

Monday, September 27, 2021

Call to order

This meeting was conducted virtually in accordance with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts guidelines pertaining to virtual meetings during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, and was called to order at 6:03 p.m.

The Chair determined a quorum was present.

Attendance

Members of the Finance Committee

Larry Langford, Chair

Paula Consolo

Dena Willmore

Bruce Lessels (arrived at 6:13 p.m.)

Others present

Heather Butler, Town Administrator

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting of July 29, 2021 were unanimously approved written

Topic: Update from Town Administrator

Ms. Butler updated the Committee on four subjects.

Town Financial Condition and Outlook for Remainder of FY23

- The Town has \$65,000 in excess levy capacity, a number higher than in recent years, and which affords a bit of a financial cushion.
- Receipts are coming in as expected, there are no calls on reserve accounts, and overall the financial condition of the Town is considered to be in “good shape.”

Four Items to be Voted at Special Town Meeting (STM), October 23, 2021

- Approval of the PARC (Parklands Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities) Grant of \$400,000 to help rebuild a community pool, poolhouse, and related feature (for which \$1.4M is now in hand. This money will advance the project through the design phase to the procurement phase, which will be handled by FRCOG. Because this represents an allocation of funds, PARC Grants are the only grants that require a vote of the Town Meeting.

9.27.21 FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

- Approval of proposed short-term (one year) borrowing of \$625,000 to supplement the existing grant of \$500,000 for the Nilman Road Culvert project. This borrowing is in anticipation of the release of funds from the authorized state Transportation Bond Bill. Efforts by Sen. Hinds and others are underway to gain release of those funds for this necessary construction.
- Approval of Zoning Bylaw Amendments as approved by the Planning Board. Overall these amendments reduce the dimensional minimums within existing Buckland zoning provisions.
- Approval of the FY22 Budget Supplementals for three budgets:
 - Police - The Chief's pickup truck has been reallocated to the Highway Department, the Crown Victoria has been taken off line, which leaves the Department with one vehicle. Grant money and stabilization funds will defray some, but not all, of the cost of a new vehicle.
 - Highway - Their newly acquired pickup truck needs a snow plow (\$6,000)
 - Public Buildings Account - The Town building maintenance is receiving much needed attention, and these funds support that work.

Capital Improvement Planning

- A grant has been written that would provide the Town with support for a much-needed Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), to be developed under the auspices of the Finance Committee. The grant funds would pay for the assistance of an outside professional to work alongside the Finance Committee in the development of the CIP. Such a plan is a best practice for Finance Committees, a cornerstone of its work, and has long been missing.

Other Items

- With the retirement of Chief Hicks, Buckland is seeking to establish shared police services with Shelburne, and/or Ashfield. Working agreements are already in place, but a larger agreement is sought.

Topic: Finance Committee Organization Issues

Mr. Langford raised four issues.

Composition

- The Committee currently has two vacancies, and would benefit from a pipeline of potential candidates for current and future needs.
- Names of prospects generated included John Holden on Orcutt Hill Rd, Mike Michonski of Bray Road, Cheryl Dukes of Sears Street, and Sam or Marie Bartlett of Lower St/Route 112. Ms. Willmore will approach Ms. Dukes regarding her interest, and Mr. Lessels will approach Marie Bartlett first, then Sam Bartlett.

Meeting Documentation Process

- It was agreed that the Committee would benefit from a template for taking minutes. These minutes may provide such a guide. A supplement to the minimalist posted agenda for each meeting should provide some detail to guide the note taking.
- It was agreed that the Committee would benefit from the assignment of the notetaking role on a permanent basis for each year. Mr. Lessels agreed to serve in that capacity for FY23.

9.27.21 FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

- It was agreed that Google Docs would be the document creation standard for the Committee, and that Google Sheets would be the spreadsheet standard. This will make storing, sharing and editing documents much easier.
- It was agreed that the Committee would utilize the folders currently on the Google Drive: Finance, Budgets, Warranty → Finance Committee → Specific topic folders (Memos, Meeting Minutes, Internal Resources, External Resources, DRAFT Budgets and Warrants, BUDGETS, Budget Transfers, Meeting Agendas).
- Ms. Butler will reach out to former Finance Committee member, Tim Gaulin, to ensure the ownership of folders reflects Town protocols.

Liaison Assignments

The FY22 budgeting process benefitted from initial conversations between members of the Finance Committee, Selectboard, and individual Department Heads. This created a more collegial approach to building a final budget and ensured context for Department Head capital and operating budget requests. The following assignments were made:

- Town Hall Departments (Collector/Treasurer, Assessor, Town Clerk, Town Administrator) - Mr. Langford
- Police Department - Ms. Willmore
- Schools (MTRSD) - Ms. Consolo
- Highway Department - Ms. Consolo
- Senior Center - Mr. Lessels
- Libraries - Ms. Willmore
- Recreation Department - Mr. Lessels

Meeting Calendar

Ms. Butler expressed the opinion that the Town has moved towards a more typical budget calendar. It was agreed that Mr. Langford would propose a schedule for Committee review and approval. Finance Committee meetings will be held on Mondays, so as not to conflict with Selectboard Meetings (Tuesdays).

The following is his proposed schedule. All meetings are scheduled as Zoom events unless otherwise noted.

- October 18th (focus on warrants for STM, October 23, 2021)
- November 1st
- November 29th
- December 13th
- January 10th
- January 24th
- February 7th
- February 21st
- March 7th
- March 28th
- April 11th
- April 25th
- May 7th - ATM

As progress in creating the budget warrants, and when conflicts and events arise, this schedule would be adjusted accordingly.

Topic: Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Topic: Any other items not reasonably known 48 hours prior to the meeting

There were no other items presented.

Adjournment

Ms. Willmore moved the meeting be adjourned, Ms. Consolo seconded her motion, and it was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Next Meeting: October 18, 2021