlager = yes
Mr. LaFleur = yes	

Fire Department

Presenter: Chief Michael Lentini

On behalf of the General Government subcommittee, Mr. Resmini said they met with Chief Lentini on January 28 and were given a very detailed overview of the challenges the Department faced over the last year and the Fire Department has done an excellent job overcoming these challenges.

Chief Lentini stated that that this past year presented many big challenges. I have three main concerns:

1. Does the department have enough PPE to meet their needs? Although we were prepared to a certain extent, we obtained what we felt was an adequate supply of PPE through purchase, donation and stockpiles from state and local organizations. We have been able to maintain those stocks.
2. How do we respond to the needs of the public in a manner which keeps the department and the public safe? Policies were put in place through efforts from my command staff and dedicated paramedics to ensure all stayed safe. Those policies changed sometimes weekly as new information came in. Considering all the difficulties, we have had only 3 positive test results since the start of the pandemic. The minimum requirement to adequately staff the fire stations is 17 firefighters. The big challenge was how to safely run our operations in the COVID pandemic environment. As you know, firefighters are also EMTs and this places them in situations where COVID transmission is possible. We instituted safety protocols, but when we had the meeting in January, we had three firefighters who tested positive for COVID. As of right now, we've had five total positive cases on firefighters in the department and they are all healthy and back to work. However, we've had a lot of quarantines and a lot of people take sick time due possible exposure to COVID from family members. Overall, we've done very well with the pandemic, dealt very well in our handling the public and the emergency management has been great. We've been able to handle those calls and, thankfully, the transmission of the disease from those calls to firefighters has been minimal (we were able to trace two of the five exposures to two transports that we had with COVID-positive patients). However, the challenge isn't over.
3. How do we conduct our business with the stations closed to the public?

The FY 22 Fire Department budget year is level-funded with the exception of two new initiatives I have proposed.

1. My requests for FY 22 were based on advice from town administration. I have asked for 4 additional firefighter positions for the last 2 budget cycles and been turned down by administration in the past and all departments were advised that the FY 22 budget forecast is bleak. That said, I did ask for 1 firefighter position in FY 22 in the hopes that I could at least 1 firefighter a year over 4 years. If that can be accelerated by a favorable budget outlook, then I would ask to do so. The

reason for the added positions is staffing for the new WNFS and overtime reduction. We would like to run a second ambulance from the WNFS since 40% of all of our calls come from the West Natick area. Staffing is a little difficult at this time, with our minimum staffing levels to be able to run that ambulance from that location. The hiring of additional firefighters is to raise minimum staffing levels from 17 to 18 in order to run that ambulance safely from that location. So hopefully in four years, a, we can get increase our manning up by four firefighters. We've also had quite a challenge in hiring paramedics, we run an Advanced Life Support (ALS) service in Natick, which is a paramedic level service the highest level service that you can do. We have an outstanding EMS system, but finding and hiring paramedics for over the last 2-3 years has been difficult – there are some out there but there difficult to find, particularly given the civil service hiring process. Last year, we suggested a new initiative for a program to train two or more of our basic EMT firefighters to bring them up to the paramedic level. The program is about a year and a half long and the cost of tuition, books, and backfilling their positions when they have classes during their shifts is \$25,000. We've also had quite a few firefighters retire over the last few years and some of them have been paramedics, exacerbating the problem. Our numbers are a little decreased.

One of the biggest challenges during FY 21 has been controlling overtime. This is a challenge every year, but was made more challenging in FY 21 due to vacancies, extended illnesses, necessary surgeries, and the state shutdown in the spring. Chief Lentini reported that three members are on administrative leave due to disciplinary reasons pending investigation by Town Counsel. The state shutdown put the hiring process on hold for almost 4 months, along with the shutdown of the Fire Academy. There was a civil service entrance exam scheduled for last spring, but the entrance exam was postponed until November and a new list will come out March 15, and we can start hiring again off of that list to fill the current seven vacancies, hopefully with firefighters with paramedic certification. The Fire Academy started back up in late August, but class sizes were cut in half – this moved all available classes out by months. Chief Lentini said he hopes to get some of the personnel out or on long-term disability back in the late winter/early spring and is working closely with the Finance team to keep the budget in check. Chief Lentini said currently has 8 vacancies from 6 retirements in 2020, 1 firefighter death, and 1 member who transferred out.

Salary increases are all per the CBA, with the exception of the new firefighter position at an “all-in” increase of approximately \$100,000. I also have 1 Admin under the Personnel Board and 1 Admin under a separate CBA. My expenses are level-funded with the exception of a new initiative request of \$25,000 to allow several firefighters with basic EMT to gain the paramedic level certification. Getting people into the Academy, which was already taking anywhere from 6-9 months now is taking 9-12 months.

Questions from the Committee

Mr. Evans noted in reading through the January 28 meeting minutes, it seems like the department had a perfect storm of difficulty between coping with COVID, firefighter retirements, the closing of the Academy and the halving of the throughput now that it has re-opened. Mr. Evans asked whether those civil service candidates are “Fire Department ready” and have already gone through the Fire Academy. Chief Lentini said it's possible, but unlikely.

Mr. Evans said he thought that would be the answer and said, given that there's a similar problem across the state and that the COVID situation has stabilized has there been any consideration to increasing the throughput of the Academy to its normal level. Chief Lentini said the Academy is staying the course with the class sizes at 18 and running two classes concurrently and there are no indications that they are planning to change that in the immediate future. At some point, they will, but they're probably going to stick with the state guidelines and will only make that change when the state guidelines allow them to do so.

Mr. Evans noted that it's conceivable that by as we get further into FY 22, you'll be able to add people from the Academy and asked whether the staffing in your FY 22 budget is adequate. Chief Lentini said that he has the salaries for the vacant firefighter positions in this budget.

Regarding the ALS paramedic training, Mr. Gillenwater asked whether the town there is any provision made for recouping those costs should the trainee or the new paramedic choose to leave the department within X amount of years. Chief Lentini said there's a clause in the signed letter of agreement with the union covering a 10 year period, so we put safeguards in place for that reason.

Mr. Scurlock said that his recollection was that there was discussion of corporations around the town about donations for equipping the facility (not the building of the facility). Chief Lentini said he is not aware of any agreements to do this.

Mr. Pierce said with the increased population in Natick and the high-rise buildings in West Natick are you concerned that you are adequately staffed. Chief Lentini said he is absolutely concerned –there has been an increase in in population and commercial growth in the West Natick area. One of the main reasons that we pushed for the new WNFS and more staffing is so we can run that second ambulance out of WNFS and possibly add a ladder company operating out of WNFS.

Mr. Linehan noted that operational staff salaries increased 10.5% and asked if that was due to additional staff. Chief Lentini confirmed this.

Mr. Linehan noted that Salaries-management and Salaries-Supervisory go up 4.4% and 5.8%, respectively and asked what the cause of those increases are. Chief Lentini said all the increases on these salary line items are step increases, contractual increases, and certification stipends. Mr. Evans stated than in FY 21, you mentioned that one of the key issues was controlling overtime costs and asked how the department is doing year-to-date and whether you are likely to need a reserve fund transfer near the end of FY 21. Chief Lentini said he fear that we will need to request a reserve fund transfer based on current trends.

Mr. LaFleur asked for clarification on the drivers of the overtime cost during FY 21. Chief Lentini said, at the moment, we have three firefighters on injured in line of duty (ILD) – two are awaiting surgery and the third is healing the injury. I also have four firefighters out with general surgeries and these, unfortunately, have been long term injuries and illnesses. And the thing with the Fire Department is you're not allowed to come back to work until you're 100% vs. a paralegal who twists their ankle who might be out a few days then returned to work. The Fire Department is prohibited from

allowing anybody to come back to work until they're cleared 100% by a doctor. So a twisted ankle could be a two- to three-week injury here whereas it might be a week out from any other position. These long-term illnesses and injuries, again, coupled with the COVID issues, the inability to hire firefighters or the limits of the Fire Academy create manpower shortages. Further, firefighters who are directly exposed to COVID are required to quarantine for 10-14 days until they've tested included to return to work. There have been multiple firefighters who needed to quarantine because they were exposed to a child or a spouse who tested positive for COVID at home that may have had nothing to do with the Fire Department. When you bundle that all together, it's caused quite an increase in overtime this year.

Ms. Wollschlager asked whether the department has had problems staffing up to the minimum levels or are firefighters willing to work the overtime. Chief Lentini said they are able to work at minimum staffing levels. This problem typically occurs around holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas every year – people want to stay home with their family so it's difficult to fill all those shifts, but we have 17 firefighters on every 24 hour period.

Ms. Wollschlager said, given that this budget assumes that the full complement of staff were available and you're not there now, chances are you will not be there on July 1 either, so overtime will continue until the hiring is complete and the firefighters are added to the active roster. Chief Lentini said this won't put the full budget at risk because any additional overtime will be balanced by a lower salary line item since those other positions would remain open. However, Chief Lentini said he will be able to fill those positions in FY 22 if the civil service list comes out on March 15 and we can start to fill those positions. If we can get those recruits into the Academy by September or October, they'll be trained and hopefully on-shift by November. This, coupled with decline in COVID cases, should enable us to be in better shape later in the year and stay within our total budget.

Mr. Evans asked whether it is legal to offer something like a signing bonus to try to attract a civil service applicant to Natick since it's a very competitive market. Chief Lentini said he did not know whether this is ever been done or the legality of it and suggested we ask Town Counsel about the legality. Chief Lentini said the civil service list will come out and we will make calls for those positions – however it's going to be a buyer's market for the firefighters certified as paramedics, so they're going to get calls from numerous departments. If legal, the suggestion of a bonus would be a great idea to attract those candidates to Natick. Chief Lentini said he didn't know if the civil service system allows for it. Mr. Evans asked Ms. Wollschlager to ask that question of Town Counsel.

Mr. Linehan asked what the basis of the increase of purchased services miscellaneous from \$4456.14 in FY 20 to \$29,000. Chief Lentini said this is the addition of \$25,000 for our assessment centers – our promotional exams. Prior to the last CBA, promotions to Lieutenant, Captain, and Deputy Chief were done solely through a written exam and the new CBA delineated that we needed to do a 40% written exam/ 40% Assessment Center and 20% experience. These three positions are anticipated to have to be filled during FY 22 and we're required to do this every two years.

Mr. Evans moved to recommend Favorable Action on the Fire Department FY 22 budget in the amount of \$9,393,587, seconded by Mr. LaFleur, voted 12 – 0 – 0

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes

Mr. DeLuca = yes

Mr. Evans = yes

Mr. Gillenwater = yes

Mr. Linehan = yes

Mr. Pierce = yes

Mr. Pope = yes

Mr. Resmini = yes

Mr. Grome = yes
Mr. LaFleur = yes

Mr. Scurlock = yes
Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Mr. Evans said he appreciated all the hard work Chief Lentini has done in to keep this budget under control and recruit people to the Natick Fire Department.

Mr. LaFleur said that the Fire Department is delivering incredible value for the dollar.

Mr. DeLuca said that we expect a lot from our Fire Department and they deliver every day and noted that the growth in commercial and residential is something that we need to carefully monitor to ensure that the Fire Department budget aligns with that growth. This is the impetus for the WNFS, but it's likely to continue to be an issue that we must address as the town grows.

Mr. Scurlock said he acknowledges the need to hire qualified individuals and getting them trained, anticipates chief that you'll need to purchase equipment, ladders, and trucks, and so on to properly outfit WNFS station.

DPW budget

Mr. Evans said he sent out two sets of minutes. The February 3 minutes covered a lot of the Q&A that we went through with the DPW Director and his staff. The February 10 minutes were our deliberation on the DPW budget. In short, we supported all seven division budgets, the Water & Sewer Enterprise Fund and the Water & Sewer indirects. Mr. Marsette told use that he received the actual MWRA sewer rates that were lower than anticipated which means that the overall budget increases the reduction from -0.74% to -2.55%, as compared with FY 21. Mr. Marsette and Mr. Townsend confirmed that this change would be reflected in the forthcoming March budget update.

DPW Administration is fairly level-funded with the only changes being negotiated salary and step increases. Mr. LaFleur noted to that the salaries- management, salaries-operational and total personnel highlighted in yellow on-screen are higher than the figures in the printed books”

Salaries Management - incorrect was \$144,383; correct is \$146,145

Salaries Operational - incorrect was \$150,644; correct is \$175,489

Total Personnel Service - incorrect was \$326,546; correct is \$353,149

Municipal Energy is increasing for the following reasons:

- 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)

Mr. Marsette said all of the roadway street lighting has been converted to LED there have been many projects within municipal buildings to convert those lighting fixtures to LED so our actual consumption of kilowatt hours is on a downward slope. Mr. Marsette said, in general, we have long-term energy supply contracts so we know we have a supply cost. Those contracts go through this the end of this calendar year (2021) and the other part is the delivery cost and we've included a modest increase in our estimated delivery cost.

Engineering Division

Mr. Evans summarized the engineering division as follows

- The modest increase in Salaries Tech/Professional is the result of collective bargaining agreements - most people in this division are collectively bargained and all, except for one, are at the top step (a project engineer eligible for a step increase). Any CBA for future contracts is accommodated elsewhere in the town's budget. Mr. Marsette stated that the Engineering Division did a superb job in difficult circumstances, enabling the town complete all the planned capital projects (roadways, Water & Sewer). It took a great deal of effort and flexibility to deliver these capital projects during the pandemic – deferring those projects would have increased their costs.
 - A handful of expense lines were reduced based on historical experience
- A \$15,000 increase to the Stormwater Master Plan line item is based on the need for administration of the town's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Permit (MS4). Mr. Marsette said the Engineering Division is responsible for overseeing the management of MS4 and there are additional requirements for either reporting, data gathering studies, sampling at the outfalls. In the FY 22 budget, we have to accommodate the preparation and update of Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans at a number of various town facilities so the consultant needs to help us identify what needs to go into those, what inspections need to be done, and identify the reports that we need to generate on a regular basis to comply with MS4. The town is also required to test all the outfalls with a pipe that stormwater discharges to water bodies, we have to test in dry and wet weather for a number of potential contaminants. And each year, there are more things that we need to do in these tests. Also coming up shortly is this townwide phosphorus management plan that needs to be developed and submitted so we can show that, as a community, we're reducing the amount of phosphorus load to the receiving water bodies from our stormwater system.

This division does a huge amount of work for the CED office, the ZBA and the Planning Board.

Equipment Maintenance Division

- Salaries - everyone is subject to collective bargaining and they are happen to be at the top steps in their jobs
- Increase in uniforms line item is due to new contract for rental uniforms and that the division is fully staffed for the first time in a long time.
 - Vehicle Supplies Parts is up 13.7% - this is due to the multi-year approach that the division is doing to bring the vehicle supplies and parts line into more of an average funding level. They use vehicle records to anticipate repair and maintenance expenses as best they can and to be as predictable possible over budget years, and have been adjusting upwards to achieve this smoothing goal. However, this line item can be overspent due to unforeseen circumstances, especially on critical vehicles, and for this reason they carefully spending in

this budget.

- Mr. Marsette said EM changed their policy on tire replacement for larger vehicles and that led to a spike on vehicle supplies and parts. This policy is to cap the usage of used tires and have a mileage and age limit on putting a retread on a tire (previously used retread tires on the front, now only allowing them on the back).
- This is an extremely well run division that service basically anything that rolls on the road in town - fire trucks, police cruisers, DPW equipment, plus the mechanical items. These guys are tremendous assets to the town and do as much work in-house as they can and out-source only when they have to do so. They also thoroughly catalog everything so that they know when regular maintenance has to be done.
- One of the other things we talked about was surplus equipment purchase. You may recall that there's a revolving fund that DPW maintains for the sale of surplus equipment. Rather than trading in equipment that they're no longer using, they sell it at auction and generally get a greater return on it rather than doing a trade-in and this money goes into the revolving fund and the revolving fund balance is around \$450,000. Over the past at least one or two years, they've been able to purchase capital equipment that would otherwise need to be funded out of the general fund or Capital Stabilization Fund using this revolving fund.

Highway and Sanitation Division

- Salaries - operational staff increases are mandated salary increases and stipends
- Pay as You Throw supplies is increasing and that's reflective of the increased need for those bags and is forecast based on actual usage. If you look at FY 20 and FY 21, the PAYT budget is roughly when age is \$160,000 and FY 22 increases to \$171,000 not a huge increase. Monetary increase.
- Curbside Recycling is level funded also but I wanted to flag that because there is discussion about a co-collection pilot. The goal of this pilot would be to take more things out of the waste cycle so we pay less in tipping fees. The pilot would use the same vehicles and collection process that we currently have. DPW was planning to do this pilot last year, but it was postponed due to COVID. This pilot is much like the compost pilot - a feasibility study to see, on a voluntary basis how many people can do this and limits the number of people who will participate in the pilot and determine whether or not it's too onerous to roll out town-wide. Benefits include getting a higher return on our recycling. Co-collection separates paper and plastic - right now they're collected together, dumped and then separated. But the paper recycling market is more lucrative if you eliminate or reduce the amount of work they have to do to get that paper. The other good recycling news is that we were \$80 a ton to recycle and that amount is down to \$60/ton due to improved market conditions. Mr. Marsette said the current contract is market-based, and the improved market has lowered our cost. Back when it was \$80/ton, it was costing us more to get rid of our recycling than our solid waste and now the market is righting itself and the trends look better going forward. Mr. Marsette said they will keep an eye on this line item to see potential savings in the future and that they conservatively budgeted at the current cost, but it may be higher than the actual cost will be in FY 22.

Land Facilities Natural Resources (LFNR)

Mr. Evans said this is another group that does a great deal and we have finally provided them some assistance. At fall Town Meeting, we added two laborers and in this FY 22 budget, we're adding an LFNR craftsman (\$75,000) who is responsible for maintenance and repairs to parks fixtures, benches, playgrounds and more. This person will have a licensed specialization. Previously, we had to contract this out to somebody with expertise and certification for this work. By hiring this person, we can bring it in-house and this person can not only take care of the existing equipment, but plan future equipment and avoid one of the problems that historically happened. The town would contract to do a thorough playground inspection once a year and if there were a safety problem in one of the parks, the only recourse was to shut down that park. My recollection is the Memorial School playground had to be closed for a period of time before because it was deemed unsafe. And, you know, with COVID a lot of people are using these parks and a lot of kids are climbing on all this equipment, so the need is great. Town Administration agreed to fund this position in their budget, so this accounts for the increase in salaries – operational staff. The other reason for the increase is the addition of the full year's salary for the two skilled laborers who were added in the fall.

LFNR has added maintenance responsibilities, with the opening of two additional parks at East school and Navy Yard and the opening of the Cochituate Rail Trail in FY 22. They're also responsible for looking after landscaping to Kennedy Middle School now that it is open and there is much more landscaping work to do. And later, there'll be an artificial turf field at KMS that they will have to maintain, so they're their workload keeps getting bigger and the increase in manpower is overdue.

Mr. Linehan noted that we were informed that maintenance of artificial turf vs. natural turf is comparable, but that the artificial turf can be utilized more heavily and is less prone to not being used in inclement weather.

Snow and Ice Removal

Snow and ice removal is funded at \$550,000, the same as in FY 21. Mr. Marsette said, over the last 10 years, snow and ice removal averaged \$900,000-\$1 million. The reason that it's budgeted at \$550,000 is to demonstrate \$550,000 is the baseline we expect to go over every year. Under the Municipal Modernization Act, this line item can be deficit-funded meaning that if you exceed this budget, you can get money from anywhere in the budget, as needed from turn-backs or free cash to pay this. So, rather than hold all the money in a line item that we may or may not need, \$550,000 is budgeted for snow and ice removal. And, at the end of the fiscal year (we have done that numerous times as a Finance Committee), we can address this, or we have up to one year to balance this account, so we could also use free cash in the next fiscal year to balance it.

Mr. Marsette introduced his Division Supervisors:

Mr. Tom Hladick, Supervisor highway and sanitation and Deputy Director, DPW

Mr. Tony Comeau, Water and Sewer Division Supervisor

Mr. Ken Fisher, Supervisor, Equipment Maintenance supervisor

Mr. Bill McDowell, Town Engineer.

Mr. Art Goodhind, Supervisor, LFNR (Art could not attend this meeting)

Mr. Marsette said we talked about the challenges we've faced over the past year, as a result of COVID. We implemented a very detailed continuity of operations plan that helped us get through the more difficult times during this pandemic, and maintain our core services to the public:

- Providing safe, clean drinking water
- Making sure wastewater and sanitation was removed from your home
- Curbside collections of solid waste
- Making sure that the roads are passable and clearing ice and snow.

Our staff and division supervisors were creative and as resourceful in addressing these needs. We've stepped up to deliver all the capital projects that we had planned on constructing this past season. Through it all, we had very little service disruption. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the curbside collection of yard waste this past spring, but were able to do it this fall. And, for a period of time, we had to pause on the collection of bulk trash at the curbside. We made a number of operational changes to the way that we would inspect water meters and backflow devices for residences, buildings and different structures.

Mr. Marsette said some of the challenges also in our budget and reflected in the budget going forward:

- Our regulatory requirements. It's been noted the MS4 permit is managed by the Engineering Division. This relatively new permit is much broader than the prior permit, in that the prior PRI permit only covered the roadway drainage; the new permit adds all town properties in their entirety, including school buildings, school parking lots, Town Hall, all Fire Stations, Public Works, yards, parks, playgrounds, and fields.
- There are additional requirements. In each year of this five year permit, more requirements are added for the community to address to stay compliant. And we've accommodated for that it with the engineering services added into the Engineering Division budget, but there's lots of work to come on that.
- One of the big upcoming tasks in the next year is a phosphorus management plan – it's a new requirement in this permit where we will have to look at all of the land use in the entire town and look at through this calculation template that will be provided to us how much phosphorus loading goes into the water bodies throughout town. Any of those that have impairments, we'll have to create a plan of how we're going to reduce the phosphorus load that gets to those sources through the storm water system. So that may be the biggest driver of capital improvements for the stormwater system and may also trigger some operational changes and requirements as we go forward to be compliant with that new requirement.
- We haven't gotten the Water & Sewer Enterprise Fund yet, but new regulations for drinking water that have gone into effect have certainly impacted our budgets going forward and are accommodated. We face the challenge of a growing community with more resources for us to maintain being added to the roster. For instance, the Cochituate Rail Trail, Kennedy Middle School grounds, including the artificial turf field, the dog park, recently included the Eliot school as a playground and landscaping that was previously maintained by the

organization that was leasing that school. Now that it's back in the town's control, DPW is assuming those responsibilities once again.

- All divisions are eligible for collective bargaining agreement so anyone who is eligible for a step increase, that is included in this budget. However, the three bargaining contracts for Clerical Union, the Public Works Laborers Union, the Public Works Supervisors Union, are those contracts are through 2018 (verify date?) and those need to be discussed and updated in the future. Those costs are carried elsewhere in the town's budget.

Questions from the Committee

Mr. Linehan noted that, on p. 116 of the budget, it mentions 2020 highlights – should that be 2021 highlights. Mr. Marsette agreed that this is a typo that will be corrected.

Mr. Linehan noted that there was a significant increase in electricity usage from FY 20 to FY 21 in spite of the incorporation of the LEDs, etc. and asked whether this was due to increased electricity cost, increase usage or both. Mr. Marsette said that what you are seeing is the actual for FY 20 and most town buildings were closed, so we did see a one-time reduction in energy use and a fairly significant amount of budget was turned back. In the FY 21 Appropriated column, those are the appropriations, not the actuals. We would expect now that since all the buildings have been open for most of FY 21 we would be back to more traditional energy usage, although we have added the Eliot School which will increase energy usage because of COVID safety requirements. In building the forecast, we look at the actual usage of kilowatt hours or therms, in the case of natural gas, and we track each building. We can see the trending of kilowatt usage going down because of the energy efficiency projects that the community has undertaken. Also, when we have a supply contract for electricity, it's a known amount so we can do the calculation of how much we're using and how much per kilowatt hour it's going to cost. So we forecast energy usage to continue to decline. However, the cost of electricity, especially on the delivery side, is still increasing and will continue to increase. We've forecasted the best we can for the new WNFS – that's a larger building than the prior fire station, but it's more energy-efficient and will have solar on its roof, so we believe these will cancel each other out and don't anticipate any much higher electricity usage for that building.

Mr. Grome stated that he thought maintenance of the CRT was to be supported by private donations and asked why the town is maintaining it. Ms. Wollschlager noted that there is a warrant article at spring Town Meeting to establish a revolving fund where donations and other monies will go could go to contribute towards the maintenance of the CRT. Mr. Marsette said the DPW plans for the maintenance of any new or updated facility and we sat down several years ago and thought about future additional maintenance needs – the East Field Park, Navy Yard Park, the dog Park and the CRT. There are also parks in South Natick that are in a state of disrepair and not very usable. So, going forward, we've made a dedicated effort to prevent that from happening again. Mr. Grome said he's not going to belabor, but said he hopes at some point, to get a definition on the responsibility as to where the liability for the operation and maintenance of the CRT.

Mr. Evans noted that the new KMS has solar panels not only on its roofs, but over the roofs above the parking lot. Again, although it's a bigger building, it is a LEED-certified building and hopefully the energy and electricity impact of those will be mitigated by the electricity generated by the solar panels.

Mr. DeLuca asked whether the town is responsible for stormwater drainage from unaccepted roads. Mr. Marsette said private unaccepted roads are not part of the stormwater permit of the community. However, they do contribute a fair amount of impervious area that does drain to the town's water bodies so they, like other roadways, can contribute to the impairment of various water bodies. We're not expected to clean the catch basins on unaccepted ways. Many unaccepted ways do not have a defined drainage system and that's one of the issues that many of them have. But if they did have a defined drainage system, you're not obligated to clean them by the stormwater permit. However, we do assist residents on these roadways if there is an emergency blockage.

Mr. DeLuca asked if the unaccepted roads feed into water bodies and increase the phosphorus going into the water bodies, will remediation of that issue be something the town must address or the residents of that unaccepted road that is causing the problem.

Mr. Marsette said this is a great question and we haven't have had to cross that bridge yet, but may have to do so. As we get further into developing the phosphorus management plan, see what the results may be, identify the phosphorus sources, and identify potential improvements to improve water quality may be required, this may enter into the conversation.

Mr. DeLuca asked whether the town uses shielded lights when possible on street lights to lower light pollution. Mr. Marsette said light fixtures in any municipal parking area or school parking area uses light shielding. For private development, the Planning Board considers that as well. The existing streetlights that the town owns do not have shields, but they shine downwards.

Mr. Linehan noted that the stormwater permit has increasingly more difficult requirements and asked how much prior notification the town receives to comply with the new requirements. Mr. Marsette said the five-year permit is prescriptive for each year of what requirements are being added and the deadline for compliance, so we know in advance what the future requirements will be. Our Stormwater consultant in our Engineering Division is planning ahead for that and that's why you see the increased budget request for consulting services to address the phosphorus management plan and the requirements for stormwater pollution prevention plans at all town sites. We will also need to monitor those on a monthly basis according to the requirements of those plans, and the additional testing of all the outfalls as the permit requires us to test the water quality as it discharges our system at the outfalls. The unknown is what some of these testing requirements and phosphorus management plan may trigger in terms of infrastructure improvements.

Mr. Linehan noted that there has been discussion of at the state level of whether solar power users will continue to get a kilowatt-for-kilowatt reduction on their electric bill because it's unfair to people who don't have solar panels because they are paying for the cost of electric transmission whether sourced from solar or otherwise. Mr. Linehan asked whether this may affect the energy costs for the town. Mr. Marsette said he doesn't believe it would affect the town because all of our current solar is under power purchase agreements that lay out the requirements and the payments. Going forward, it's a good question and we'll have to monitor it.

Division	Budget					
Administration	\$429,847					
Municipal Energy	\$1,469,900					
Engineering	\$647,388					
Equipment Maintenance	\$1,185,124					
Highway & Sanitation	\$3,479,155					
LFNR	\$1,450,379					
Snow & Ice	\$550,000					
TOTAL	\$9,211,793					

Figure 1 DPW FY 22 Budget

Division	Budget
DPW Administration	\$429,847
Municipal Energy	\$1,469,900
Engineering	\$647,388
Equipment Maintenance	\$1,185,124
Highway & Sanitation	\$3,479,155
Land Facilities Natural Resources	\$1,450,379
TOTAL	\$9,211,793

Mr. Evans moved to recommend Favorable Action on the DPW FY 22 budget in the amount of \$9,211,793, seconded by Mr. LaFleur, voted 10 – 0 – 0.

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. LaFleur = yes
Mr. DeLuca = yes	Mr. Linehan = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = yes	Mr. Scurlock = yes
Mr. Grome = yes	Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Mr. Evans encouraged member to read the February 3 DPW Subcommittee meeting minutes - there was a lot of good discussion with the DPW department heads and the Director. There is a lot of great information in there concerning their challenges and accomplishments, and needs. Top to bottom, this is a great organization. It's been a pleasure working with them – they are so professional and they take great care of the community.

Mr. LaFleur added that the conversations with Mr. Marsette and the rest of the DPW crew revealed a level of thoroughness and attention to detail that really impressed me and were

candid about their challenges, where things are going well, and where they want to expand or improve.

Mr. Linehan noted that DPW’s responsibility covers some of some of the most critical functions in the town that are totally invisible to most people but they are the kind of things that when they don't go perfectly, it has a huge impact.

Ms. Wollschlager thanked Mr. Marsette, Mr. Comeau, Mr. Fisher, Mr. McDowell, and Mr. Hladick for coming this evening. She noted that it's important for everyone to understand the scope of the regulatory issues and changes that they have had to address and will continue to address in the future. We have heard about how the town had to be nimble and adapt to the COVID environment, and DPW has the added burden of having to adapt to new regulations on a seemingly continuous basis. We're very fortunate that we have an organization that can tackle these challenges and plan to address them, as well as develop a strategic plan. It speaks to the level of professionalism that was mentioned by my colleagues.

Water & Sewer Enterprise Fund

Mr. Evans stated that this is one of the areas of the budget where there's a change from what's in the budget book due to the change in the MWRA sewer assessment. As we said earlier, the actual MWRA sewer rate was lower than projected. For more details on this, see the February 9 DPW Subcommittee minutes that has both the original W&S EF budget and the updated budget. Previously the overall roll-up of the Water & Sewer Enterprise Fund showed an overall reduction of 0.74% and with the actual MWRA sewer rates, the overall budget decreases by 2.55%. In the DPW minutes, I included the original budget that we voted on as well as the new budget provided on February 18 (shown below)

| | | | | | |

Water	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Appropriated	2022 Proposed	2021 vs. 2022	
						\$ (+/-)	%(+/-)
Salaries							
Personnel Services	1,193,057	1,230,404	1,276,455	1,311,645	1,302,799	-8,846	-0.67%
Operating Expenses							
Purchased Services	439,452	419,584	504,925	531,349	537,828	6,479	1.22%
Other Services	16,202	18,173	24,552	24,000	24,000	0	0.00%
Tech./Prof. Services	56,374	60,601	52,991	62,500	114,000	51,500	82.40%
Supplies	69,782	73,813	182,712	74,700	76,700	2,000	2.68%
Other Supplies	243,447	234,283	226,632	245,000	248,000	3,000	1.22%
Other Charges	215,216	189,678	179,968	205,000	205,000	0	0.00%
Total Expenses	1,040,473	996,132	1,171,780	1,142,549	1,205,528	62,979	5.51%
Total Water	2,233,530	2,226,535	2,448,235	2,454,194	2,508,327	54,133	2.21%

Sewer	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Appropriated	2022 Proposed	2021 vs. 2022	
						\$ (+/-)	%(+/-)
Salaries							
Personnel Services	793,453	768,186	800,056	838,850	837,643	-1,207	-0.14%

Operating Expenses							
Purchased Services	109,186	210,250	137,330	266,163	271,355	5,192	1.95%
Other Services	2,100	998	595	2,200	2,200	0	0.00%
Tech./Prof. Services	15,000	12,510	15,062	17,500	17,500	0	0.00%
Supplies	4,000	4,281	5,050	5,000	5,500	500	10.00%
Other Charges	6,189,540	6,089,534	6,180,476	6,505,760	6,505,760	0	0.00%
Total Expenses	6,319,826	6,317,573	6,338,513	6,796,623	6,802,315	5,692	0.08%
Total Sewer	7,113,279	7,085,759	7,138,569	7,635,473	7,639,958	4,485	0.06%

Utility Billing	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Appropriated	2022 Proposed	2021 vs. 2022	
						\$ (+/-)	%(+/-)
Salaries							
Personnel Services	113,485	79,789	92,058	106,497	106,497	0	0.00%
Operating Expenses							
Supplies	89,000	58,322	43,893	89,000	74,000	-15,000	-16.85%
Total Expenses	89,000	58,322	43,893	89,000	74,000	-15,000	-16.85%
Total Utility Billing	202,485	138,110	135,951	195,497	180,497	-15,000	-7.67%

Employee Benefits	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Appropriated	2022 Proposed	2021 vs. 2022	
						\$ (+/-)	%(+/-)
Medicare	30,554	27,464	28,611	32,726	32,581	-145	-0.44%
Insurance Group Health/Life	433,796	386,564	416,855	424,116	445,322	21,206	5.00%
LIUNA Pension	75,658	80,556	83,014	87,399	101,533	14,134	16.17%
Funding Schedule	296,128	315,114	337,172	383,604	383,604	0	0.00%
Total Employee Benefits	836,136	809,698	865,652	927,845	963,039	35,194	3.79%

Debt Service	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Appropriated	2022 Proposed	2021 vs. 2022	
						\$ (+/-)	%(+/-)
Principal	1,976,150	1,991,591	1,976,271	1,990,352	1,652,352	-338,000	-16.98%
Interest	364,638	451,304	465,574	601,004	503,122	-97,882	-16.29%
Total Debt Service	2,340,788	2,442,895	2,441,845	2,591,356	2,155,474	-435,882	-16.82%

Reserve Fund	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Appropriated	2022 Proposed	2021 vs. 2022	
						\$ (+/-)	%(+/-)
Total Reserve Fund	0	105,262	0	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%

Total Enterprise	12,726,218	12,808,260	13,030,251	14,004,365	13,647,296	-357,070	-2.55%
-------------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-----------------	---------------

Indirect Expenses		2,218,150	2,533,300	2,697,486	2,841,359	143,873	5.33%
-------------------	--	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	---------	-------

Water

We had extensive conversation in the February 3 meeting and learned a lot about water quality and the new PFAS standard, a new Mass DEP requirement that was supposed to take effect in April 2021 but DPW tested all its wells because they were drilling a new well and needed to certify that well, so they opted to help test all town wells. MassDEP is one of a handful of states that is ahead of the curve on this issue - it's a national problem, not a local problem. On first test, a couple of the wells didn't meet the PFAS standard, so DPW will not be using those wells until this is remediated at those wells, so the town's water supply is safe. They sent out a very informative piece, talking about how what PFAS is, what steps they are taking to ensure the safety of the water supply and recommended that residents who are at-risk (have young children, immuno-compromised people) could consider using bottled water near-term. Further, the DPW took the action to shut the flow down from these wells and blend water from other wells to reduce the overall water supply to under the new PFAS limit.

Here is a quote from Matthew Gardner of the Conservation Commission that was posted on-line, as follows: "I'm a scientist, a PhD in Organic Chemistry. What the report says is some of Natick's wells are showing PFAS levels slightly higher than the new limits the Commonwealth has set. The water department is reducing the use of those wells that are higher than the limit and making up the volume by increasing pumping in other wells sites and blending the water sources. The Water Department has done exactly the right thing, started testing even before required to do so, and transparently sharing the data so people can make informed decisions." Mr. Marsette spoke earlier about the MS4 permit and phosphorus requirements – the water division is receiving more requirements and they are right on top of them to ensure that the safety of our water supply. Mr. LaFleur added that they are testing the entry points where the wells feed into the town water system. They're still looking into various methods of remediation for PFAS and continuing to do the testing on a monthly basis, so they're taking it very seriously and doing everything possible to determine the best course of action.

Mr. Evans said the Water Division is evaluating a number of different things as alternatives to address the PFAS levels and they're being studied extensively by not only the town but also MassDEP. There are a range of options and some may require a capital investment down the road; others may be a relatively quick fix. And again, this is not a dire situation by any stretch of the imagination.

Mr. Evans has noted that some residents have asked why the town doesn't just use MWRA water. The benefit to having town well supplied water is that it's about half the cost of water from the MWRA. Further, there is an enormous capital expense to buy into their system and invest in the infrastructure. You don't just sort of flip a lever and now you're on MWRA – you need to install all the piping to hook up with them. The estimate was upwards of \$4 million per million gallons and Natick uses 6 million gallons annually, so this totals \$24 million and that's the one-time entry fee. Then it's you go pay-as-you-go, so this is a non-trivial thing to do both financially and logistically.

Ms. Wollschlager asked why the Water & Sewer budget is in a different format than the rest of the budget book. Mr. Evans said Mr. Marsette had provided us with the update in the previous format because it was easier to show us where the changes were to each budget. The numbers tie out to the ClearGov budget with the exception of the sewer component of the W&S Enterprise Fund and the total of the budget is \$16,370,164.61.

Sewer Collection and Pumping

Mr. Evans said 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. Mr. Marsette said that the MWRA sewer assessment accounts for about 85% of the sewer expenses and we're able to level-fund that in FY 22. 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. Natick had to estimate MWRA sewer assessment estimate the sewer flow into the MWRA system as not all of the dozen or so inflows have flow meters on them. Mr. Marsette noted that only six of those outflows actually had meters that accurately measured the flow that we've contributed. The other six were estimated based on calculations of residences and commercial uses. Now, all have meters and our analysis is that we have underestimated our flow, so our MWRA assessment will go up. However, MWRA will spread that increase over the course of three years.

Utility Software

Mr. Marsette said the only change here is a reduction of \$15,000 for the utility billing software. This software was taken out of this budget and put into the IT budget and the W&S enterprise fund is charged an indirect cost of \$15,000 for this expense. The new utility billing software improves the efficiency of utility billing and makes it easier for residents to look at their individual water & sewer bill.

W&S Indirect Expenses

W&S Indirect expenses are on page 271 and total \$2,841,359. We had some good discussion about what these indirect expenses cover. One good example is that the town GIS person sits in the Water & Sewer Enterprise Fund, but they also do work for the general fund departments. So the salary is paid by the Water & Sewer enterprise Fund and the general fund pays indirect expenses to account for the usage of GIS for things like the CED Department or the Engineering Division in DPW. So it's a two way street. Mr. Marsette said he also does a lot of work with his general fund peers, as a consultant, as a manager, etc. We track the indirects to more accurately reflect the cost of doing various things so that this budget accurately reflects the usage.

Mr. Marsette said most of the key points were described accurately by Mr. Evans. Mr. Marsette added that they had been planning to include the PFAS testing in FY 22, but because of our proactive work in maintaining the town's ten drinking water wells by drilling and putting a replacement well in service, we had to comply with the requirements ahead of the April deadline, earlier than all of our peer communities. We fully expect that surrounding communities will get similar results when they start PFAS testing. We have already made operational improvements and modifications and, as more data is collected on a monthly basis, will have more information on the scope of the issue. Our engineering consultant is already been tasked with looking at alternatives that we have to further our compliance. If our analysis shows that we need capital requirements we will plan for that and bring it up at fall Town Meeting, In addition the lead and copper regulations are changing. In addition to the new PFAS requirements, the lead and copper standards for drinking water are also changing. We face a series of regulatory challenges in the near future. We are required to get registration approvals for nine of our well supplies every ten years and they are due. The registrations were intended to be short of permit to acknowledge that these wells these nine wells are older and in existence for some time and are exempted from some of the newer regulations that went into effect after those wells were installed. If communities don't change the amount of water

that is withdrawn from those wells, then the registration is granted. However, regulators have indicated that this coming round they will be adding requirements to these registrations, in essence, making these registrations mirror a permit. The big concern that we're wary of is that our registrations may be tied to any kind of drought management that the state does at the statewide level. If they indicate that there's a drought in the in the region, that may de facto require us to operate our wells differently, regardless of how the science actually applies to the groundwater table, and how much we're able to pull from the ground. We previously challenged the Elm Bank permit, the only Water Management Act permit that we have. When that permit comes through, we'll challenge that again and we expect that we will have some healthy debate with MassDEP.

Questions from the Committee

Mr. Linehan asked how close the town is to needing a permit for its well versus a registration. Mr. Marsette said it's difficult to answer that. We're not close if we're allowed to use the Elm Bank well. Mr. Linehan noted that there are two figures in the budget book for MWRA Sewer Assessment for FY 21 (on p. 267 it's \$6,604,000 and on the graphic on p. 271 it's \$5,916,675). Mr. Marsette said the proposed FY 22 number has been adjusted down to \$6.1 million. In FY 21, there was a one-time acknowledgement from the MWRA DM on the assessment where they deferred some loan payments so what we thought we were going to get for an assessment and budgeted for actually came in lower at \$5.9 million, which was great and that surplus rolled into W&S retained earnings. Mr. LaFleur asked if this statewide drought management plan is put in place the town's water supply going forward. Mr. Marsette said, given the nature of our current registrations, most of our water supply comes from registered wells that do not have any triggers by way of requirement by way of some flow in a river or a drought declaration. All our water use restrictions have been driven by the operational needs so when we have difficulty filling our storage tanks from the day before overnight and see our water levels trending lower, that has generally been the trigger to implement a water use restriction. One time in the past was due to the repair work to our air filtration systems that decreased our ability to fill our tanks to replenish them for the day. Mr. Linehan asked what percentage of our water is used outside of Natick and what percentage of sewer comes into our system from other towns. Mr. Marsette said in both cases there is only a small amount of water going outside of Natick and very little sanitary sewer that comes in from outside of Natick. Mr. Comeau estimates those water sales were less than 5%.

Debate:

Mr. Evans said the W&S Division does a great job under often difficult circumstances. When you have a sewer main problem or a water piper ruptures, it seldom occurs at 10 AM on a sunny day; it's usually at night in the rain or snow. These guys are out there in a flash and they fix it and they're pretty cost effective in doing it. This is the infrastructure we all depend on and makes our lives a lot better. I'm glad that we have some top-notch people working on our behalf.

W&S Indirects

Mr. Evans move to approve the Water & Sewer indirect cost allocations in the amount of \$2,841,359, seconded by Mr. Linehan, voted 10 – 0 – 0

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. LaFleur = yes
Mr. DeLuca = yes	Mr. Linehan = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = yes	Mr. Scurlock = yes
Mr. Grome = yes	Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Debate:

Mr. Evans noted that this is an accounting mechanism to ensure we're keeping track of the actual costs to deliver Water & Sewer services to the town in general, and to reflect the time where personnel in this division work on general fund type things.

Police Department
Chief James Hicks

Mr. Grome stated that the discussions at the General Government Subcommittee were similar to the Fire Department discussions - difficulty in recruiting new officers, getting them through the police academies, and serving the public in a COVID environment.

Mr. Evans pointed out the new initiative request for a Deputy Chief position that was approved by Town Administration. Mr. Evans noted that it was many years ago that the Chief first requested this position and it's fair to say that the complexity of being Natick Police Chief increased not only because of COVID and the Chief wears a lot of hats. Further, the rationale for this position is that the Chief is the only member of the Police Department that is not a union position. The Chief has told us that if you're part of a union it's much more difficult to supervise or discipline another police officer, so it makes a lot of sense.

Chief Hicks introduced Lieut. Leo Fitzpatrick, who is also online in case there's anything specific that he can answer. Chief Hicks provided a general overview of the Police Department budget.

Significant salary changes include:

- As mentioned, a new initiative adds the Deputy Police Chief to the Salaries – Management line in this budget and noted that he has made this request since 2012. Mr. Evans covered many of the reason for this position and I want to add succession planning. Succession planning is something that department heads have been asked to consider by the Select Board as part of our strategic planning.
- Sales -operational staff increased by 5.5% – this is the addition of 1.5 new officers to assist with traffic enforcement that was approved at Fall Town Meeting. This amount for a full year's funding of those positions. This also includes step increases that resulted from the collective bargaining agreement. As you know, all municipal contracts expire on June 30, 2021
- During the COVID budget, we eliminated a dispatcher position and Fall Town Meeting restored that position for town meeting bought that position back. The 7.3% increase from the FY2021 budgeted was because that budget didn't include the Fall Town Meeting adjustments.
- We also requested additional hours for our records bureau to handle the increases in public records requests and requests by courts. That was also added back in to the FY 21 budget at Fall

Town Meeting.

- Merit increase for FY 21 are also not reflected in the FY 21 budget, were added back in at Fall Town Meeting, so the percentages are off and will be corrected when the revised FY 21 budget figures are made available in March.

The Expense budget is flat with the exception of the Assessment Center (AC). Like the Fire Dept., we are required to conduct an AC (\$29,000) to evaluate candidates for promotion. Further, the increase is a little larger compared with FY 20 (\$26,435.36) as a result of collective bargaining agreements with patrol officers and there are some additional costs included every time there is an exam. And in FY23, this will go back down as the AC is only done every other year.

Questions from the Committee

Ms. Wollschlager noted that there has been a lot of discussion lately in town on issues surrounding policing and asked Chief Hicks if he wanted to comment in response to that. Chief Hicks said he was glad that this was brought up. Chief Hicks said that many things are happening at the legislative level, in the community and around the country that on policing. At the Natick Police Department, we've been proactive and are ahead of a lot of the items, questions and suggestions that have come up regarding training, working with people with mental illness, and things like that. The Police Department has partnered with advocates to have an in-house clinician who responds with the Police Department to address mental health issues which, admittedly, police officers are not trained or equipped to handle and that's been in place for 1.5 years. This position is grant-funded and one of the questions a Select Board member asked is whether we were going to add funding for a clinician to the FY 22 budget. We didn't put it into the FY 22 budget because we know we need to continue with this clinician and want to analyze whether we need an additional clinician and we haven't finished that analysis yet. We will do additional training for all officers – this is not due to mandate, we are choosing to do this, particularly given the history of policing, especially in the history of policing in black and brown communities. The final part is the police reform legislation bill that was signed by the Governor in December –that's going to have an impact on the Natick Police Department, but we just don't know what that impact is yet. There are a lot of mandates around training. There are other mandates on policy development, new rules or regulations, and new equipment that may need to be acquired. We don't know the extent of it yet because a lot of the bill doesn't go into effect until a new commission is put in place in July 2021. There is definitely going to be a cost to the department that we don't know, but this is the budget that we have now. The FY 22 budget also doesn't include any salary increases because the current contracts for all three of our unions end June 30, 2021. We have started negotiations for the contracts starting in FY 22.

Mr. Linehan asked whether the clinician is an on-call position or a full-time clinician. Chief Hicks said the grant funds a full-time clinician assigned to the Police Department and, based on analysis of previous calls, we determine what times make the best use of the clinician's time and she's available to respond to calls with police officers and go directly to the scene. She's also assigned to us to take calls on her own phone if she is not in the office to respond to individuals who may need assistance. We have two more fiscal years on this grant from the Mass. Department of Mental Health that covers FY 22 and FY 23. The only thought is whether we need to add another full-time clinician. If that ends up being the case, it would need to come out of the town's budget.

The COVID pandemic of 2020 presented several challenges in police operations and policy development for the Natick Police Department. We had to balance our required response for service needs while maintaining a workforce that was available to operate on a daily basis. Further, we added duties and requirements such as assisting with public health-related responses and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE). We had to limit access and contact between officers and the public as much as possible. For a short period of time, we reduced enforcement of minor civil violations (motor vehicle) and encouraged residents to report crimes that did not need immediate response to our online platform. We restricted access to the Police Station for all but necessary matters and implemented strict sanitation procedures for all shared equipment. From a budget perspective the purchase of equipment and cleaning supplies was a challenge due to availability so seeking out these products and paying top dollar was an impact on the budget. The Police Department has taken on the responsibility of from emergency management of town purchasing and distribution of PPE. Officers have done all they can to stay healthy and we've been lucky that we haven't had a large number of officers out on COVID quarantine, but it's still a concern.

Mr. Evans asked, if Town Meeting approves the Deputy Chief position, what is the process to identify and on-board the Deputy Chief and what is the timing. Chief Hicks said the Deputy Chief position is an appointment by the Select Board because all appointments in the Police Department are made by the Select Board. So if there's a Town Meeting approval, we'll work with the Select Board and the unions to develop a process on onboarding. I would anticipate that that if we start the process after Town Meeting approval, the Deputy Chief could be in place shortly after the start of FY 22.

Mr. Pope said one of the discussions regarding police reform has been around the civil service requirements. Some of our peer towns have sought waivers from the civil service requirement - do you have a view as to whether that would be prudent and whether that would help or hurt recruitment and training cost. Chief Hicks said his personal opinion is that the civil service process is too restrictive, in recruitment and hiring, especially if you're looking to create a diverse department. This has been my position for years. The current reform bill has a study commission that will look at civil service and civil service process around hiring and diversity – it's not a mandate. There is a possibility that some surrounding communities including Wellesley and Framingham have come out of civil service. The choice to withdraw from civil service would have to go to Town Meeting to withdraw the department from civil service, and we also would have to work with the unions to come up with an agreed-upon process for hiring and promotion. There are plenty of examples out there and there will be some work to do if that's what the town wants to do. Those discussions have not started in earnest, but it is a possibility.

Mr. DeLuca asked for clarification of what the impediments to hiring a diverse applicant pool result from using civil service to determine which police officer candidates to hire such as age restrictions and veteran's preference. Chief Hicks said the civil service guidelines or rules on hiring are restrictive. You cited one example and that is that you must give absolute preference to veterans. By no means I am saying that veterans shouldn't have an opportunity or get a little bit more consideration towards hiring, but under Civil Service rules, as long as they pass the exam, they go to the top of the list. Once someone takes a statewide examination and declares themselves interested in working in Natick. If they are a Natick resident and veteran, they go directly to the top. If they are a Natick resident, they are next in line and in preference on the list. After that, it goes to non-

residents. The problem that is now that you get a formula 2 + n, which means that if you want to hire one individual, you will get three names to consider and that's all you get unless something comes up on a background check that rules them out. So your selection pool is restricted to those three names. The problem with that you could have a great candidate, regardless of sex or race, who may be further down on the list and you are unable to consider them under these current guidelines. If you do want to look at a special list or a preferred list based on race, gender, or language, you have to petition the Civil Service Commission and that takes a lot of work in order for them to approve circumvention of these guidelines. Most departments that are getting out of civil service create their own system to determine hiring practices. So, for example, if the Police Department determined that they need someone who speaks Portuguese, they can go to that list that they've created through the system and look for candidates that meet that profile and that's why it's advantageous to some of those departments who have left civil service and created their own system.

Mr. Evans moved to recommend Favorable Action on the Police Department FY 22 budget in the amount of \$7,931,351, seconded by Mr. Grome, voted 10 – 0 – 0

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. LaFleur = yes
Mr. DeLuca = yes	Mr. Linehan = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = yes	Mr. Scurlock = yes
Mr. Grome = yes	Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Mr. Evans said the Police Department does a great job for protecting us and keeping things going on track, protecting us not only on roads and such and in our homes, but also from COVID-related things. They have done a lot of work over the past year on COVID-related things and it is much appreciated. I'm very happy to support the Deputy Police Chief position and I look forward to the day when Chief Hicks doesn't have to do his bi weekly COVID announcement.

Mr. Grome agreed and said, as usual, Mr. Evans spoke eloquently and we should support this budget.

Mr. Linehan said Natick is blessed with an excellent Police Department that, in large part, is reflective of the leadership.

Mr. Pope said until last month when someone roamed the streets of my neighborhood looking to rob cars, outside of Finance Committee, I had no interaction with a Natick Police officer. My interaction was extremely positive (my wife and I), the officer reassured us and gave and gave us extra confidence in our interactions with our police force, so I'm happy to support this budget and hope that Town Meeting will take up the cause of police reform, civil service changes, and whatever changes to empowers the Chief and the Department to be an example for the region.

Mr. DeLuca noted that Chief Hicks exemplifies what community policing means through all their departments – whether it's the School Resource Officers or patrol officers. The training, procedures and policies reflect the methodology and thought process of community policing. Mr. DeLuca noted that, as a Natick resident I was proud to hear Chief Hick's comments on police reform in Boston, at the State House and felt that he represented the town well. During this process, as a lot of changes

are coming, he said that he has faith that Chief Hicks can implement the reform processes for the town in a thoughtful and meaningful manner.

Emergency Management budget

The Emergency Management FY 22 budget is level-funded. Chief Hicks said there were a lot of things that they we didn't get an opportunity to do as a result of COVID. We usually have several meetings with the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LAPC) doing sheltering drills and things like that that we couldn't do in this environment.

Questions from the Committee

Mr. Linehan asked for a brief description of what is included in the \$22,500 repair and maintenance line in the Emergency Management budget. Ms. MaryLee Watkins said the majority of the expense is radio maintenance and also includes the Rave Smart 911 and alerts system maintenance.

Mr. Linehan moved to recommend Favorable Action on the FY 22 Natick Emergency Management budget in the amount of \$39,100, seconded by Mr. Grome, voted 10 – 0 – 0.

Debate – None

Parking Enforcement

Chief Hicks said this line item is level-funded, with the exception of the lease for the St. Pat's parking. As a result of COVID, parking lot revenues decreased precipitously and the lease was renegotiated downward for FY 22 to \$20,000 (vs. the \$58,583 in FY 21) The parking spaces are pretty much empty during the day at this time because there is not much commuting going on right and we weren't selling many commuter permits as we started this calendar year.

Mr. Linehan said that he's looking at page 103 of the budget book and the FY 21 sales-operations line item is \$85,000 and the FY 22 sales-operations line item is \$114,144. Mr. Rauf said the budget is level-funded from last year and this was an incorrect number and the updated budget will show FY 21 budget as \$114,144

Mr. Evans asked whether the St. Pat's lease is a year-to-year lease. Chief Hicks said the lease is for the current calendar year, but prior to this year, we had a three-year lease and both sides felt comfortable with a one-year lease given the likely market conditions in FY 22.

Ms. Wollschlager asked how many full-time and part-time staff is included in this budget. Chief Hicks said there is budget for two full-time and two part-time employees. However, we have not been able to fill the part-time positions, so the full-time employees have been taking the brunt of it. However, we also haven't moved to hire the part-time employee yet because parking, especially in the downtown area is down tremendously. As things get back to normal coming out of COVID and into summer, we anticipate hiring part-time employees to assist with parking enforcement.

Mr. Linehan asked what the projected income from parking enforcement is projected to be in FY 22.

Mr. Townsend said, generally speaking, in a regular year (and FY 20 and FY 21 are not regular), we would receive \$120,000 - \$125,000. Unfortunately for FY 21, my estimate off the top of my head is that it's half that and close to a \$60,000 number. This is an FY 21 problem and we are seeing some uptick in revenues, so for FY 22, we expect to get to the \$110,000 - \$115,000 revenue level and forecasting \$115,000.

Mr. Evans moved to recommend Favorable Action on the FY 22 Parking Enforcement budget in the amount of \$180,394, seconded by Mr. DeLuca, voted 10 – 0 – 0.

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. LaFleur = yes
Mr. DeLuca = yes	Mr. Linehan = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = yes	Mr. Scurlock = yes
Mr. Grome = yes	Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Debate

Mr. Evans said that he was appreciative that the town was able to negotiate the appropriate lease on the St. Pats parking lot.

Ms. Wollschlager added that she hopes that the town does not hire the part-time employee until the numbers increase for downtown and commuter parking, but that she is sure that Chief Hicks will take that into consideration.

Committee and Subcommittee scheduling

Ms. Wollschlager said there is a General Government subcommittee meeting this coming Monday – this will hopefully be their last meeting.

Mr. Scurlock said the Finance Committee will be reviewing the library budgets on Tuesday March 9 and Keefe Tech on Thursday March 11. Natick Public Schools will review their Transportation and Special Education budgets on Tuesday March 9 and Technology and Teaching, Learning & Instruction on Thursday March 11. All minutes except for the February 25 meeting have been voted on and approved by the Subcommittee. One-page synopses for the Libraries are available and similar documents are forthcoming from NPS. Mr. Scurlock encouraged the Committee to read both the one-pagers for the summary and the minutes for the detail.

Mr. Evans said that he will be convening a very brief DPW subcommittee meeting to approve minutes and anticipated that it will take ten minutes and that he would schedule it just ahead of a full Finance Committee meeting, or if I'll put out some feelers on, on what time to do it. I don't anticipate a great plan for time.

Ms. Wollschlager noted that the Committee will be looking to review and approve the library budgets and Keefe Tech when they present next week. The NPS presentation will be informational and Q&A and not voting on their overall budget because they are working with the town to reconcile the gap between their budgets.

Ms. Wollschlager noted that there is one month more of hearing and there's a lot to fit in. We're working on the schedule, and you can check the schedule that's on our shared Google Drive. You will note that it is still changing, as we're working on the warrant articles. I hope to get information from the administration on when they will be ready to present the Town Administrator-sponsored warrant articles. Right now, we have a few of them confirmed.

Mr. Evans moved to close the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Linehan, voted 10 – 0 – 0.

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. LaFleur = yes
Mr. DeLuca = yes	Mr. Linehan = yes

Mr. Evans = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = yes
Mr. Grome = yes

Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. Scurlock = yes
Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Mr. Linehan moved to close the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Evans, voted 10 – 0 – 0.

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes
Mr. DeLuca = yes
Mr. Evans = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = yes
Mr. Grome = yes

Mr. LaFleur = yes
Mr. Linehan = yes
Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. Scurlock = yes
Ms. Wollschlager = yes

MEETING ADJOURNED 10:21 PM