

## **Finance Committee Meeting Minutes Thursday, September 8, 2022**

**Present:** (Z – zoom)

**Finance Committee**

Roll Call 12 in attendance (later 13)

Dennis Crowley (Chair)

Douglas Shea (Vice Chair)

Josette Burke (Clerk)

Brian Bain (Z)

Audrey Grace

Steven Hendricks

Jean Kenney

Leigh Ann Luetzen (Z)

Lawrence Pitman

Adrienne Rogers (Arrived late)

Mark Sullivan

Lisa Van der Linden

Scott Wassel

**Absent:** Kathleen Foley Greulich, Mark Trudell

**Additional attendees:**

Jim Johnson, Patrick Shield, Allyson Hamilton, Mike Friscia, Bridget Gough, Nancy Gallivan, Jodi Cuneo, Lisa Sinkus

The meeting was called to order by Dennis Crowley at 7:05pm.

Meeting minutes of recorded meetings now include time stamps from the video for viewing actual content. The video can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KHv8SYmXzg>

*\*Approval of minutes is based off of the printed word and not the video \**

**Article 15 Bylaw Review Committee recommended changes (3:45)**

Bylaw Review Committee Chair Allyson Hamilton was present to summarize the Article's bylaw changes. There are six chapters that the Bylaw Review Committee is recommended changes, all of which are minor revisions. The changes include a switch to more gender-neutral language and deleting obsolete or redundant passages.

Mark Sullivan questioned the passage about televising board and committee meetings. Allyson Hamilton clarified that if resources are tight, the meetings would still go on regardless of whether or not Walpole Media has the capability to record or stream said meeting.

Audrey Grace asked why the Warrant is still required to be mailed to all Walpole residents. Allyson Hamilton stated that this requirement is consistent with what state law mandates.

**(10:15) Motion** by Lawrence Pitman and seconded by Scott Wassel for **Favorable Action on Article 15**. The motion passed 11-0-1 (Douglas Shea abstained).

#### **Article 14 Revolving Funds (11:55)**

Jim Johnson presented Article 14, which would rename the Turco Field Turf Replacement Fund to the Synthetic Field Maintenance and Turf Replacement Fund. The Town has multiple turf fields, so the name change reflects the fact that the funds would be used for replacing more than just Turco Field.

**(13:03) Motion** by Douglas Shea and seconded by Mark Sullivan for **Favorable Action on Article 15**.  
The motion passed 12-0-0.

#### **Article 13 School Transfer from Free Cash (13:45)**

*Adrienne Rogers arrived at 7:15, bringing attendance up to 13 members.*

Jim Johnson presented Article 15, which is a standard transfer of funds from Free Cash into the School Department's budget. This consists of revenue that was generated from the school through sources including Medicaid Reimbursement, Student Parking, and McKinney-Vento funding that goes straight to Free Cash and has to be manually returned to the Schools through a Town Meeting Article.

Mike Friscia explained that Medicaid Reimbursement is money that the federal government reimburses for services and administrative expenses related to students who are eligible for MassHealth. He also explained that the McKinney-Vento Act reimburses expenses related to transportation costs for students who are homeless.

Mark Sullivan asked about student parking. Mike Friscia explained that it costs high school students \$200 per year to park in the Walpole High School parking lot. The money goes towards offsetting the costs of the school's bus contract. They've tried to avoid raising the parking cost over the years, even though the bus contract fees are increasing slightly each year. Mike Friscia described the many ways in which school budget costs have risen over the years, thanks largely to COVID and rising rates.

**(23:33) Motion** by Douglas Shea and seconded by Brian Bain for **Favorable Action on Article 13**.  
The motion passed 13-0-0.

#### **Articles 3, 4, & 5: OPEB, Stabilization, and Capital Stabilization (24:20)**

Jim Johnson began discussion of Articles 3, 4, and 5, continuing the conversation from the Finance Committee's 8/29 meeting.

Douglas Shea proposed an alternate motion that would move an additional \$150,000 of Free Cash to OPEB (total of \$1 million) and \$500,000 to the Capital Stabilization Fund (total of \$1.15 million). This money will be needed for upcoming projects like the eventual high school renovation and can be accessed through a 2/3 vote of Town Meeting representatives. This action would leave the Town's Free Cash reserves at \$2,443,695.

Mark Sullivan asked if we would get a better bond rating by putting that money into Stabilization instead. Jim Johnson stated that his financial advisors told him that bond rating agencies would not hold it against the Town if the money is placed into Capital Stabilization now and withdrawn shortly after.

Lisa van der Linden worried that getting a 2/3 vote from RTMs to use the money may be difficult and that the Town won't have access to the money when it needs it. Jim Johnson stated that many RTM seats are now filled by new members since the last election, so the dynamics of the new group are not as easily predictable.

Brian Bain, Lawrence Pitman, and Scott Wassel spoke in favor of allocating more money to OPEB. Jim Johnson stated that the benefit of putting money into Capital Stabilization as opposed to Stabilization is that we know we have big Capital Projects coming up, and it looks bad if we have to dip into Stabilization (the last resort rainy day fund) to finance them.

School Committee member Nancy Gallivan stated that the School Department originally had many Capital Budget requests that they are now holding off on, but in upcoming Town Meeting cycles these projects will become a greater priority. If this money is to be placed in Capital Stabilization, the School Department is concerned that the 2/3 vote required to use the funds will be more difficult to achieve than a simple majority vote. Mark Sullivan agreed and supported keeping the \$500,000 in question in Free Cash instead of placing it into Capital Stabilization.

**(56:30) Motion** by Lawrence Pitman and seconded by Brian Bain for **Favorable Action on Article 4 in the amount of \$650,000 into Stabilization from Free Cash.**

The motion passed 13-0-0.

**(57:10) Motion** by Douglas Shea and seconded by Lawrence Pitman for **Favorable Action on Article 5 in the amount of \$1,150,000 into Capital Stabilization from Free Cash.**

The motion passed 10-3-0 (Mark Sullivan, Lisa van der Linden, and Scott Wassel voted no).

**(59:10) Motion** by Douglas Shea and seconded by Lawrence Pitman for **Favorable Action on Article 3 in the amount of \$1 million into OPEB from Free Cash.**

The motion passed 10-2-1 (Jean Kenney abstained, and Mark Sullivan and Lisa Van der Linden voted no).

#### **Article 2 FY 23 Budget Adjustments (1:00:40)**

Jim Johnson began discussion of Article 2, continuing the conversation from the Finance Committee's 8/29 meeting.

Lawrence Pitman asked whether the new Assistant Town Assessor position would disappear once the person in that position becomes Town Assessor. Jim Johnson confirmed that it would, stating that it would be part of the agreement with the clerical union since the new job temporarily replaces an already existing union position.

Lawrence Pitman asked to see a copy of the full Town Clerk contract, to which Jim Johnson replied that he would send the entire document to the whole committee. Brian Bain asked about the dates of the Town Clerk's current contract. Jim Johnson stated that her contract currently lasts until June 30<sup>th</sup> 2023, with an option to extend it by one year.

**(1:09:09) Motion** by Josette Burke and seconded by Brian Bain for **Favorable Action on Article 2 as presented in the memo dated September 7<sup>th</sup> from the Town Administrator as outlined with the funding source being \$167,500 from taxation, \$50,000 from Board of Assessors overlay as follows, which totals \$217,500.**

The motion passed 12-0-1. (Lawrence Pitman abstained)

#### **Other Business (1:11:40)**

The Finance Committee had a discussion about having future conversations with other groups earlier in the budget process to exert more influence over the Town Meeting Articles. Dennis Crowley suggested holding a meeting after Fall Town Meeting to discuss how the group wants to handle future budget development processes. Josette Burke agreed and proposed spending time refreshing on the Finance Committee's role is and defining important terms so everyone has the knowledge they need to confidently act as a member of the Finance Committee. Jim Johnson suggested meeting with town department heads early in the process so they can explain their budget needs and plans. Dennis Crowley suggested going on field trips to various town buildings and letting the Committee members see for themselves how things run and what needs to be improved.

#### **Adjournment (1:32:03)**

**Motion** by Josette Burke and seconded Lawrence Pitman to adjourn.

The motion passed 13-0-0.

The Finance Committee adjourned at 8:30pm.