

**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, February 14, 2022**  
**Held virtually over Zoom**

**Present:**

**Finance Committee**

Roll Call 13 in attendance:

Mark Trudell

Dennis Crowley

Josette Burke

Allyson Hamilton

Brian Bain

Steve Hendricks

Jeff Fisher

Kathleen Foley Greulich

Jean Kenney

Douglas Shea

Mark Sullivan

Lisa Van der Linden

Lawrence Pitman

**Absent:** Susan Lawson, Lucy Romanowiz

**Additional attendees:**

Jim Johnson, Patrick Shield, Liz Gaffey, Jodi Cuneo, Lisa Sinkus, Sal Genovese, Melissa Ranieri, Kerri McNamara, Mark Bryson, Kristine Brown

The meeting was called to order by Mark Trudell at 7:00pm

**Town Administrator Update**

Town Administrator Jim Johnson updated the Finance Committee on the status of the Spring 2022 Town Meeting Warrant. It is close to completion and he will be able to provide an overview to the Committee next week.

**General Government Budget Review**

**Town Administration-** Mr. Trudell asked who in the department receives the Hearing Officer stipend, to which Mr. Johnson replied that it was his. Mr. Johnson explained that the Energy Management Consultant is a position that Walpole shares with Norwood and Sharon, and the allotted amount pays our third of the salary.

**Town Accountant-** Mr. Bain asked about the telephone line item. Mr. Johnson clarified that the item was for a town-owned cellphone for the Town Accountant to use.

**Legal Services-** Mr. Shea asked why legal service costs are reduced from last year. Mr. Johnson stated that the current year is an outlier because of a high one-time fee incurred this year.

**Personnel Board-** Mr. Sullivan asked why training expenses have doubled since last year. Mr. Johnson stated that the budget includes new diversity training costs that will improve employee relations.

**Elections & Registrars-** Mr. Sullivan asked why the personnel budget has significantly increased. Ms. Gaffey stated that the 2023 fiscal year will have three elections, which is more than the 2022 fiscal year has. Therefore, there will need to be more money budgeted for staffing.

**Motion** by Dennis Crowley and seconded by Josette Burke for **favorable action on the General Government budget.**

The motion passed 13-0-0.

#### **Culture and Recreational Budget Review**

**Walpole Public Library-** Mr. Shea asked the books and periodicals budget. Mr. Genovese stated that the Library has other funding sources (including gift accounts, state aid, trust funds), that makes up for the difference in funding.

**Town Celebrations-** Mr. Bain asked why the holiday lights budget has doubled. Mr. Johnson stated that Town is now handling the cost of some holiday lights that was previously paid for by the Walpole Chamber of Commerce.

**Motion** by Dennis Crowley and seconded by Josette Burke for **favorable action on the Culture and Recreation budget.**

The motion passed 12-0-1 (Mr. Hendricks abstained).

#### **Health and Human Services Budget Review**

**Board of Health-** Mr. Bain asked increase in professional services. Ms. Ranieri stated that the increase is due to the Town's participation in a mental health awareness program which is partially grant-funded. She also stated that an additional line item refers to a needle disposal program that is not taken care of by the Visiting Nurses Association.

**Council on Aging-** Mr. Bain asked why the budget for dues and memberships has increased from two years ago. Ms. McNamara stated the cost of memberships in associations like the MCOA has risen.

**Veterans Services-** Mr. Bain asked for an update on the agreement with Medfield. Mr. Johnson stated that it has been three or four years, and the Veterans Agent position they share has been successful.

**Motion** by Dennis Crowley and seconded by Kathleen Greulich Foley for **favorable action on the Health and Human Services budget.**

The motion passed 12-0-1 (Mr. Fisher abstained).

#### **Debt and Interest Budget Review**

**Middle School Project Debt-** By borrowing \$50 million upfront, the town has already saved \$7.9 million from what was originally proposed. Mr. Pitman asked about the process, to which Ms. Sinkus stated that the town's financial advisor, Hilltop Securities, is responsible for the bidding process and decides which institution is awarded the bid. Mr. Pitman asked if the financial advisor receives a cut of the deal as an incentive to save the town money by finding the lowest rates, but Ms. Sinkus stated that they are paid a flat rate.

**Motion** by Dennis Crowley and seconded by Josette Burke for **favorable action on the Debt and Interest budget.**

The motion passed 13-0-0.

### **Assessment and Fringe Benefits Budget Review**

**Employee Retirement Assessments-** Mr. Pitman stated that Town should put more into OPEB.

**Unemployment Compensation-** Mr. Bain asked for more numbers on previous years' budgets for Unemployment Compensation. Mr. Johnson stated that he does not have those exact numbers in front of him, but it would be reckless to cut this number down too quickly.

**Employee Fringe Benefits-** Mr. Pitman asked for an update. Mr. Johnson stated that the benefits are administered from a pool of over 100 towns called the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) and the rate increase for this year is 6.7%

**Casualty Insurance-** Mr. Pitman asked if the Town is protected if scammers get ahold of sensitive information. Mr. Johnson stated that they are indeed protected by liability insurance.

**Motion** by Dennis Crowley and seconded by Josette Burke for **favorable action on the Assessments and Fringe Benefits budget.**

The motion passed 12-0-1 for all items except OPEB (Ms. Kenney abstained)

The OPEB portion passed 11-1-1 (Mr. Pitman no, Ms. Kenney abstained)

### **Future Meetings Venue**

**Motion** by Larry Pittman and seconded by Dennis Crowley to hold hybrid meetings starting 2/28/22.

The motion passed 13-0-0.

### **Solid Waste & Recycling Budget Review**

Mr. Crowley asked if the level of service is changing with the new contract. Mr. Johnson stated that the level of service would remain the same. Ms. Hamilton asked for an update on recycling costs. Ms. Ranieri stated that over the past year the cost per ton to recycle materials has dropped from about \$100 to \$30. Ms. Hamilton asked if the new contract will include composting, and Ms. Ranieri stated that it does not but they are looking into that option. Ms. Ranieri stated that the contract has protections against the volatility of the recyclable market, and the Town will receive royalties of any profits made from the recycled materials. Ms. Hamilton asked if Robbins Road's hours of operation will be extended, but Mr. Johnson said they probably would not.

### **Adjournment**

**Motion** by Dennis Crowley and seconded by Brian Bain to adjourn

The motion passed 13-0-0.

The Finance Committee adjourned at 8:20pm.