

DPW Budget Review Subcommittee Summary for FY 2023

Subcommittee members – Stefan Chase, Dennis Hogan, David Mastroianni and Jim Sullivan

A zoom meeting was held with Director Joe Conway, Business Manager Ann Waitt and Town Engineer Bill Renault to review the DPW budget in detail and to review the proposed articles from DPW. The articles are:

- Town Wide Drainage Improvements
- Broadway Quite Zone Improvements
- Harts Hill Water Storage Tank Replacement
- Refuse and Recycling
- Eminent Domain

Joe Conway and Bill Renault used a PowerPoint presentation to give an overview of the warrant articles. Drainage improvements were reviewed and discussed. The Broadway Quite Zone article was discussed by the group. Joe called it a safety net incase other funding from the State budget doesn't come through. The hope is the crossing upgrade will be funded through the State and won't need local funding. Dennis believes that the MBTA should be paying for this upgrade as they required what is currently there. The water tower is reaching it's end of life (built in 1927) and planning for its replacement is prudent. Refuse and Recycling is going up 4.2% (\$92,604) this year. There is less of a concern that external market drivers associated with recycling will affect this budget.

The DPW has many responsibilities and has many parts. Departments include:

- Engineering
- Highway
- Fleet Maintenance
- Buildings
- Forestry and parks
- Cemetery
- Water and Sewer departments

Joe reviewed the Operating budget by department. During our meeting we reviewed and discussed each of the items described. Some items on the operating budget include:

- Many line items are level funded
- Salary increases are generally consistent with some outliers
- No new employees in this budget

Overall DPW operating budget increase request is 2.3 %. There is an unsettled contract still being negotiated that if accepted, would increase the budget to an overall increase of 3.5%.

Water and sewer have minimal increases, even better than last year's low increase. -1.52 % and 1.65 % respectfully. MWRA water assessment is down \$220K this year. (These budgets are supported by enterprise accounts)

The Snow and Ice Budget has been level funded at \$850,000. Department request is \$1.5M.

Capital outlay items were not discussed at this meeting.

An area of concern is the continuing use of the North Ave. DPW facility. The site has reached the end of its useful life and needs replacement or extensive upgrades.

There was discussion about how difficult it is to hire staff across the departments. People are just not interested in working for Town departments right now given the other opportunities in the current economic cycle. There was discussion about the possibility of privatizing a group or branch and deploying the displaced staff to other open positions. Joe felt it could be an option down the road but not at this time.