

2023 Annual Town Meeting Questions

Last updated 5/10/23

Please submit questions to Selectboard@southhadleyma.gov

Q: Town meeting review committee, can you clarify what this is?

A: A Town Meeting Review Committee shall be appointed every five years beginning in 2015. Said committee shall include the Town Moderator, one representative each from the Selectboard, School Committee, Appropriations Committee, Planning Board, three Town Meeting members and up to four registered voters who are not Town Meeting members to be appointed by the Selectboard. Said committee shall report its findings and recommendations regarding ways and means to improve the effectiveness and efficiencies of Town Meeting to the Selectboard within six months of its appointment or such further time as the Selectboard may grant.

Q: Article 6. What are the current salaries of moderator, select board members, and assessors and is there an increase?

A: Article 6 Moderator is \$500; Selectboard is \$2,000 each ; assessor \$2,500 each
No increases for FY24. Note that this article just "fixes" the salaries for these elective officers. The actual monies are included in the budget article.

Q: Article 9. Budget - How much money does the police department get in grant funding on top of town budget?

A: This varies by year. Please see the grant section of our Town Reports:

Grant Funding, FY22:

The South Hadley Police was awarded \$146,300 in grant funding during fiscal year 2022. This supplemental funding includes the following: \$91,750 from the Massachusetts E911 Department for the operation of the E911 Dispatch Center; \$6,200 from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security under the Traffic Enforcement Grant Program; \$12,260 from the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health (DMH) to enhance the SHPD Crisis Response Team (CIT); \$30,450 from the DMH to support the development of the co-responder clinician program; \$5,300 from the US Department of Justice to support the Departments' efforts in achieving accreditation.

Grant Funding, FY21

To be good stewards of the public's financial resources, the department applied for and was awarded \$118,000 in grant funding, which is a 25% increase from FY20. This supplemental funding includes the following: \$88,500 from the Massachusetts E911 Department for the operation of the E911 Dispatch Center; \$8,200 from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security under the Traffic Enforcement Grant Program; \$12,260 from the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health to enhance the SHPD Crisis Response Team (CIT); \$1,300 from Med-Project Inc. to support the medication disposal program; and \$8,400 from the Massachusetts

Executive Office of Public Safety and Security awarded under the Edward Byrne Grant Program to promote police innovation.

Q: What does "review body cameras for police mean"? Is it reviewing which cameras, processes, their effectiveness, etc? What are the consequences for officers turning off cameras/when is the policy going to be written?

A: Review of body worn cameras will include community position (does the community want the officers to have cameras), product efficiency, costs and policy development. While a standard operating procedure for body worn cameras has not been written yet, the policy would read that certain events are mandatory to be recorded and failure to record or turn off a recorder during an event would be a violation of the policy. And, as with any policy/rule violations, the employee is subject to discipline after a review.

Q: Article 16-17. Opioid - Who will be doing this work?

A: Depends on what the work is for and if Town Meeting limits the use. This could be used to hire vendors to do educational programs, or staff to provide services, materials or education flyers, etc.

Q: Article 20. Short term rental - Who decides who gets the unoccupied Airbnb

A: Articles 20 and 21 create a General and Zoning Bylaw to regulate short term rentals. Article 20 creates a licensing process, under which no more than 25 license for Short Term Rentals can be issued at any time. Of these, no more than 5 can be for non-owner occupied short term rentals. Licenses will be issued on a first come first served basis to qualified applicants that meet the standards for short term rental operations as detailed in the zoning and general bylaws.

Q: Article 22. ADU - What is the plan with South Hadley Falls development?

A: Only properties with single-family residential dwellings are eligible for an ADU. So, if the property is already a multi-family dwelling, it is not eligible for an ADU. ADUs are prohibited in the Industrial Zoning Districts. If there were a single-family property in one of the other zoning districts in the Falls, that was dimensionally conforming to that zoning district (ie lot size and frontage requirements, setbacks, etc), to add an ADU, either attached or detached, the new building would need to keep the total lot coverage under the max allowed. Due to the typically small lot sizes and existing building coverage, it is unlikely that further building coverage would be permissible. For dimensionally non-conforming preexisting single family lots, a Special Permit would be needed from the Planning Board to expand the non-conformity. In this case, there are greater standards to demonstrate that the expansion is not "significantly more detrimental to the neighborhood". So, it would really depend on how the ADU was designed and how it would fit on the lot as to whether or not it would be permissible.

Q: Does the money reflected in the proposed budget for personnel include wages AND all of the incremental items such as medicare, health insurance, FICA, etc?

A: Yes. Wages are reflected in individual budgets. Medicare, health insurance, FICA are reflected separately on page 67 of the budget book.

Q: Is the Parks Working Foreperson a new employee?

A: This position is currently vacant. The FY24 budget proposes to move funds from the seasonal line item to the parks employee line item to fund this position.

Q: Does this mean there will be no seasonal staff in Parks? If yes, then that means a Parks staff will have to cover the weekends and some nights?

A: The use of seasonal staff has been minimal and there is still funding for seasonal staff. DPW has the ability to cover weekends and nights based on need and on an on call basis.

Q: What is the increase of \$4500 to rubbish collection in Town Hall with less usage?

A: The cost of trash and recycling has increased.

Q: What is the \$10K for animal control?

A: We anticipate costs to increase especially as the Town looks to ensure backup services are in place.

Q: Are the increases to Ledgles due to their contract?

A: Yes the contract has annual increases.

Q: How can one person do all of the inspections, etc. that the building inspector will be required to do with the proposed by-law changes? Are we hiring or contracting for a second inspector?

A: There is currently funding in the budget to hire additional inspectors. The Town is contracting with inspectors to assist on an as needed basis as well as provide back up services in case the Building Inspector is on vacation.

Q: Who will do the HR work, and all that you are doing now if we don't hire a new HR Director?

A: The Town is actively seeking an HR Director / Assistant Town Administrator.

Q: Do we have any kind of number yet for the Schools?

A: The school budget is on the town and school website:

Q: Is there more information about Article 15, the compensation fund?

A: This fund was created in 2015 to cover payouts when employees leave. The amount varies from year to year and is hard to predict. Town Meeting voted twice in 2018 to add 100k and 75k. There is 47k left. Sick payouts were eliminated for employees hired after 2013, so the costs moving forward would primarily be for vacation buyout.

Q: Is the Town still paying the former superintendent?

A: No.

Q: Is the revenue from Ledges covering expenses?

A: Revenue from Ledges is covering operating expenses and capital expenditures. It is not currently covering debt service, which is being covered by an allocation of Free Cash.

Q: Are we addressing cyber security?

A: Yes. The Town recently upgraded infrastructure and subscribed to threat detection software. We set aggressive virus and spam filtering settings on our email platform and implemented a virtual private network dedicated appliance to manage remote connections to the network.

Q: What are our class sizes?

A: The School Department has student teacher ratios by grade. PreK-K: 15. Grade 1-2: 20. Grade 3: 22. Grade 4: 20. Grade 5 - 19. Grade 6-8: 22 -27. High school varies.

Q: What is the police increase? Are additional officers being hired?

A: The increase reflects two years of contract increases because the contract was not yet settled and therefore not reflected in the FY23 budget. The Town is hiring additional officers to fill currently vacant positions.

Q: Why do we need additional positions?

A: Positions proposed in the Town budget are to fill positions that have been vacant as opposed to creating new positions. The new Director of Building Operations is proposed to be a joint hire with the School Department, which previously had a facility director position that has been unfilled for several years.