

**Minutes
Budget Retreat
Aberdeen Town Board**

March 13, 2020
Friday, 8:00 a.m.

Aberdeen Fire Station
Aberdeen, North Carolina

The Aberdeen Town Board met on Friday, March 13, 2020 for the Budget Retreat. Members present were Mayor Robert A. Farrell, Mayor Pro-tem Joe Dannelley and Commissioners Wilma Laney, Elease Goodwin, Teressa Beavers, and Bryan Bowles. Staff members in attendance were Parks & Recreation Director Adam Crocker, Planning Director Justin Westbrook, Finance Director Butch Watson, Town Manager Paul Sabiston, Interim Public Works Director Joe Wood, Fire Chief Phillip Richardson, Police Chief Carl Colasacco, and Town Clerk Regina Rosy. Reporter for The Pilot Laura Douglass was also in attendance for the meeting.

1. Call to Order – 8:30 a.m.

Mayor Farrell called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

2. Budget Sessions

a. 8:30 a.m. – 8:50 a.m. – General Budget Introduction

Manager Sabiston stated this year’s presentation will be a little leaner and focus briefly on successes of each department over the past year and needs and goals for the upcoming budget year.

b. 8:50 a.m. – 9:25 a.m. – Administration/Finance/HR/IT

Manager Sabiston stated there have been key staff retirements in 2019 in Finance and Public Works, and staff has done a great job of filling those positions. There is an additional retirement on the horizon which will be Deputy Police Chief Todd Weaver. Manager Sabiston discussed some restructuring that has taken place over the past year in some departments. FEMA projects were completed at Station #2 and the Town is about 98% complete for the Lake Dam project. More revisions to the Town and Code and the UDO re-write were completed this past year also.

Manager Sabiston reviewed the trends of personnel, operations, and capital expenditures for the Administration and Finance Departments.

Manager Sabiston stated Aberdeen is doing about as good as possible with salaries and benefits for a community our population and size. Our biggest challenge is competing with local towns such as Pinehurst and Southern Pines. Manager Sabiston stated salaries are reviewed by comparable jurisdictions on a regular basis to ensure we remain competitive.

Manager Sabiston stated Finance Director Butch Watson will be taking a look at current financed projects and see if there may be some cost savings by refinancing a few projects. Manager Sabiston stated another short-term goal is to consider seeking CAFR certification for Town finances. Director Watson stated if you have long-standing debt then having a CAFR is required.

Manager Sabiston stated capital items for consideration for the upcoming budget year include the following:

- Property acquisition – old Aberdeen Elementary and/or Primary schools
- Fund major projects in Police (new facility - \$5.6 million), Fire (new fire engine 2022 - \$700,000) and Parks (park developments - \$150,000) Departments
- Schedule other needed IT improvements to portions of our computer system (\$20,000 - \$30,000 over next 4-5 fiscal years)

Manager Sabiston stated there is a 1.2% increase for the general local governmental employees retirement system contribution and a 1.29% increase for the law enforcement local governmental employees retirement system contribution. Manager Sabiston stated those increases are required.

Manager Sabiston stated for debt service – there are 11 outstanding items that are currently financed for a total of \$3,265,000 at the end of FY 18/19. At the end of this year he expects that to be about \$2,999,000. Director Watson stated any loans that have rates higher than 3% he would like to revisit and see if there may be some cost savings. Total budget for debt is about 6-7% which is not bad. Director Watson stated he would be interested in developing a formal debt policy which would include a plan for how to replenish debt.

c. 9:25 a.m. – 10:25 a.m. – Public Works & Water/Sewer

Director Wood reviewed the past year which included the following items:

- Director Wood stated Jim McRae retired this past December. Six candidates were assessed and Eric Honrine was offered the position. Staff has already seen really good results from Eric as he has been taking care of projects that have needed attention for a long time.
- Purchased a new garbage truck which replaced the oldest truck in the fleet which was a 2004 model.
- Worked rapidly through a changing recycling environment to decrease contamination rates and reduce overall disposal costs.
- Current discussions have indicated a possible increase to all disposal fees.
- Resurfaced 4690 linear feet of Town streets. Currently staff is evaluating conditions of additional streets to add to the 5-year resurfacing schedule.
- Completed repairs to all Town owned buildings that were identified by staff.
- Performed upgrades to the building's security system.
- Replaced all office computers that were not Windows 10 compatible.
- Potential increases - Leaf and limb may go from \$25 to \$28 per ton. Mayor Pro-tem Dannelley asked if Director Wood could provide information on what drives increases in how he provides measures of what is collected.
- Potential increases - \$50 to \$58 for debris per ton.

Director Wood stated he is interested in doing a customer satisfaction survey card to evaluate the streets and sanitation departments.

Director Wood reviewed the 5-year capital improvement plan for Public Works. The FY 20/21 year includes the following items:

- Mini excavator attachment – hydraulic jackhammer and mower - \$14,700
- Soil containment - \$3,000

Commissioner Laney asked if personnel has been increased any due to the extra growth that has been taking place in town. Director Wood stated

no, staffing has remained the same. Commissioner Beavers asked if there are multiple quotes received for equipment to find the best pricing. Director Wood stated he gets at least three quotes before purchasing equipment so that the best deal can be found.

Year in Review for Water/Sewer includes the following items:

- Continuing the installation of AMR meters. This has added an additional 800 meters to our system.
- Construction of Well #28 was completed.
- Installation of the Southwest Interceptor was completed.
- Water loss audit was completed.
- Wellhead Protection Plan updated.
- A required path study for a Fixed Network Ready System for water billing was completed.
- All capital projects were completed, and capital items purchased.

Director Wood reviewed the capital improvement plan for FY 20/21 for the Water and Sewer Department:

- Replace problematic sewer line in Robbins Walk area off of Magnolia Drive. These service lines require constant repairs, not allowing staff to resurface any of these streets as residents have complained about the conditions in the past.
- GPS Survey Equipment - \$12,000
- New Chevrolet C2500 Pickup Truck - \$34,000
- SCADA conversion path study - \$12,00

d. 10:35 a.m. – 11:25 a.m. – Planning

Director Westbrook stated achievements over the past year include the design and adoption of the UDO Re-write, which was implemented in January 2020, Technical Review Committee successes, Building Permitting & Inspections very strong with quick turnaround times from staff.

Mayor Pro-tem Dannelley asked at what point will the TRC notify the Board of Commissioners if an applicant has been denied for a project. Director Westbrook stated weekly updates are provided in the weekly report and updates are also provided quarterly at Work Sessions about status updates. Mayor Pro-tem Dannelley stated he wants to make sure that status is tracked regularly on these projects. Manager Sabiston stated the goal is to level the playing field for all developers. Mayor Pro-tem Dannelley stated he wants to be able to communicate information about projects when he is asked about them. Director Westbrook stated there has been an increase in workload for plans and a decrease in average review time. Director Westbrook stated better feedback is also provided to applicants so that it requires less time for staff to continue seeing the project. 75% was the goal for reviews on time, and currently that number is at 77%.

Director Westbrook stated regarding building permitting & inspections – single family permits are very strong and are reviewed within 3 days. Director Westbrook displayed some graphs that showed trends in personnel, operations and capital expenditures. Goals include the following:

- Technical Review Committee – goal of 15 days to review
- Demolition of nuisance properties – goal of 4 properties per year
- Downtown projects – rework concert series, more aggressive promotion of façade grant program – goal is to get 4 grants awarded in FY 20/21.
- Coordinate with Public Works, NCDOT and contractors for implementation of downtown paving projects – goal of 4 stamped crosswalks
- Bicycle, Pedestrian & Greenway Plan – use consultant and take advantage of any grant opportunities

Director Westbrook stated some of the items on Capital Improvement are being pushed forward from this year which are due to NCDOT changing their timelines, and through no fault of the Town. Director Westbrook stated capital items include the following:

- Downtown Pedestrian Railroad Crossing Improvements - the cost for each of the sidewalks across railroad crossings will cost \$5,000 each.

- Poplar Street Improvements – Phase 2 – create a bio-retention stormwater plan - \$12,000 for engineering and \$60,000 for construction
- US 1 crosswalk – adding crosswalk to Aberdeen Lake Park - \$20,000
- Johnson Street Sidewalks – adding sidewalks from US 15/501 to Mike’s Place – engineering - \$7,600 and construction - \$38,000

Director Westbrook stated there have been recent changes to staff. A new planner was hired and it was transitioned to more of a broader planner, rather than just focused on downtown. Also a new Code Enforcement Officer was hired full-time which helps with backup for inspections.

Director Westbrook stated additional needs for FY 20/21 include the following:

- Minimum housing line item is requested to be increased
- Staff training line item is requested to be increased
- Vehicle maintenance line item expected to remain steady
- Downtown development line item must be maintained
- Full-time landscape planner (requested by Appearance & Beautification Commission)

Commissioner Laney asked if the Code Enforcement Officer ever looks for code enforcement issues, versus only replying to complaints. Director Westbrook stated it is hard to justify an employee driving around looking for problems all day – not to say that Erik does not look for issues when he is out and about. Mayor Farrell stated all Board members can help look for violations and report those to Town staff.

- e. 11:25 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. – Lunch

The Board members took a brief recess for lunch.

- f. 12:15 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. – Police

Chief Colasacco stated he is hoping to move forward with the new Police Station this upcoming budget year with the lowest bid just under \$6

million. Chief Colasacco stated this upcoming year he will be looking to have more community-based projects by officer initiation including Shop with a Cop, National Night Out, and Backpack Pals.

Chief Colasacco stated the past year has been a good year and the department was able to complete the transition for take home vehicles, retained quality officers, added ballistic panel vests to patrol for more protection, continued to reach out to the sick and elderly and see the contact program grow, and kept response times low. Chief Colasacco stated a short-term goal for the new year will be to replace Deputy Chief Weaver since he is retiring in September.

Chief Colasacco discussed the capital improvement items needed for the upcoming fiscal year as follows:

- the mobile radio units that will need to be replaced in the upcoming year at a cost of \$8,100.
- 3 marked vehicles at \$108,000 total – to replace two vehicles with over 100,000 miles on them.
- 2 replacement cameras for patrol cars - \$11,000
- Need to replace 9 ballistic vests for \$7,200 and 2 SRT vallistic vests at \$3,600

g. 1:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. – Parks & Recreation

Director Crocker displayed a video of the SLAM program – which consists of over 20 women that participate in the program. Director Crocker stated his department has just made the decision to push kickball back until after spring break due to COVID-19.

Year in review includes the following items:

- Completed plans for drainage renovations at Aberdeen Lake Park and ground improvements at Ray’s Mill Park.
- Increased summer day camp maximums from 40 to 50 children per week
- Continued to increase programming, special events, and athletic participation

Director Crocker reviewed the athletic participation numbers from the past two years and explained there was a dip in the t-ball registration due to the Town of Southern Pines offering the same program (but opposite season).

Director Crocker reviewed the budget history for Parks and Recreation, goals and objectives, etc.

Director Crocker reviewed the short-term goals for Parks & Recreation:

- Improve drainage and grounds conditions at Aberdeen Lake Park
- Improve ground coverage at Ray's Mill Park
- Renovate the outfields at Colonial Heights to establish proper ground cover and grade to prevent massive erosion issue
- Purchase a new park maintenance truck, hand down the old truck to part-time staff, and surplus the old Public Works Ranger truck
- Begin renovations of the Malcolm Blue Farm grist mill
- Continue to increase programming and participation

Director Crocker stated the long-term goals for Parks & Recreation include the following:

- Replace Sharpe Park playground surfacing
- Increase parking at Colonial Heights Park
- Finish drainage improvements at Aberdeen Lake Park
- Establish new entrance and parking area for Sharpe Park
- Finish renovations of Malcolm Blue Farm grist mill
- Replace Lake Park playground
- Add to Ray's Mill walking trail and add natural looking play structures

Commissioner Beavers asked how old the playground equipment is at Aberdeen Lake Park. Director Crocker stated it was installed in 2008 and the average life span is 15 years.

Commissioner Dannelley stated Crocker has really put together a level capital improvement plan each year and is making great progress.

BREAK - 1:45 p.m. – 1:55 p.m.

h. 1:55 p.m. – 2:40 p.m. – Fire

Chief Richardson explained the duty shifts for volunteers that he has began implementing, where volunteers are requested to cover two shifts each month. Chief Richardson stated calls actually decreased this past year, mainly due to no storm events. Chief Richardson stated the majority of calls are medical or wreck related, and 65% of calls are inside the Town limits. Mayor Pro-tem Dannelley asked how many calls are happening at the same time – Chief Richardson stated about 12.6%. Chief Richardson stated the SAFER grant ends in December of this year, which is causing payroll to increase for those six SAFER grant positions. Chief Richardson reviewed the response times and types.

Chief Richardson reviewed the goals for the Fire Department for FY 20/21 which are aimed towards maintaining and lowering the ISO rating:

- Maintain apparatus and vehicle replacement schedule
- Maintain part-time staff
- Cultivate new volunteer program
- Improve/finish Station 2 enhancements
- Reduce response times
- Maintain community programs / involvement
- Improve inspections / education
- Increase personnel to meet demands

Chief Richardson stated in order to meet those goals – a new replacement engine will be needed to replace a 32 year-old engine at a cost of \$650,000. Chief Richardson stated 4 additional personnel are needed in order to maintain the day to day operation of the department and respond to call volume.

i. 2:40 p.m. – 3:10 p.m. – Debt Service Summary, Conclusions, Review Budget Calendar & **Next Steps**

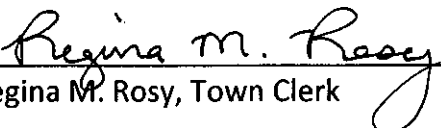
Manager Sabiston stated upcoming dates are:

- Review draft detailed budget at the April 13th Work Session
- Target date of final budget to review and adopt at the May 26th Board Meeting


Manager Sabiston stated staff is struggling to get the audit completed for FY 18/19. The auditor is still chasing down some things they need from the Town. The Local Government Commission (LGC) application can't be reviewed until the audit is complete. The next deadline to make the April LGC Board Meeting is a week from today. The auditor is still going to need 10 days to put the final audit together once all information is received. The consequences of not being heard in April are delaying until May for review by the LGC. The contractor Racanelli is willing to work with the Town on extending the construction contract. The plan is to hope for May LGC review, extend construction contract, and discuss with First Bank to see about the financing contract. Mayor Pro-tem Dannelley asked what the effect will be on moving to the new police office space temporarily. Manager Sabiston stated Art Parker is willing to work with the Town. Mayor Pro-tem Dannelley stated it might be time to look at new auditors for future years, because he is not happy with how they have responded to this year's audit.

3. **Adjournment**

A motion was made by Commissioner Laney, seconded by Commissioner Goodwin, to adjourn the Work Session. Motion unanimously carried 5-0.


Regina M. Rosy, Town Clerk

Minutes were completed in
Draft form on March 13, 2020


Robert A. Farrell, Mayor

Minutes were approved
on April 27, 2020