

Finance Committee Meeting September 2, 2021

Finance Committee Meeting Room Town Hall

Present: (Z - zoom)

Finance Committee

Roll Call 13 in attendance:

Mark Trudell

Jean Kenney

Dennis Crowley

Alice Susan Lawson

Josette Burke

Lucy Romanowiz (Z)

Andrew Flowers (Z)

Douglas Shea (Z)

Jeff Fisher

Mark Sullivan

Kathleen Foley Greulich (Z)

Lisa Van der Linden (Z)

Steve Hendricks (Z)

Absent: Allyson Hamilton, Lawrence Pitman

Additional attendees:

Jim Johnson

Elizabeth Gaffey

Rick Mattson

Patrick Shield

Jodi Cuneo

Tim Bailey

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

Committee Reorganization

Motion by Susan Lawson and seconded by Josette Burke to nominate Mark Trudell as Chair

12-0-1 (Mark Trudell abstained)

Motion by Mark Trudell and seconded by Susan Lawson to nominate Dennis Crowley as Vice Chair

12-0-1 (Dennis Crowley abstained)

Motion by Mark Trudell and seconded by Susan Lawson to nominate Josette Burke as Secretary

12-0-1 (Josette Burke abstained)

Mark Trudell announced that the Finance Committee's representatives in the Capital Budget Committee (Josette Burke) and the Middle School Building Committee (Susan Lawson) shall remain in those positions until the expiration of their terms.

Town Administrator's Overview and Discussion of Fall Town Meeting Articles 2, 3, 4, 5 & 16

Article 2 – FY22 Supplemental Budget - \$430,000

Includes changes to the Elections Budget (\$30,000), Legal Budget (\$50,000) and Fire Department Budget (\$350,000). Items in Fire Department budget would include keeping the East Walpole Fire Station open 24/7 and outfitting the two new trucks proposed in capital budget articles.

Dennis Crowley asked what will happen to the current Fire Engines if the Town allocates money to replace them. The Fire Department will try to sell the old engines online and the money will be used to offset future capital budget projects.

The \$30,000 Elections budget will go toward the Special Election in November on the Middle School Project debt exclusion override and will pay for ballots and staffing for five 12-hour days of early voting. The \$50,000 Legal Budget will pay for council for the Zoning Board of Appeals to defend positions on several items including KW Steel (Appeal) and the Norfolk Aggie Solar Farm.

Motion by Dennis Crowley and seconded by Susan Lawson for **Favorable Action on Article 2**
The motion passed 13-0-0

Article 3: OPEB - \$716,914

Questions from Lawrence Pitman through Mark Trudell:

How much money is in the current budget? \$100,000

What the plan for the liability? Annual budget appropriation and Free Cash formula

Question by Mark Trudell: When is an audit scheduled? Next year

Jim Johnson stated that OPEB allocations were conservative last year because of the pandemic, so now the Town is playing catch-up. Post-Covid, allocations for unemployment benefits will drop back down to Pre-Covid levels. Additionally, filling staff positions has been difficult because the candidate pool is smaller than before.

Motion by Dennis Crowley and seconded by Susan Lawson for **Favorable Action on Article 3**
The motion passed 13-0-0

Article 4 – Stabilization - \$1,000,000

The Town tries to keep the Stabilization fund equal to about 10% of the Operating Budget to serve as an emergency safety net. Current Stabilization balance is about \$8.6 million, and adding an extra million would get us close to Town's \$10 million goal.

Peter Frazier had previously recommended that the Stabilization Fund be upwards of \$20-30 million. Once that goal is reached, Jim Johnson hopes to allocate excess money into Capital Stabilization.

Motion by Dennis Crowley and seconded by Susan Lawson for **Favorable Action on Article 4**
The motion passed 13-0-0

Article 5: Capitol Stabilization Fund - \$1,000,000

The current balance of the Capital Stabilization Fund is zero. This fund would serve as cash reserve set aside for future capital projects.

Question from Mark Sullivan:

Why do we need a separate account for Capital Stabilization if we have an account already for Capital?

The High School project will be coming up at some point, so we will be in a better position if we start now to put money aside to prepare for this renovation, or addition. It's to our advantage when we do need to borrow we have money in this account.

Question from Douglas Shea:

Could we use the money other Capital projects if needed? Yes, but the Capital projects currently are all ongoing.

Motion by Dennis Crowley and seconded by Susan Lawson for **Favorable Action on Article 5**

The motion passed 13-0-0

Article 16: Street Acceptances

This article would classify Emerald Way and Olmsted Lane as accepted public ways.

DPW Director Rick Mattson declared that the streets in question are all approved by his department.

Motion by Dennis Crowley and seconded by Susan Lawson for **Favorable Action on the Street Acceptance Article**

The motion passed 13-0-0

Chair Update Regarding FY21 Transfers

Mark Trudell stated that there were two transfers that were brought to the Finance Committee's attention for action: One was for an Animal Control position moved out of Salary and into Professional Services for \$9,500. The other was for taking a Permanent Part-Time Salary of \$3,000 and moving it into Office Supplies to purchase a smart screen for the Building Department.

Next meeting: September 9, 2021 at 7:00pm

Adjournment

Motion by Jeff Fisher and seconded by Dennis Crowley to adjourn

The motion passed 13-0-0.

The Finance Committee adjourned at 8:00pm.