**Lenox Finance Committee Meeting Minutes.**

Date: March 16, 2023

Members Present: Kristine Cass (KC), Blaise Gregory (BG), Josh Levin (JL)

Guests: Chris Ketchen (CK), Steve O’Brien (SO), Chris O’Brien (CO), William Gopp (WG)

Absent: Mindi Morin (MM), David Neubert (DN)

Meeting called to order at 6:03pm

CK provided an overview of the police department budget, explaining the increase in salary is due to an additional patrolmen position and contracted salary increases. BG asked if we have a need for more protective equipment, and SO responded that additional equipment is included in the capital budget at $25k. Each cruiser would contain appropriate gear. Recruiting police officers has been challenging, so the budget includes funding for training.

CK discussed the fire and ambulance budgets. Call volume has increased post-Covid, with 72% of calls attributable to ambulance calls, which are answered by ambulance and fire personnel. Fire and ambulance budgets have some shared elements and some that are distinct. Training costs are increasing due to an increase in new training requirements.

Ambulance receipts are projected to exceed ambulance costs by about $40k. In recent years, the department is answering more mutual aid calls in Pittsfield. Costs are billed to patients’ insurance. Because Stockbridge does not have an ambulance department, Lenox charges Stockbridge $79k annually to provide ambulance coverage in north Stockbridge.

Like police, recruiting for fire and ambulance has been challenging. Now that EMS coordinator position has been filled, CO noted that department is currently appropriately staffed. Fire department has a junior program to train youth to become firefighters, providing a pipeline of staff.

Budget reflects final year of fire/EMS union contract. The contract will be negotiated for FY2025. Police and DPW were recently negotiated.

CK and WG discussed the public works budget. Highway department increases are due to contracted salary increases and fuel.

Wastewater operates out of a self-supporting enterprise fund. Costs have been increasing, and recruiting and retaining qualified people has been challenging. Lenox pays Pittsfield to take wastewater from north end of town, and Pittsfield’s rates have increased significantly. Current Lenox plant has capacity, but pipes are routed to Pittsfield. Design for wastewater treatment plant project is in progress.

Water enterprise fund is healthy, accumulating retained earnings due to debt service rolling off. Retained earnings will support future investment in plant upgrades. Reservoir is healthy.

Meeting adjourned at 7:28pm

Respectively Submitted,

Kristine Cass