I. OPEN MEETING
A. Opening Ceremonies
Chairman Chris Maas opened the meeting at 6:30 PM. Town Manager, Jack Clukey led the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Roll Call
Budget Advisory Committee Members present: James Annis, Kimberly Cavanagh, William Clark, Jamie Gaudion, Sean Letarte, Chris Maas, Kathleen Thibault. Absent: Lucas Butler and Marc Poulin. Also present: Town Manager, Jack Clukey.

C. Adjustments to the Agenda

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
Budget Advisory Committee – March 11, 2020
Resolution 006-051320
MOTION: Annis, seconded: Gaudion, and voted unanimously (7) to approve the minutes of the Budget Advisory Committee meeting of March 11, 2020. Motion passed.

III. FY 2020-2021 MUNICIPAL BUDGET
A. Overview – Revenue outlook and proposed budget revisions
Town Manager, Jack Clukey welcomed the budget advisory committee back to resume its work on the FY 20-21 municipal and wastewater budget via Zoom Teleconference. He said Geoff Chambers, Public Works Foreman and Brett Marshall, Wastewater Department, were in attendance to review their departmental budgets.

The Town Manager said that as a result of the Covid-19 crisis and its effects on the economy, there is a significant reduction in two revenue sources expected to offset the tax commitment. He said that excise tax collections and State revenue sharing are two sources of non-property tax revenue that are expected to decline by a total of $211,970 compared with earlier estimates.

The Town Manager said that in the revised proposed budget, most of the revenue decreases are offset with expenditure cuts. He referenced summary sheets to show the amounts of reduction in expenses that are necessary to meet the reduction in revenue. He said that over $180,000 of the $211,000 is proposed to be offset through expenditure cuts and the remaining amount through use of the fund balance. He also noted that there is no effect on the mil rate assuming a modest increase in the town’s tax valuation.
The Town Manager said that a decrease in excise tax revenues of $68,875 is projected due to fewer people purchasing new vehicles in 2020. He also explained that State revenue sharing depends on the ability of the State to collect income tax and sales tax and that although an increase was initially expected in State revenue sharing, even if the town’s percentage stays the same, there will be a significant decrease in the overall amount to be distributed and he expects a decline in the projected amount of approximately $148,000.

He said that he and Dave Johnson, Finance Director/Treasurer have worked to identify reductions that could be made in expenses to make up for the revenue losses while still maintaining a level of basic operations. He said that some capital expenses will be deferred while others could be addressed by a special town meeting at an appropriate time and that two major capital items, the purchase of a new plow truck and work on the Autumn Avenue Bridge, planned to be paid for through reserves, have been deferred. He said that administrative fees will be eliminated across all departments, personnel costs are to be based on COLA only, part-time wages will be reduced, and a part-time position restructured.

Members discussed the proposed expenditure cuts and offered ideas and asked questions concerning other areas of the budget that could be reduced such as reducing personnel for the cemetery/maintenance seasonal staff and the possibility of reducing appropriations in the recreation budget. With the explanation that the seasonal staff works on a staggered schedule throughout the summer months, members agreed that the seasonal cemetery/maintenance staff should remain staffed as is and that with the PRYMCA being closed and not billing its members, it would be difficult for the YMCA to absorb a reduction in their requested appropriation.

The Town Manager said that the appropriations for health insurance enrollment costs were initially based on the anticipation that there could be changes in enrollment. He said revised amounts are based more closely on current enrollment and provides less ability to make major enrollment changes.

The Town Manager said there is also a reduction to consultant fees for the land use committee based on amounts in current budget. He said this would allow for a similar amount of work as what the committee has done in the current year.

It was discussed that it may be necessary later in 2020 depending on the revenue situation to consider and pursue more reductions based on the effects on the economy due to Covid-19.

Members also talked about reviewing the school budget and that it may be appropriate to request RSU No. 68 to also consider reductions in the future based on the needs of the community.

B. Wastewater

Brett Marshall, 14 year employee of the Wastewater Department was present. Town Manager, Jack Clukey said that Brett has stepped up to the helm during Bill Littlefield’s unexpected absence over the past several weeks and has taken over day to day operations. Brett Marshall said that the annual license is due for renewal and that some projects that were planned for the department will likely be postponed.

The Town Manager said that there is a minimal increase in the operations budget and that the proposed budget will not defer capital for the wastewater department. He also said that rates are not expected to increase and there is no reduction in projected revenue.
C. Public Works
Geoff Chambers, Public Works Foreman was present. He commented regarding discussion earlier in the meeting about reducing the staff for the cemetery/maintenance crew. He expressed concern over the limited availability of the Charleston Correctional workers due to Covid-19 because they do mowing and keep the grounds at the South Dover Cemetery. He said that with the Charleston workers potentially unavailable, he does not advise reducing the staff for the cemetery/maintenance crew.

Town Manager Clukey said that drilling and blasting on Klimavicz Road could be postponed. He said that more gravel could be put down if needed and blasting and ditching can be done in the future.

The Town Manager said that after reviewing the history of the tree removal budget, he doesn’t feel the need to budget $14,000 two years in a row so he is proposing a reduction in tree removal and budgeting only for hazards. He said that $7,000-$8,000 is more in line with what is normally spent annually on tree removal.

He also said that he has reduced the budget for heating fuel because the typical budget is for a higher cost structure and there have been lower energy prices.

The Town Manager said that although the replacement of the 97 plow truck needs to be addressed, it has been eliminated from the budget for this year, and noted that since 2008, the department had only purchased used vehicles until the town bought a new truck in 2017. He discussed the possibility of purchasing a cab and chassis since the truck has a good sander body. He also said that this could be addressed at an emergency special town meeting at a later date.

Chairman Maas asked what could be done if the department is unable to purchase the right replacement parts to put together a plow truck. Geoff Chambers said that the department would adjust and that a plow can be attached to the grader if needed.

Select Board Vice Chairman Freeman Cyr asked about bridge and dam work. Town Manager, Jack Clukey said that the work on the Autumn Ave. bridge is being deferred for this year, but there needs to be a plan implemented by 2021 as structural work may be needed. He said this can also be addressed at an emergency special town meeting. Vice Chairman Freeman Cyr asked about dam work at Branns Mill Pond. The Town Manager said that the dam work at Branns Mill Pond has been done and is holding up well.

Chairman Maas asked of the town’s position in terms of borrowing.

The Town Manager said that the town hasn’t borrowed in more than 10 years in terms of the general fund. He said that the town has been doing lease/purchase agreements which doesn’t go against indebtedness and the town’s ability to borrow. He said that the town has nearly paid off all of its general fund debt. He did say, however, that there has been borrowing through the wastewater department for collection system improvements.

Chairman Maas expressed concern that the State might close a bridge if it was in need of repair.

Town Manager Clukey said that the State bridge inspection reports do indicate that a closure is not imminent.
D. Road Maintenance and Improvements
The Town Manager said that no changes are being proposed in the paving budget. He said the plan is to finish last year’s work which includes the final work on Pleasant Street from High Street to Foxbrook Variety, Davis Street, Dwelley Ave., Grange Street, and Grove Street from Pleasant Street to East Main Street, Harvey Street, and 700 feet on Parsons Landing Road.

He said new improvements are planned for Green Street, Lancaster Ave., Lilac Street, two sections of Mechanic Street, the Bear Hill section of Norton Hill Road, Paul Street, River Street from Court Street to Essex Street, Shamrock Road and Whittier Street.

Chairman Maas said that if the town needs to reduce the next year’s budget, before reducing services, perhaps reducing the budget for paving should be considered.

IV. ADJOURN
Resolution 007-051320
MOTION: Letarte, seconded: Letarte, and voted unanimously (7) to adjourn at 8:05 PM. Motion passed.