

TOWN OF EGREMONT, MASSACHUSETTS  
MEETING OF THE SELECT BOARD  
MINUTES

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Date: March 28, 2023  
Time: 9:25am  
Place: Town Hall  
Egremont

Present in-person were Select Board Chairman George McGurn, Select Board Vice-Chair Lucinda Fenn-Vermeulen, Select Board member Mary Brazie, Finance Committee Chair Laura Allen, Finance Committee member Dan Blitzler and for part of the meeting Fire Chief Joe Schneider. Present via zoom were Mary McGurn and Grant Administrator Peg McDonough.

At 9:00 am the Board voted unanimously to go into Executive Session as allowed by MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21, paragraph 2 for Union negotiations. The Board will returned to open session at 9:25am.

The meeting was audio and video recorded.

The Board agreed to add \$3,000 to the Building Improvements budget to cover the cost of a new sign in front of Town Hall.

Egremont's share of the school budget is up 7.45% to \$2,096,264.

The Board reviewed edits to the Police Department budget.

It was noted that the contractor who mows the Cemeteries is asking for a \$10 per hour raise in his rate from \$35 to \$45. The Cemetery Commissioners amended budget, increase the amount from \$28,000 to \$32,000m was approved. Consideration of hiring personnel to mow the cemeteries will be considered for the FY 2025 budget.

It was agreed to use \$35,000 in retained earnings towards the Water Department budget in order to avoid a taxpayer subsidy.

Fire Chief Schneider joined the meeting and explained the new software the Department purchased. The program includes an interactive reporting option with County Dispatch, the I Am Responding module that dispatches the department, fire and rescue training modules as well as standard operating and guidance which the Department has been updating. On average 6 members are active. The stipend program is based on a point system in which members receive points for training and responding to calls. The Fire Chief is not paid any stipend funds. Three active members oversee the stipend program. The Board voiced concern that Egremont Fire Department may be lagging behind in updating critical information necessary to standard operating procedures. All of the Fire Department budget requests were approved as follows:

Expenses	\$66,000
Stipend	\$38,000
Forest Fire	\$1,000
Fire Chief pay	\$22,664 which is a 6.1% increase in line with what other town employees received.

The Board after some debate decided to invite Mr. Duggan of Municipal Resources Inc to a meeting after Town Meeting to discuss the town's needs regarding a study of the Fire Department. Funds have been earmarked in ARPA to pay for this.

The Board approved the \$65,775 Transportation budget and is pleased to note that the Town has two successful transportation programs available, the town's van and the third round of Taxi & Limousine Grant funds, as well as a third program in conjunction with the Town's of Great Barrington and Stockbridge that will start up soon.

The Board approved the budget requests as follows:

Council on Aging	\$20,090
Highway Union	\$205,700
Grant Administrator	\$16,675
Web Administrator	\$44,370 (no increased proposed)
Literacy Network	\$400
Tree Work	\$40,000
Health & Dental Ins	\$249,238
French Park Forest & Trails	\$5,960

Though no amendment is being recommended for the budget today, Office Administrator Mary Brazie explained that hauling costs may double though no official request has come from Casella. The Town has a contract with pricing that may be able to be upheld if increases are sought.

The Board voted unanimously to place two debt exclusion questions on the upcoming election ballot to exclude the debt for the Fire Truck and the Highway Truck. A Debt Exclusion allows a community to raise funds for certain purposes above the amount of its levy limit. The levy limit is the amount the Town is allowed to levy in property taxes under Proposition 2 1/2, which restricts the Town to taxing no more than 2.5 percent of the total full and fair cash value of all taxable real and personal property in the community.

The Board will ask the Assessors to release Overlay for use at the town meeting. Overlay funds are set aside to cover tax abatements.

There is \$407,912 available in free cash. Historically the Town uses all but approximately \$100,000 at its Annual Town Meeting. Proposed funding for most articles is typically transferred from Free Cash. This practice and will be finalized at the next meeting.

The Board agreed to transfer \$15,000 into the GASB 45 account for retirees benefits. The balance in the fund is approximately \$185,000.

The possibility of reimbursement of costs for the March 13/14 snow storm will be confirmed. (It was later determined that the County did not qualify for funding.)

The Board will invite the Town's Emergency Management Team to a meeting after Town Meeting to discuss the response during the March snow storm and reviewing and potentially updating plans that are in place for future responses.

A great deal of discussion took place around establishing a housing trust at the Annual Town Meeting. In the end it was determined that Office Administrator Brazie will work with Housing Committee members Doug Mishkin and Judith Goodman to get the appropriate article(s) on the warrant.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00pm.

Mary Brazie,  
Office Administrator

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*The recording of the meeting is posted on the Town's webpage. Attachments are on file at Town Hall.*