

QUESTIONS FROM BOB EVANS

1) In the year to date column the cost of Medicare and Health Insurance Payments is allocated by department, but the yearly budgets don't do that. Why aren't these included in the proposed budget figures? It would be very useful to have them allocated by department for budgets since it re-enforces that fact that compensation costs are greater than only wage costs. It would have to be a single line called health insurance since employee plan choice has yet to be made, but with almost everyone in HMO's at equal rates it should not be a problem.

This methodology has been discussed and the FY13 budget works from current consensus. This topic should be addressed at the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee levels for the FY14 budget. There are advantages & disadvantages to both approaches.

2) Why is there a relatively large increase in celebrations for fiscal 13?

We reinstated Veterans Day and April 19 celebrations this year with the help of the Manager's Budget. The \$8K would fund all four holiday celebrations (Veterans Day, April 19, Memorial Day, and July 4th except for the donation from Gould's and Donelan's (\$6k each). This budget would replenish Police, Fire, Highway and Recreation budgets for services and personnel cost involved in implementing public ceremonial events. [Answer provided by John Murray]

3) What is the estimated cost of un-settled labor contracts that are not included here?

AFSCME ratified a 3-year (FY09-11) and 1-year (FY12) contract this past summer. It represents a 0, 1.5%, 1.5% and \$1.00/hr increase. In staying in line with other Town negotiations using the "Net Zero" method, AFSCME came to the table and was successful in negotiating wage increases in concert with a change in their health insurance premium split from 85/15 to 75/25 for the HMO's and 50/50 for the indemnity plans. It is hopeful these contracts will be approved at this year's Annual Town Meeting. The total cost of wages is \$148,791 and the health insurance savings over a comparable 3-year period is \$136,791 (\$45,597/yr). It is important to note, too, that because these members did the right thing over the years and migrated to the HMO's from the more expensive indemnity plans, they had very little health insurance savings to negotiate compared to other Unions.

The Town is currently in Arbitration with the Patrol Union. The Union has requested a 3-year contract (FY09-11) representing a 6%, 6%, 6% totaling \$451,478. The Town countered with a 0%, .5%, .5% totaling \$32,997. The Town has not been allowed to negotiate health insurance through the Arbitration process.

The Town is at the table currently with Dispatch, will be going to the table with Superiors and AFSCME starting in FY13 and will be back to the table immediately with Patrol after Arbitration is complete. The Town will go to the table with Fire starting in FY14.

[Answer provided by Marianne Fleckner]

4) Under BOS it states that their stipends are set by them, but it should say Town Meeting.

It is Town Meeting that sets those stipends.

5) Under Health it shows some \$85,000 for a .48 time Social Worker. Didn't we get that corrected last year?

Note should read full time Social Worker. [Answer provided by Doug Halley]

6) Contractual service in Public Health Nursing goes up in FY 13 by \$30,000 yet this year it appears that only 2/3rds of the FY 12 budget amount will be spent. Why the increase?

We are providing level services. The FY13 budget increase is related to the State of Massachusetts cutting adult and childhood immunization programs by 55% and 23%, respectively, and for the better recording of staff performing state-mandated services by using our HealthWyse electronic medical record software. FY12 is the first year that the department has had to purchase Influenza Vaccine, as well as put much more staff time into the collection of insurance information and billing for each vaccine given to recoup some of this cost. There are also a number of other childhood vaccines that are either not provided by the state or Acton's allocation has been drastically decreased. [Answer provided by Heather Hurley]

7) In Human Resources the Chapter 111 Police budget was over spent in FY 11 and it appears it will probably be over spent in FY 12. Does the Town carry any stop-loss insurance on these expenditures?

For FY11, we stayed within the \$50k overall budget, (\$25k Police, \$25k Fire). FY11 total was \$48,442; \$1,558 below budget. We can understand the concern, though, about stop-loss insurance. That question was brought up last year, too, on Budget Saturday. At this point, I am recommending that we stay self-insured, as is, for one more additional year to be able to have a 3-year average for comparison purposes. For FY14, the Town should determine whether it is advantageous to remain self-insured. Also, last year John Murray and Marianne Fleckner wrote to the DIA (Division of Industrial Accidents) to receive a list of possible stop-loss insurance carriers and rates, but we did not hear back from them. We could look into that again for FY14. [Answer provided by Marianne Fleckner]

8) In the Town Manager section, professional services, 52190, changes greatly between years but there is no explanation.

This was increased to include funding to compensate the holders of two conservation restrictions (Caouette and Gaebler), future appraisals, environmental studies and other professional services. There are upcoming land decisions to be made that this account funds the necessary due diligence steps.

9) Natural gas expenditures to date exceed FY 12 budget and the proposed FY13 budget—yet the winter has not really started. How realistic are the estimates for Fiscal 13?

We encumbered amount in the gas accounts equal to our actual expenditures in FY 2011 so that we did not have to write purchase orders each month for all accounts, so the numbers under “available budget” look quite alarming, since an encumbrance looks like an expense. We have signed a 24-month supply contract that commenced at the end of November 2011, which is less than the contract we had been under. I am pretty confident in the numbers in the budget. [Answer provided by Dean Charter]

10) In Transfer station only some \$2,000 has been spent to date on regular permanent employees, but in FY 13 it is proposed to spend \$107,000. There is no clear explanation for this odd situation.

Currently, one of the Transfer Station employees is out with an injury and we have a temporary employee covering his position. I’ve reviewed the Transfer Station Salaries Budget with the Finance Department and confirmed that almost 54% of the total salary budgets have been spent to-date.

11) At the BOS’ meeting the Manager proposed spending \$246,000 on public transportation but I found no information about revenue or expenses in this document. Nor do I think this situation was envisioned when our Committee voted to support the program for an additional year at last year’s Town Meeting. Also the total subsidy should be \$296,000 because the COA van also requires a \$50,000 a year subsidy.

Please see the Selectmen’s packet for January 7, document titled “020 – Transportation” for the cost estimate for the Town’s transportation program initiatives.

The total budget is \$264,951. Their budget included \$5,000 for marketing. We added \$35,000 for additional marketing initiatives thereby increasing total cost of \$300,000.

From the \$300,000, we would reduce the cost estimate by the \$55k MPO grant, which gets us to \$246,000.

We do not yet have state authorization to expend potential fares.

[Answer provided by Steve Barrett]

12) I support the idea of almost \$2,000,000 in bonded equipment. The budget should also include the \$200,000 or so that would be year one' principal payment. Much of this equipment should be operational in FY 13 and FY13 taxpayers should pay their share. Also pretending the \$200,000 doesn't exist only causes problems for FY14. We saw this with the schools and don't need to repeat it with the town.

Based on the debt estimates provided by our financial advisor, and the premise of borrowing after 7/1/12, the budget impact is \$30,000, included in the FY13 budget. The principal will be part of the FY14 budget.

13) The Manager refers to the Nursing Service as experiencing "extreme cash flow" problems. Without an estimated income statement for FY 13 it is impossible to know if it is a cash flow problem or a non-viable operation. Expenses are estimated at \$800,000. Revenue will be \$131,000 from the Health Department and \$400,000 from the tax payers. Thus outside revenue would be expected to be \$269,000. Subtracting from the \$800,000 the \$131,000, one has expected outside revenue of \$269,000 and expenses of \$669,000. This means it is proposed to earn 40 cents by spending one dollar. Sounds like bankruptcy to me.

In 1993 the BOS commissioned a review of the Nursing Service. There the argument was that the principal virtues of a Town service compared to a regional organization such as the Nashoba Nursing Service or a hospital based one such as Emerson Home Health Care were that the municipal operation would cost the taxpayers nothing!! And it would be more responsive to Acton's public health needs. This first is now completely false with an estimated FY 13 taxpayer cost of \$531,000. If the \$131,000 gives Acton responsiveness to our public health needs, what do we receive for the \$400,000?? We will only find out by a detailed examination of what services are provided and to whom. My own suspicion is that there are excessive over-head costs for the level of billed services. Only a careful analysis of the business operation, which the Town's consultants apparently did not do, can provide answers.

If the \$400,000 really pays for social welfare for low-income citizens then it should be clearly and separately identified so citizens can decide if they wish to support such payments. It also would allow us to determine if there were more efficient ways to provide this support.

Your position is noted and will be discussed.

QUESTIONS FROM JOHN SONNER

Overall

New personnel request are technically not capital. Would like these separated out because they represent a permanent increase in our operating expenses.

Council on Aging (from spreadsheet)

The 37.51% increase to purchased services is due to increasing the number of times the Senior Bulletin is printed. We are currently only printing 9 issues a year and I would like to move to a monthly publication. The cost of printing 2,200 newsletters per month is approximately \$900. The COA attempted to control costs by publishing the Senior Bulletin less often and encouraging the use of e-mail. This initiative has not worked well and we're trying to increase our outreach to seniors. The 60+ population continues to grow which does increase the number of newsletters printed and mailed each year. [Answer provided by Sharon Mercurio]

Emergency Management

Portable emergency info traffic control system

How many times in the last 10 years or so do you think we would have used these systems?

I would estimate 5-7 times. Hopefully, we would never use any of our equipment and if we had a generally recurring need – then it would not represent an emergency need.

Why was this purchase recommended? Background:

We have not had a truly significant event since the Blizzard of 1978.

Less significant events such as Hurricane Bob, the two incidents this year, the snowstorm of the mid 90's has shown us that the utilities will not be in for 3-5 days, FEMA and MEMA will not arrive for 5-7 days, utility and Emergency Management reponse will be based upon size of benefitted population, and citizens want out before outside entities are prepared to send in assistance.

Five intersections are dangerous in emergency circumstances: 2A/27 – Main St and 2A, Kelley's Corner, South Acton, Rt 62 and High, 111 and Central. All except South Acton will benefit from Emergency Traffic lights. The configuration of South Acton cannot be met by current technology.

The Police Chief will not assign officers to direct traffic at all of these intersections during power outages due to prior injury/almost injured rates.

Why 3 not 4 – hopeful one of the four areas will have restored power in a very short time frame.

[Answer provided by John Murray]

Would it make sense to start with a single unit instead of 3?

No, we need to end the conflict between citizens using unpowered intersections with traffic signals. Four intersections have State Roads -- Rt 2A, Rt, 111 and RT 62 meeting major Town collector roads –

**Main ST. and Central St. As a smell test you may wish to consider the following questions. If these intersections need significant traffic light infrastructure because of the number of accidents during “normal times”, then why would they require less traffic control during emergency conditions?
[Answer provided by John Murray]**

Is there an option to share with another town?

We list all our equipment as able to be shared in our emergency management area. [Answer provided by John Murray]

Portable traffic system with solar assist and security arm
Is the first model more or less flexible? Is there an option to share with another town?

This item was not recommended for FY13. [Answer provided by John Murray]

Water supply pump
If we lost water today, how would we handle? Truck it in? Is there an option to share with another town? e.g., connect to Littleton?

This item was not recommended for FY13. [Answer provided by John Murray]

Engineering

Main Street drainage system
If we put off by, say, 5 years, will the job be more involved?

I don't foresee delaying this project to cause the re-design to be more involved unless there are major changes to the Storm water regulations. It's hard to predict the costs of materials, but we've experienced price increases for construction materials needed over the last several years. The DPW would have to continue closely monitor the system for problems and make the necessary emergency repairs to patch the existing drainage system in the meantime. [Answer provided by Corey York]

Parking meter system
Would we throw away the old meters? Or would there be a market to sell them used?

My initial thought would be to seek a trade-in value for these units as part of the purchase for the new metering system. Another alternative would be to declare them surplus and auction the existing parking meters. [Answer provided by Corey York]

If we add spaces to the lot, we should have this in place first, right? (So that we don't have to add old-style meters)

The preferred metering system for the South Acton Commuter Lot is a multi-space metering system. The multi-space meters work together to service all metered parking spaces. Any future parking

spaces can be easily incorporated into the programming for these units. [Answer provided by Corey York]

This would increase personnel efficiency?

Yes. Town Staff currently maintains, collects revenue and enforces parking at 107 individual metered parking spaces. This requires staff to inspect each meter to either determine if there is a problem and then make the necessary repair. The Police also have to inspect each meter to determine if there is a violation. The new multi-space metering system can manage these same parking spaces with only 3-4 units. SATSAC Committee and Town Staff have been working with the MBTA to allow the new style metering system to be positioned by the new dual platform train station that is tentatively scheduled to start construction this spring. Town Staff would only need to inspect, maintain and collect revenue from those units. This will reduce the overall time currently spent by staff to manage the metered spaces. The new system also has the ability to aid the Police in locating possible parking violations. [Answer provided by Corey York]

Acton Center Traffic Study

Do you have a ballpark estimate for what it would cost to implement? \$500K? (if we don't carry it out, it doesn't make sense to do the study)

This is not being considered for FY2013

At this point, we do not have a cost estimate to implement any possible improvements/modifications. It'll greatly depend on the results of the studies, public input and the possible design alternatives. Sometimes there are low-cost, low-impact changes that can be done to improve the situation versus a more costly venture. [Answer provided by Corey York]

Fire

Deputy Chief / Fire Prevention

Does \$105K include current and future benefits?

Is there an example of another town's fire prevention program?

What is the number of fires in Acton the last, say, 10 years? (not number of dispatches)

North Acton Fire Station

Is there a any study or plan on the North Acton station?

Would there be any change in the staffing or operating costs?

What is the response time to the farthest corner of Acton? And what would it be with a North Acton station?

Command Vehicle Replacement (Deputy Chief)

What is the number of miles on the 2008 vehicle?

Why not an Explorer instead of an Expedition?

Replacement – Vehicle 33

How much will we be able to sell 2008 vehicle for?

Jaw of Life

Is there an option to share with another town?
How old is the current unit?
Rescue Truck Replacement
What are the possible non-town resources? A grant?

Most of the Capital Items submitted were not approved due to transition to a new Chief. However, we do have 2 sets of Jaws, both of the early 80's vintage. That \$35,000 request was approved and placed in the equipment line of the Ambulance Operating budget. This is equipment that must be readily available for use and therefore it is not feasible to share with another community. [Answer provided by Chief Craig]

Health

Treatment Plant SCADA Upgrade
The useful life says 20 years but is the current system only about 12 years?

20 year useful life incorrectly marked. As a computer based system useful life is 5 to 10 years tops. [Answer provided by Doug Halley]

John Deere Tractor
How old is the current tractor?

This item was not recommended in the FY13 budget. There is no current tractor. This is the first vehicle purchase for the sewer system. Currently a tractor is being borrowed from Natural Resources to till the open sand beds. Winter plowing of the treatment area relies on the Highway Department when they are able to get to it. [Answer provided by Doug Halley]

Employee Health Incentive
Do we have a concrete estimate from our health care providers on how much they would reduce premiums? Is this a one-time cost or would the program be \$30,000 per year?

This item was not recommended in the FY13 budget. The Acton Health Insurance Trust was formed in 1985 to allow Acton to self-insure and offer health insurance. The health insurance rates are set by the trustees, who place most weight on recent expense increases. Based on that there can be no concrete estimates on how much premiums could be reduced, however, programs that reduce the likelihood of insurance claims over time would have an impact on premiums over time. The program would be on-going at an estimated \$30,000 per year. [Answer provided by Doug Halley]

Transportation Coordinator
The useful life should be 1 year, because this is an on-going operating expense right?

This item was not recommended in the FY13 budget.

What are the biggest obstacles to combining the various shuttle and dispatch services?

Combining the COA Van, Roadrunner, Rail Shuttle and Dial-A-Ride will mean gaining the cooperation and support from each of the entities responsible for each of the services and ensuring that the mission of each service is retained to the satisfaction of each entity and the people they serve. [Answer provided by Doug Halley]

Highway & Recycling/Transfer Station

Truck Drive/Skilled Laborer (H-3)

Would there be any savings in reduced overtime?

What is the estimate with current and future benefits?

This is not being considered for FY2013. [Answer provided by Corey York]

Skid Steer (Bobcat)

Would there be fines if we don't comply with Mass. Storm Water Regs?

Currently, the Health Department has to submit annual reports to document our compliance with the Storm water Regulations. There are fines associated with failure to comply with the Storm water requirements. [Answer provided by Corey York]

Is there a possibility of sharing with other towns or departments?

It is difficult to share this type of construction equipment with other Towns since we would both need it during the same time to perform similar type work. [Answer provided by Corey York]

Towable Generator

How many generators do we currently have?

The Highway Department currently has 4 generators, but only one high-capacity towable generator. [Answer provided by Corey York]

Is there any option to share with another town?

This would be a difficult item to share for the same reasoning described above. It would also be difficult to share during emergencies such as these past large storm events since the other Towns are typically experiencing similar emergency needs. [Answer provided by Corey York]

Would this be big enough to power the Senior Center (instead of installing a fixed one there)?

This generator is large enough to support the Senior Center facility. However, it is not adequate to also support the air conditioner units. The issues that typically arise are the time it takes to deliver the generator for an unexpected event (assuming it is not being used for another emergency purpose) and the setup time to ensure the connections are working properly. Then there is an added factor of keeping it fueled and running for prolonged outages. [Answer provided by Corey York]

Center Common

Would it make sense until after we complete the traffic study?

This is not being considered for FY2013

Message Boards

How many functioning boards do we currently have?

The Town has 3 functioning message boards. [Answer provided by Corey York]

Are all of these boards “owned” by the Highway Department?

These message boards are maintained by the Highway Department. [Answer provided by Corey York]

Is there any option to share with another town?

It is difficult to share this type of equipment with other Towns since we would both need it during the same times. We have, on occasion, loaned them to other towns during non-emergencies. [Answer provided by Corey York]

Would it be possible simply to have a “marquee-type” of board at the Transfer Station? (instead of an illuminated sign)

One of the benefits for these types of message boards is the ease of changing the messages via the computer. Plus, I.T. also has the ability to also relocate and re-program the boards in the event of an emergency. A manual-style marquee-type sign would be more time consuming to change the message for each event and also possibly more-prone to be vandalized by changing the wording. [Answer provided by Corey York]

Information Technology

Core Switch Replacement

Has the manufacturer set an end-of-support date for the hardware?

If the switch were to fail before July what is our plan? An emergency purchase?

On February 1, 2011 manufacturer’s support for the Town’s core router ended. Our current unit features several levels of redundancy including multiple power supplies and redundant supervisor engines. In the event of a hardware failure before July a repair attempt would be made using spare parts we have on hand or obtained through second-hand equipment vendors. If a repair is unsuccessful an emergency purchase will need to be made. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

Trailer Aerial Lift

How much have we spent in the last few years on renting equipment? (ballpark is fine)

While this is no longer being considered for FY13, approximately \$30,000 has been spent in the last three years on radio antenna service work. Most of this work has been carried out by outside

contractors who have the necessary equipment to reach our antenna infrastructure. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

How do we put up banners today?

Banners are currently put up by the Fire Department's Fire Alarm division using an aerial bucket truck. We have considered the possibility of using this truck for antenna work, however the off road conditions and tree growth surrounding some of our sites would prevent a truck of this size from gaining access. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

Is there any option to share with another town?

We have not looked into this option at this time. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

How many communication antennas do we have in town?

We maintain 40 different communication antennas at 12 separate sites. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

Would we be able to make some money back on this by renting it out for bungee jumping at NARA? ;)

Emergency Communications Equipment

Is there any option to share with another town? (e.g., WAVM radio station in Maynard)

While the WAVM station does cover Acton well, it is a "shared-time" station, meaning they share the frequency with UMass Boston, with Maynard being license-restricted to 2 PM – 9 PM. We need 24-hour broadcast capability, with 24-hour access, fiber optic or Internet connectivity, standby power, etc. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

Commuter Lot Communications & Surveillance

What is a ballpark figure for how much more it would cost to install 2 years after the station? Say, 50% more? 10% more?

The cost quoted in the proposal assumes installation is done during the construction phase of the new station. This would result in less time and labor as conduits and wiring can be run before the walls are built. I would estimate a 15% increase in labor cost if we wait. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

What other places in town do we have cameras? Library and Public Safety?

Correct. We currently have surveillance equipment at the Public Safety Facility and the Memorial Library. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

How much would just the call boxes cost?

Installation of the call boxes will cost approximately \$15,000. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

Replace Storage System

Has NetApp set an end-of-support date for the hardware?

Our current EMC storage unit is scheduled for end-of-life on March 30, 2013. At that time we will no longer be able to purchase support or parts from the manufacturer. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

Do we have a storage reduction program in place? (e.g., auto-archiving after a certain date or de-duplication)

Our current unit does not support data de-duplication. We do intend on utilizing de-duplication on the replacement unit. Similarly, the new system will auto-archive lesser-used information to lower-cost disks in the array. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

What would our ability be to increase the storage if we need more than 20T before 2020? Can we add incremental storage?

The proposed storage unit supports incremental storage increases up to 240 terabytes. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

How much has our storage usage grown from, say, 3 years ago? 50% growth?

Over the last three years we've seen at least a 50% increase in storage. Major increases are attributed to a rise in email use, server virtualization, digitalization of paper documents such as building plans and applications as well as financial records, the addition of GIS parcel and map data, and paperless billing. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

If we're already are over 80% (9.8T of 11.6T) consumed can we make it more than 18 months?

Based on the last 180 days of data we will reach our capacity in approximately 20 months. This figure only accounts for the current systems we have in place and does not factor in upcoming projects that will rely heavily on storage. The reorg's group proposed digitizing records project, electronic permitting, and Tyler (Munis) Content Management system, will rely heavily on network storage. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

If the system were to fail before July what is our plan? An emergency purchase?

We currently pay for an extended yearly support contract and are entitled to repair or replacement of all components from the manufacturer. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

How would the new system decrease the expense budget?

The new system will not necessarily decrease the expense budget, but will alleviate known future cost increases as the existing system ages. [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

Manager

Reorg

Does the budget include process redesign or would that all be done by staff instead of consultants?

The proposed Reorg, in tandem with Permit Tracking System, GIS, and Electronic Record System, is aimed at improving customer service. To accomplish this, the Reorg project will physically integrate the land use departments, streamline the flow of information processing and handling, and create space efficiencies. It is anticipated that the Reorg will be done in a deliberate and phased manner by staff and the systems vendors (Permit Tracking, GIS, Electronic Records). The vendors provide consulting services for installation, implementation, and integration of their systems. The cost of these consulting services is included in the system purchase. It is further anticipated that staff will continue implementation and refinements for some time after the Reorg project is completed. [Answer provided by staff reorganization group]

The Kaffee Kang quote include design and construction, right?

Yes, the quote includes design and construction. [Answer provided by staff reorganization group]

Municipal Properties

Senior Center Design

Do we need to settle the question of Senior Center or Senior & Community Center before starting the design?

Would CPA money be an option for design or construction?

The following is an excerpt from the minutes of the 12/1/11 SCBC meeting:

“The SCBC will meet the BoS on Monday, January 9 to discuss the charter of this committee and how best to proceed. Paulina spoke of the need to include other residents to explore the community center piece. Peter suggested the SCBC form a subcommittee to explore this option. It would be important to have representation from recreation on this sub committee”

Arborist (Tree Climber)

Have we had to contract out any of the work or simply put it off? Is there any option to share with another town?

This item was not recommended in the FY13 budget.

Windsor Building Historic Restoration and Reuse

How many handicapped-accessible rooms does the town have?

There are four such rooms in Town Hall, two or three (depending upon configuration and timing) in the Memorial Library, one at the Public Safety Facility, and two at the Senior Center. In addition, we can book space from time to time at the High School through Community Education. That may seem like a very large number of rooms. However, most committees want to meet Monday through Thursday evenings, and it is a challenge to fit the right size group into the right sized room. The Boards also desire to have a consistent meeting space. Finally, there is quite a bit of demand for space from groups other than Town Boards and committees, and the Memorial Library feels that it is their mandate to provide space for these “outside” groups. [Answer provided by Dean Charter]

Are there any private rooms available for rent, and if so, for how much?

I am not aware of much in the way of availability of private rooms space for night meetings. I believe the Woman’s Club is available at the rate of \$500 per day. Based on the number of requests we get from outside groups, I suspect that the supply of inexpensive space in Acton is pretty limited. [Answer provided by Dean Charter]

Is there an estimate for what we might collect in rent for the Windsor building over a year?

I have never developed such an estimate, because I have figured that the primary use of the Windsor Building would be by town boards and committees, with only infrequent use by outside groups. Again, noting the experience at the Woman's Club, they have recently gotten CPA funds for capital improvements, probably because they cannot fund those improvements on rentals. [Answer provided by Dean Charter]

Replace Heating Systems at Fire Stations 2 & 3 – Design Only

Is the need for replacing these systems more urgent than the Windsor Building Restoration?

In my opinion, the heating system replacements are more urgent than the work at the Windsor Building. However, the Windsor Building project fits within the confines of the Community Preservation Act (Historic Preservation), and the heating systems do not, so it is not a true “apples to apples” comparison. [Answer provided by Dean Charter]

Do you have a ballpark estimate of the annual heating cost and expected savings?

In FY 2011 the heat bill for Fire Station 2 (South Acton) was \$8,222; in Fire Station 3 (West Acton) it was \$8,962. Our mechanical contractor estimates that heating systems of this vintage operate at 60% to 70% of combustion efficiency. New systems would operate at an expected efficiency of 90%. I do not want to overpromise savings, but it seems that we could expect to save \$2,200 to \$2,500 in fuel savings each year for each building. The primary reason, however, for doing this project is for reliability; the units are original to the buildings and are all about fifty years old. Repairs are expensive and everything is worn out and prime for failure. [Answer provided by Dean Charter]

Would MetroWest Mechanical be able to estimate how close a new proposal would be to their \$80,000 from several years ago?

A phone conversation yesterday with MetroWest confirmed that the numbers in the memo are still valid. Metals prices have gone up but labor costs have not greatly escalated. Year one of the project would be for engineering and estimating, and we can fine-tune the construction costs next year prior to asking for an appropriation for actual construction. [Answer provided by Dean Charter]

Senior Center standby generator

How long would it take to set up the mobile generator in the event of an emergency?

In the past we have used a mobile generator borrowed from the Highway Department for this task. It takes about two hours to bring it to the site and set it up, assuming that we have a bit of time to plan for the event (i.e. the generator is not already in use elsewhere and we have a crew lined up to do the work). Usually we set the generator up in advance of foreseen events, such as the Tropical Storm. The building requires a 50KW generator for all services, which is fairly large for a towable generator and is a larger demand than can be satisfied with the existing Highway generator. The Highway towable generator is not of sufficient size to power the air conditioning systems in the building, so the Senior center could not be used as a cooling center during a prolonged summer power outage or brownout. The building has been impacted in the past by unexpected outages of uncertain duration,

which cause programs to be cancelled with very short notice; a permanent generator would resolve this problem. [Answer provided by Dean Charter]

Would the increased operating expense be due to maintenance and what would the estimate be?

A maintenance service contract for a unit of this size would be between \$550 and \$600 per year, fuel would be extra, and would vary in price with usage and fuel type. [Answer provided by Dean Charter]

Not a budgeting question, but does NStar have the Senior Center listed a high priority site to bring back online?

In the past NSTAR has stated that there are no facilities or areas of Acton that would qualify for top priority status; that designation would be reserved for hospitals and the like. The Senior Center is situated fairly close to where a circuit originates at the sub-station on the Acton/Sudbury line, but outages do occur. [Answer provided by Dean Charter]

Natural Resources

NARA Improvements

Why would these improvements increase the operating expenses?

NARA improvements include installing ventilation in the bathhouse snack bar. The addition of an exhaust fan in the bathhouse snack bar will increase the utility bills that Recreation pays each month to NSTAR and Constellation. This improvement will lower the temperature of the building interior by pulling out the hot air that currently builds up and stagnates up in the high ceiling. During the height of the summer, the temperature of the snack bar exceeds 85 degrees and despite use of cooling fans, it is an intolerable temperature to work in. [Answer provided by Cathy Fochtman]

Arboretum wildflower

How old is the current boardwalk?

The Arboretum wildflower boardwalk was constructed in 1990. This project was not recommended for FY13. [Answer provided by Tom Tidman]

Nursing

Website

How would the website reduce the operating expenses?

The web site will be a marketing initiative expense to increase revenue.

Police

Cruiser lights and sirens

Do we have 5 new cruisers coming in (based on “cost effective to replace the units as new when outfitting new cruisers”)?

Yes, we buy five per year in order to turn over the patrol vehicles every two years. Once replaced, the old patrol vehicles are either used as unmarked vehicles for another few years or traded based on condition, idling time and mileage. After three years the warranty expires on these vehicles. Occasionally we pass one down to another town department for their use so they can avoid buying a new vehicle if the old cruiser still meets their needs. [Answer provided by Frank Widmayer]

How old are the units that we would be replacing?

Six to nine years old. Also we are changing the model of the cruiser since the Crown Victoria model is no longer available. We will be using an all wheel drive SUV version called an Interceptor that is a crossover vehicle based on a Ford Taurus frame. The new cruisers will be more fuel-efficient but the big selling point to me is the all wheel drive. The lights and sirens will need to be updated for those vehicles and they were getting to the end of their useful life anyway. [Answer provided by Frank Widmayer]

Why would these improvements increase the operating expenses?

We would be buying five in FY13 and five in FY14, then none for the next two years. It makes sense to budget for them within the operating expenses since they are a recurring expense and by definition do not meet the criteria for a true capital expense. This change was made by the Budget Book Working Group and makes sense to me. [Answer provided by Frank Widmayer]

Replace radar units (3)

How many units do we currently own?

We own 13 radar units including 3 handheld radars and one Lidar (laser). Most are over 15 years old and need to be replaced over the next five years. Five of the cruiser models are single head and can only check the speed of vehicles traveling in front of the cruiser. The newer ones will run in a forward and backward position at the same time. The three newer ones are already three to four years old. The one Lidar unit can only be used on flat terrain and for crash reconstruction scenes to measure distances so we won't be adding any of those models. We are replacing three each in FY13, FY14 & FY15, then two each year for FY16 & FY17. [Answer provided by Frank Widmayer]

Lead Dispatcher

Do the benefits estimate include current benefits as well as setting aside for future benefits?

If I understand the question correctly I would say that the benefits are included in the amount for FY13 and from that point on they would be handled in another section of the Finance Department Budget as all other positions are handled. [Answer provided by Frank Widmayer]

Is there any option to share with another town?

A regional dispatch study has been done recently in an attempt to regionalize towns for dispatching emergency services personnel. The preliminary study included options for eight towns or two groups of four towns. One of their recommendations that is expected to be in the final report is that Acton hire a lead dispatcher because the need is apparent. I have always been interested in regionalization of dispatch but other towns have been reluctant to join us in spite of many attempts to do so. Sharing is always an option if regionalization becomes a reality. In the current environment with the present staffing levels a lead dispatcher is needed and would not have time to be shared with another town. [Answer provided by Frank Widmayer]

QUESTIONS FROM STEVE NOONE

I would like to see the so-called "26 Liner" on Budget Saturday if not before. It should be updated to include 2011 actuals.

Please see the Selectmen's packet for January 7, document titled "030 – 26 Liner Budget". [Answer provided by Steve Barrett]

I believe Clint has already requested FTE's by department, but it should include actual FTE not just Budget.

Please see the Selectmen's packet for January 7, document titled "040 – Current Employees." [Answer provided by Marianne Fleckner]

QUESTIONS FROM CLINT SEWARD

The background for the budget is reportedly: “Acton continues to witness significant increases in benefit costs, and decreases in state aid.”

1. Level Services budget: is this budget a level services budget? If not, from where do you propose to obtain the additional revenue to fund it?

Yes. [Answer provided by Steve Ledoux]

2. Capital: Of the capital items requested with detail in the budget book, more than 30 are noted as “new or expanded service.”

The recommended capital was to insure level service operation. Not all capital requests in the book were recommended by the Manager. [Answer provided by Steve Ledoux]

a. How does this qualify as “level services?”

Please see above. [Answer provided by Steve Ledoux]

b. Can you please reorganize your capital request list with the “new or expanded service” items listed separately?

The recommended capital projects are listed on page 3 of the Manager’s budget message in the budget book. [Answer provided by Steve Ledoux]

3. OPEB: The recommended budget will cause a large deficit before any OPEB money is set aside. The Town has two votes at ALG on a recommended budget. What will be your position at ALG on how to pay for the OPEB obligation, in conjunction with the budget deficit you are recommending?

Last year, we agreed to work with the Finance Committee on this important matter. We look forward to the FinCom presentation and recommendation Saturday on this subject.

4. Capital: A list of capital requests by itself is difficult to evaluate. Can you please provide a list of all capital items owned by the Town by department so that a comparison may be made on an “apples to apples” basis?

Please see the Selectmen’s packet for January 7, document title “050 – Fixed Assets.” [Answer provided by Steve Barrett]

5. Emergency Plan: Does Acton have a comprehensive emergency plan?

Yes, certified by the Commonwealth. [Answer provided by John Murray]

How many times in the past ten years has Acton needed emergency shelters?

I can probably think of about ten times over the past ten years on average, but more lately. If you need a shelter and don't have one, there can be real problems.

Why was the Sr. Center used for shelter when it was not suited for that purpose? (No generator, no showers, etc.)

Different facilities are used depending on the severity of the incident and demand for service. The senior center can accommodate a certain number of people with certain services. Should an incident require a larger, more comprehensive facility, that step would be, and was, taken with the cooperation of the schools.

How many standby generators does the Town own and where are they?

**The town has permanent generators in the following locations:
Town Hall (diesel, covers entire building except elevator and A/C)
468 Main Street (natural gas, covers essential systems)
Memorial Library (diesel, covers essential systems and computer hub)
Center Fire Station (natural gas, covers most systems)
South Fire Station (natural gas, covers most systems)
West Fire Station (diesel, covers all systems)
Public Works Facility (natural gas, covers all systems)
Public Safety Facility (diesel, covers almost all systems)
Waste Water Treatment Plant (diesel, covers essential systems)* verify with BOH since this facility is operated by an outside contractor.**

Additionally the Highway Department has a towable diesel generator that can cover portions of the Senior Center, and the WWTP has a diesel towable to power the pumps in the wet wells.

There are numerous smaller gasoline fueled generators for small applications like lighting units and electric tools, which can be used for short periods of time for lights run off extension cords "when all else fails" in our buildings. [Answer provided by Dean Charter]

There are two large portable units. The highway unit is assigned to the Senior Center, if it is being used as a shelter and the sewer treatment plant has one. We have one medium unit on wheels which powers the Emergency Management building. There are an additional 8 units used for deployment for pumping or for medical uses in a power outage. [Answer provided by John Murray]

Why not use the schools as shelters since they have more facilities, and from news accounts most towns use their school gyms.

The major philosophy of Emergency Management is scalability. You do not place 6 people in a school gym. You also do not have a public discussion of emergency deployment/response plans in public. If

the Finance Committee would like to review the subject of shelters in executive session, I am willing to do so. [Answer provided by John Murray]

What other venues are available for shelters within Acton? Private or business?

See above. [Answer provided by John Murray]

6. Employees: How can we find out how many employees have been added year over year by department?

a. Is there a report by department of number of employees in 2011, 2012, projected for 2013?

Please see the Selectmen's packet for January 7, document titled "045 – Employee Count" [Answer provided by Marianne Fleckner]

Also, my understanding we have no new positions planned for FY13.

b. Is there a similar report for part time and FTE employees?

Please see the Selectmen's packet for January 7, document titled "040 – Current Employees." [Answer provided by Marianne Fleckner]

7. Employees: how many open positions are included in the FY2013 budget?

This question can best be addressed after discussion at the Budget Saturday meeting.

8. Reserves: What is the status of the talked about NESWC reserve against landfill liability. It has been mentioned as \$1M, but is this still the case? And has money been set aside for it? Or should it be set aside? Or is it finally ended?

Yes, \$1M has been set aside as a potential liability. No change/update in status. [Answer provided by Steve Barrett]

9. Veteran's Office: you plan to fund a full time employee. Is this in line with a level service budget? Can this office be regionalized?

The FY13 Budget contains funding for a full-time VSO (Veterans Service Officer). Mass. General Law requires a full-time VSO for any town with a population greater than 12,000.

Until recently, the Town's VSO position has not been full-time, therefore, a level-service comparison cannot be made.

Acton has discussed the possibility of regionalization with neighboring towns (by law, they must be contiguous). None were interested. [Answer provided by James MacRae]

10. Library: Who is using it?

At the end of June 2011, over 14,500 Acton residents had library cards here. Observation tells us that the library is used by a cross section of the community--families with young children, high school students, and adults of all ages, including seniors, and by people from different racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. [Answer provided by Marcia Rich]

Can we get detailed info on usage?

We can get detailed information on the circulation of different types of materials, but we can't tell if a children's book has been taken out by a child, an adult who only wants basic information on a topic, or an adult whose primary language isn't English and finds children's materials better suited to their needs. [Answer provided by Marcia Rich]

How many books get signed out?

In FY11, 414,424 printed books were taken out. (Total items checked out was 665,990.) [Answer provided by Marcia Rich]

How much traffic is for DVD's and videos?

In FY11, 108,462 DVDs and videos were circulated. 60,543 of these were children's materials. [Answer provided by Marcia Rich]

How much for children's books?

In FY11, 245,077 children's books were checked out. [Answer provided by Marcia Rich]

How much for books?

I believe this was asked and answered above; if I'm misinterpreting one or the other question, please let me know. [Answer provided by Marcia Rich]

Do people use the reference section anymore with the availability of references online?

The print reference section is still used, sometimes separately and sometimes in conjunction with online resources--it all depends on the user and their question. The library is putting more and more (now about 70%) of its reference budget into online resources and currently buys 17 databases in

addition to the ones we have access to from other sources, such as the state or the Minuteman Library Network. [Answer provided by Marcia Rich]

To give some further perspective, in FY10 Acton was 96th in population in the state and Memorial Library was:

4th in the state in circulation per hour open;

6th in the state in the circulation of children's materials;

6th in the state in circulation per FTE;

11th in the state in circulation per capita and

12th in the state in total circulation. [Answer provided by Marcia Rich]

West Acton Citizens' Library Statistics [Answer provided by Jennifer Friedman]

2010 Population Estimate: 1,315

FY2011 Circulation Information (7/1/10 - 6/30/11)

Material	Adult	Young Adult	Children's	Totals
Books	4,960	1,230	5,270	11,460
Print periodicals, newspapers and other print serials	985			985
Audio (compact discs, cassettes, etc)	35		75	110
Video (VHS/Discs/DVD's, etc.)	100		850	950
E-books				
Downloadable audio (audiobooks, music, etc.)				
Downloadable video				
Materials in electronic format				
Materials in microform				
Miscellaneous (e.g. e-book readers, kits, framed art prints, puppets, films, etc.)				
Totals	6,080	1,230	6,195	13,505

Interlibrary Loans

ILL Type	Returnables	Non-Returnables	Totals
Interlibrary loans RECEIVED FROM other libraries	5		5
Interlibrary loans PROVIDED TO other libraries			

Interlibrary Loans Reported as Patron Circulation in the Circulation Information Section Above (If Applicable)

	Adult	Children's	Totals
ILL's also reported as patron circulation in the Circulation Information section above (if applicable)			

FY 2011 Nonresident Circulation Transactions (7/1/10 - 6/30/11)

Number of items circulated at library to residents of other MA municipalities certified for State Aid to Public Libraries	1,000
Number of items circulated at library to residents of other MA municipalities not certified for State Aid to Public Libraries	
Number of items circulated at library to residents of other states	
Total	1,000

Services At Main Library & All Outlets – During FY 2011

Total hours the main library was open	1,605
Total number of weeks the main library was open	
Total hours the branches were open	
Total hours the bookmobile was open	
Total number of Saturdays the library system was open	
Total hours the library system was open on Saturdays	
Total number of Sundays the library system was open	15
Total hours the library system was open on Sundays	45.0
Total hours the library system was open after 5 p.m.	104
Total attendance in library system	6,250
Total number of reference transactions in library system	
Total number of children's programs held in library system	100
Total attendance at children's programs in library system	1,900
Total number of YA programs held in library system	
Total attendance at YA programs in library system	
Total number of adult Programs held in library system	0
Total attendance at Adult programs in library system	
Total number of volunteers in library system	10
Total number of hours volunteered in library system	1,000.0

Borrowers, Branches, & Bookmobiles - As Of 6/30/11

Number of registered borrowers	800
Number of registered borrowers that were residents of your municipality	675
Has the file of registered borrowers been purged since 6/30/2008?	Yes
Number of branch libraries	0
Number of library's bookmobiles in service	0

QUESTIONS FROM DAVID CLOUGH

Was there an assumption that we are going to be without power often? What frequency was assumed? How can the equipment earmarked for this kind of event be used at other times (dual use).

The assumption regarding frequency has not changed. Four other assumptions have changed.

1. NSTAR Response

a. NSTAR has stated not expect them in Town to do repairs for the first three days of a major outage

b. The two relatively minor “major Storms” we had this year maxed out NSTAR’S Emergency Response Plan

2. FEMA & MEMA Response

a. 5 – 7 days

3. Residents and Businesses will not accept such a delayed emergency response. They need to be able navigate roadways within hours of the end of the actual event.

4. Unavailable/Unsafe Police & Fire Presence

a. The number of officers has not grown with the “normal” daily needs. In Emergency Response circumstances the under manning is much more pronounced because of the additional needs. Officers are not available for traffic direction.

b. Intersections such as 2A & 27, it is unsafe to place an officer in the intersection due to volume

Addressing the need for the emergency traffic signals:

We have traffic signals at the following locations for the safe passage of vehicles and pedestrians in good weather conditions:

1. Nagog and 2A

2. Main and 2A

3. Brookside shops and 2A

4. Main and Post Office Sq.

5. Kelley’s Corner

6. South Acton Sq at Main St

7. High and Rt. 62

8. West Acton Sq.

9. No traffic light but significant traffic loads at periodic times.

10. Taylor and Rt. 2 (proposed signals will not work at this location. Engineering is investigating the ability to place a portable generator to power the intersection

We are recommending 3 emergency traffic signals for these nine locations. The expectation is one unit will be deployed at each of the following locations during significant emergencies:

· Main & 2A

· Kelley’s Corner

· West Acton Sq.

These units are programmable and as such may be used for non-emergency purposes. The Police Chief will have full access during non-emergency times.

[Answer supplied by John Murray]

For example, are we renting generators at 4th of July, where now we would need fewer?

We don't rent generators for NARA events (sometimes we borrow portable units from Civil Defense). We do rent light towers for very large events such as July 4th. The Highway Dept. has a trailer mounted diesel generator that we use for certain events such as the yearly concert at the Skatepark and the beach party we do at NARA. [Answer provided by Tom Tidman]

Could we save police overtime and use the portable traffic lights at times?

I don't think there would be any savings in the overtime budget. It would improve the safety of the intersections and improve traffic flow. [Answer supplied by Frank Widmayer]

Can the emergency communications equipment be used for major events?

The electronic message boards are heavily-used during major (and minor) events. The more message boards we have, the better we will be able to indicate traffic instructions and parking options for recreation events, elections, emergency detours, and so on. Should we be fortunate enough to provide a low-power FM broadcast, that could certainly be used in any of these events as well (you may have seen signs to "Tune to 1670 AM" or similar on highways for traffic and weather information). [Answer provided by Mark Hald]

Nursing

1. What is the viability of Hospice Care? Can you make money with it per case? What would the volume be? Who can deliver the care? Can it be a combination of Nurse/aid? What would the startup costs be (\$100K?)

In the past there has been some on/off discussion of Hospice Care being added to the service. There would be considerable startup fees to do this and I unfortunately cannot even begin to know what that would be, but agree that it may be in the \$100K + ballpark. There are other regulations for Hospice separate to what there is for Home Care, as well as the need to have an MD as the Medical Director who is available at all time for any issues/orders needed/med changes etc. Also, staff (all staff from office to clinical) would have to be hired or trained in Hospice regulations, protocol, billing etc. When Hospice has been discussed in the past there has also been the concern that it does not fit in the model we have currently have to support the community. Please see attachments for both the Medicare Conditions of Participation for both Home Care and Hospice in the Selectmen's packet for January 7, documents titled "062 – 1999 CFR Title 42" and "060 – Hospice Care Conditions of Participation", respectively. These documents are not printed for the meeting's packet. [Answer supplied by Heather Hurley]

2. Utilization reports

a. What is the average number of visits per day delivered by nurses in calendar 2011 or fiscal 2012

The average number of visits/day for RN during the week is 8, weekend average is 1 in CY11. [Answer supplied by Heather Hurley]

b. What is the average number of visits per day delivered by aids in calendar 2011 or fiscal 2012

The average number of visits/day for aides during the week is 11, weekends are 2 consistently on Sat and Sun for 4 hours each day for CY11. [Answer supplied by Heather Hurley]

3. How much income did the nursing service have in calendar 2011 or fiscal 2012

Current revenue for FY12 is \$214,672 as of COB 01/04/2011. Revenue for FY11 totaled \$535,394. [Answer supplied by Heather Hurley]

4. What are the statutory requirements of the public health nurse? For example, how much education outreach is required, How much immunization or any other professional services are required, etc?

Please see the Selectmen's packet for January 7, document titled "064 – Public Health Requirements." [Answer supplied by Heather Hurley]

5. What impact would the proposed national Medicare cuts have on the income and care?

The proposed Medicare cuts would of course have an impact on the revenue received by the nursing service as they do each year there have been cuts. As for the care, the Nursing Service has always strived for the highest quality of care for the residents of Acton and in the last few years the surrounding towns. Every patient we care for has different issues and different needs and we pride ourselves on assisting and making our patients independent with their health management. Some patients can do this remarkably quickly, others need more time to get to a point where they understand and can safely manage this on their own. To say that the care will change if Medicare cuts our reimbursement goes against our mission as a Public Health Department and a Home Health Agency. Our awards, innovations, low re-hospitalization rate and positive feed back from the residents we service speaks for itself. Please see the Selectmen's packet for January 7, document titled "066 – Nursing Mission Statement." [Answer supplied by Heather Hurley]