

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes Thursday, September 1, 2022

Present: (Z – zoom)

Finance Committee

Roll Call 12 in attendance

Dennis Crowley (Chair)

Douglas Shea (Vice Chair)

Josette Burke (Clerk)

Brian Bain (Z)

Audrey Grace

Kathleen Foley Greulich

Jean Kenney

Leigh Ann Luetzen

Adrienne Rogers

Mark Sullivan

Lisa Van der Linden

Scott Wassel (Z)

Absent: Steve Hendricks, Lawrence Pitman, Mark Trudell

Additional attendees:

Jim Johnson, Patrick Shield, Ed Forsberg, Carl Balduf, Rick Mattson, Landis Hershey, Mike Friscia

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=3QcymgfQKSA>

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

Article 6 Capital Infrastructure (6:40)

Capital Budget Committee Chair Ed Forsberg presented this year's Capital Infrastructure requests on behalf of the following town departments:

Engineering Department (6:55):

-Replacement of an old stone culvert on Washington Street. This was not recommended by the Town Administrator and was voted no action by the Capital Budget Committee.

-Phase 2 of the Downtown Traffic Study on how to most efficiently direct the flow of traffic. The lights at the intersection currently run on independent timers, but there are many possible electronic and software solutions that could make things run more smoothly. This phase includes both the report and full implementation of the results. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$250,000.

Parks Department (16:30):

-Synthetic Turf Replacement fund: There are currently three turf fields in town, with expected lifespans of 12-15 years. The fields are relatively new, but the purpose of this fund is to raise money for when the fields eventually need replacement. The Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommends \$125,000, due to the increase in the number of fields.

- Tree planting program: This program would pay to replant any trees that needed to be removed for safety reasons. The trees would be planted on private property, so the owners would need to grant permission and eventually take ownership of tree care and maintenance. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$20,000.

-Turco Field Track Replacement: The Turco Field track is currently 12 years old, and similar tracks have lifespans of only 10-15 years. This project would replace the deteriorating top layer and take place during the offseason to avoid disrupting athletics teams. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$190,000.

-Passive Area Renovation: This project would upgrade various parks and traffic islands throughout town with plantings to help beautify the area. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$30,000.

Trails Committee (25:12)

-Trails Maintenance: Add benches, modify bridges, install signage, etc. This request also includes a study on how to best extend Walpole's portion of the Metacomet Rail Trail. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$20,000.

Cemetery Department (29:30):

-Repair various stone walls and headstones: This will improve safety and aesthetics of the Town's cemeteries, especially Maple Grove and Terrace Hill. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$20,000.

Building Maintenance (30:00)

-Masonry Project: Remove four chimneys at Blackburn Hall in preparation for a future roof replacement project. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$125,000.

-Oil Tank Removal: This would pay for the removal of the unused underground oil tank located at the high school and the safe disposal of its leftover oil. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$55,000.

Conservation Commission (34:21)

-Land Access Project: Install a drop-off area and a pathway on the land owned by the Town off of North Street to improve access to the pond from Adams Farm. Patrons have to park at Adams Farm and walk across a street to reach the water, so this project would provide more safety. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$20,000.

-Memorial Pond Water Treatment: This project would eliminate harmful invasive vegetation from the water. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$8,750.

School Department (46:40)

-Walpole High School Design Services: Follow up from the feasibility study for various architectural design improvements. This request was not recommended by the Town Administrator or the Capital Budget Committee.

Jim Johnson took over to explain that the only School Department Capital Infrastructure request he is recommending is the Elementary School STEM Labs. He hopes to find other funding sources for the

other requests, such as a green energy grant to pay for the installation of new HVAC systems and 40B funding to potentially help pay for the Elm Street School traffic signal.

The \$300,000 request for the elementary school STEM labs would pay to outfit the existing media centers with new equipment and supplies to facilitate the learning of technology and robotics.

Culture & Recreation (53:58)

-Elements and Activities: This project would pay for the installation of concrete lawn games, such as corn hole or chess tables, strategically placed throughout town. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$10,000.

-300th Anniversary Celebration: Pay for expenses related to the Town's 300th Anniversary celebration, including parades, fireworks, vendors, and merchandise. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$150,000.

-Blackburn Hall Improvements: Repair and renovate bathrooms, drainage sites, entrances, and exterior walls to bring the building up to ADA regulations and increase safety. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$420,000.

-Center & South Walpole Pool Design: redesign and replace two pools. Both are several decades old and are losing a lot of water. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$640,000 for Central Pool and \$605,000 for South Walpole Pool.

Community & Economic Development (58:35)

-Downtown Wayfinding and Branding: Proposal to revamp the town's image with new signage, branding, and decoration. This request was not recommended by the Town Administrator or the Capital Budget Committee.

The total cost of Article 6 as recommended by the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee is \$1,993,750.

(59:40) Motion by Douglas Shea and seconded by Mark Sullivan for **Favorable Action on Article 6 in the amount of \$1,993,750 from Free Cash.**

The motion passed 8-4-0 (Audrey Grace, Adrienne Rogers, Lisa Van der Linden, and Kathleen Foley Greulich voted no).

Adrienne Rogers and Lisa van der Linden expressed reluctance to approve Article 4 due to the omission of the School Department's HVAC project request. Kathleen Foley Greulich asked if there would be any opportunity before Town Meeting to re-discuss this Article, and Jim Johnson stated that although they are tight on time, the Committee could hypothetically continue to reevaluate their recommendations right up until Town Meeting.

Article 7 Capital Equipment (1:03:12)

Capital Budget Committee Chair Ed Forsberg presented this year's Capital Equipment requests on behalf of the following town departments:

Assessors Department (1:03:20)

Field Vehicle: The Assessors Department pulled this request so it is not recommended by the Town Administrator or the Capital Budget Committee.

Parks Department (1:03:33)

Heavy Duty Dump Truck: This would be a new six-wheel Ford F-150 with a plow. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$100,000.

Hook Truck: This would be a new six-wheel Ford F-550 with a detachable back for alternating between a flat-bed, chipper box, dump body, etc. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$150,000.

Cemetery Department (1:04:45)

Two stand-on mowers: New lawn-mowers to replace the existing machines that are near the end of their lifespan. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$22,000.

Vehicle Maintenance (1:05:25)

- Replacement of the Engineering Department's 2010 F-150. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$47,000.

- Replacement of the Highway Department's 2012 F-150 with a plow. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$71,000.

- Replacement of the Highway Department's 2008 Sterling 10-Wheel Dump Truck with a sander. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$320,000.

- Replacement of the Parks Department's 2012 F-250 with a plow. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$75,000.

- Battery-Operated Mobile Pallet Lift. This would help transport supplies between floors in the new vehicle maintenance garage. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$10,000.

- 3/4-ton utility body truck with a plow. This would be a new F-250 and belong to the Building Maintenance Department primarily for snow removal. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$72,000.

Highway Department (1:13:20)

- 2022 Heavy Duty Dump Truck with a Plow: This will be new and utilized for the removal of snow on roads. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$95,000.

- John Deere 624 Loader: This will also be new and used for snow removal. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$290,000.

- Salt Brine Maker: This would allow the Town to produce its own salt brine to pre-treat roads before storms for easier snow removal. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$24,000.

- Portable Screen Plan: This would allow the Town to screen gravel and separate out bigger rocks and debris so the gravel can be recycled for other purposes. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$92,000.

Police Department (1:18:16)

-New unmarked police cruiser: There are currently two lieutenants sharing a vehicle, so this would allow each to use their own cruiser. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$48,000.

-Taser Replacement: This would purchase fifty new Tasers and 63 battery packs to replace the existing set of aging Tasers. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$121,200.

-Portable Radio Equipment: This would purchase five new radios with 30-35 battery packs. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$25,000.

IT Maintenance Replacement System: Phase One of four phases to replace the 47 desktops and servers in the police department. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$12,000.

-5 Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs): These are emergency tools that can restart the human heart and would replace existing aging machines. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$8,000.

-Simunition Training Equipment: This would be realistic training equipment to be used in training exercise to prepare officers for real-life scenarios. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$14,000.

-Marked Cruiser: This would replace an existing marked cruiser used by the department. It would have a lifespan of about three years. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$58,000.

-Unmarked Cruiser: This would replace an existing unmarked cruiser used by the detectives for undercover work. It would have a lifespan of about six years. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$40,000.

Fire Department (1:37:43)

-20 SCBA Bottles and 14 Air Packs: These are self-contained breathing apparatuses that are essential firefighting equipment. They would replace existing equipment that is near the end of its lifespan. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$140,000.

-Replace the Captain's 2013 Command Car: The current car will be passed down to the Fire Prevention Officer. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$60,000.

School Department (1:39:36)

-Three-year Technology Plan: This plan would provide Chromebooks for all students. This will be a one-time expense, because in future years the cost will be incorporated into the regular budget. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$300,000 for one year.

-Elementary School and High School Science Equipment: This would give the students cutting-edge science related equipment for the teaching of a more modern science curriculum. The equipment would be on a mobile cart for easy transportation between classrooms. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$100,000.

The total cost of Article 6 as recommended by the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee is \$2,294,200.

Mike Friscia explained that science equipment request consists of high-tech supplies, including hydroponics, CRISPR gene editing tech, thermal cameras, 3D printers, and oscilloscopes. As for the Chromebooks, students are assigned a laptop freshman year and keep the same one all four years of high school. After graduation, the devices are typically too old to be recycled to younger students.

(1:45:55) Audrey Grace suggested striking the line items for the two unmarked police cruisers, the Simunition training equipment, and the salt brine maker from Article 7 with the expectation that they be incorporated into the regular department budget process. Jim Johnson warned against doing so because he already neglected the Police Department's cruiser requests in previous years in order to balance the budget. He stated that in general he only makes recommendations that he feels are absolutely essential, and he therefore advised the Finance Committee to approve the Article 7 that he and the Capital Budget Committee suggested. He invited members of the Finance Committee to attend Capital Budget Committees to deliberate over these items earlier in the process.

Kathleen Foley Greulich requested that, moving forward, recurring expenses be shifted over to the regular operating budget process. There was discussion over the Finance Committee's role in the budget approval process, and what possible changes to the schedule could be implemented to improve the Committee's confidence in the motions that they are bringing to Town Meeting. Ed Forsberg stated that neglecting Capital Budget purchases in any given year will only increase the need for new equipment the following year, so getting even a little behind will make it very difficult to catch up in future years.

(2:01:30) Motion by Audrey Grace and seconded by Lisa Van der Linden **to amend Article 7 by removing the line items for the two unmarked police cruisers, the Simunition training equipment and the salt brine maker, creating a new motion in the amount of \$1,968,200 from Free Cash and \$200,000 from the Ambulance Fund.**

The motion failed (0-12-0).

Josette Burke stated that she would not like to see the Simunition Training be removed, because that training is important and can potentially result in saved lives. Mark Sullivan agreed and pointed out that none of these expenses are surprises because of the five-year-plans that every department provides. Kathleen Foley Greulich and Audrey Grace clarified that none of the voices of dissent on the Finance Committee think the items in question should go unfunded, but rather that they should be funded by alternative means other than the Capital Budget process.

(2:12:16) Motion by Audrey Grace **to amend Article 7 by removing the line items of the Simunition training equipment, the salt brine maker, and ONE police unmarked cruiser.**

The motion failed because there was no second.

(2:13:30) Motion by Douglas Shea and seconded by Josette Burke for **Favorable Action on Article 7 in the amount of \$2,094,200 from Free Cash and \$200,000 from the Ambulance Fund.**

The motion passed 11-1-0 (Audrey Grace voted no).

Article 8 Capital Street & Drainage Improvements (2:15:56)

Ed Forsberg presented this year's Capital Street and Drainage Improvement requests.

-Street Drainage Improvements: The paving of various town roads, sidewalks and parking lots. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$600,000.

-Pavement marking: Town-wide repainting of road markings. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$68,000.

-Hot Fiber Crack Sealing: This would repair cracks in roads with hot black tar stripes to prevent damage water damage. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$65,000.

-Cemetery Department Seal Coating: Sealing cracks in the road of the newly-paved pathways at the Maple Grove and Terrace Cemeteries. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$10,000.

-Ch. 90 Paving: \$781,146 of paving from Chapter 90 funds. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$781,146.

(2:18:40) Motion by Kathleen Foley Greulich and seconded by Audrey Grace for **Favorable Action on Article 8 in the amount of \$1,524,146: \$781,146 from Chapter 90 Funding, \$10,000 from Cemetery Receipts, and \$733,000 from Free Cash.**

The motion passed 12-0-0.

Article 9 Water Department Retained Earnings (2:19:52)

Ed Forsberg presented this year's Water Department Retained Earnings requests.

-Seaweed Cartridges: Replace the seaweed cartridges used for water filtration at the Willis Treatment Plant. The Town Administrator recommended no funding and the Capital Budget Committee took no action.

-Raw Water Transmission Line Cleaning: Clean the piping that extends from the well to the treatment plants. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$475,000.

-Supplemental Water Source Investigation: Fund a study to look into alternative water supply sources. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$375,000.

-Willis Lagoon Design Permit: Find a location to store the debris that is removed from the plant during the water filtration process. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$180,000.

-Replace 2009 CASE Backhoe: A shared purchase with the Sewer Department, the existing backhoe would be passed down to the Highway Department. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$100,000.

-Well Improvements: Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$350,000.

(2:25:02) Motion by Douglas Shea and seconded by Kathleen Foley Greulich for **Favorable Action on Article 9 in the amount of \$1,480,000 from Water Retained Earnings.**

The motion passed 12-0-0.

Article 10 Sewer Department Retained Earnings (2:26:06)

Ed Forsberg presented this year's Sewer Department Retained Earnings requests.

- Sewer Extension on Industrial Road: Add 3,850 ft. of sewer underneath Industrial Road. The Town Administrator recommended no funding and the Capital Budget Committee took no action.

- North Walpole Sewer Expansion: Add 16,655 ft. of sewer in the Coach Road area. The Town Administrator recommended no funding and the Capital Budget Committee took no action.

- Sewer Design Phase 1 & 2: Design 4,650 ft. of sewer near Marilyn's Way and Marion Street. The Town Administrator recommended no funding and the Capital Budget Committee took no action.

- Meter System Components: Purchase equipment for the sewer metering system. The Town Administrator recommended no funding and the Capital Budget Committee took no action.

- Replace 2009 CASE Backhoe: A shared purchase with the Water Department, the existing backhoe would be passed down to the Highway Department. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$50,000.

Jim Johnson stated that he did not recommend several Sewer Department items due to a lack of funds in Sewer Retained Earnings.

(2:29:44) Motion by Douglas Shea and seconded by Kathleen Foley Greulich for **Favorable Action on Article 10 in the amount of \$50,000 from Sewer Retained Earnings.**

The motion passed 12-0-0.

Article 11 Water Department Borrowing (2:30:27)

Ed Forsberg presented this year's Water Department Borrowing requests.

- Water Main Replacement: Funds the design and construction of a replacement of 6,400 ft. of the town's cast-iron water main on streets including Bird Street, Spring Street, Allen Street, and Riverview Place. This would improve water quality and dependability. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$2,900,000.

- Redundant Water Line: Construct an alternative line to move water to and from central storage on Washington Street and High Plain Street to Old Post Road. Both the Town Administrator and the Capital Budget Committee recommended \$2,910,000.

Scott Wassel asked if some of the money would go to repairing the roads after they are torn up during construction. Rick Mattson confirmed this to be true.

(2:36:50) Motion by Douglas Shea and seconded by Kathleen Foley Greulich for **Favorable Action on Article 11 in the amount of \$5,810,000 from Water Borrowing.**

The motion passed 12-0-0.

Article 12 MWRA Sewer Grant (2:37:55)

Rick Mattson explained that the MWRA Sewer Grant is a financial assistance program that we have taken advantage of over the years. The funding has to be used for sewer system improvements that remove

inflow and infiltration form the system. Article 12 requests that this money be used to improve the Town's sewer system as intended.

(2:40:45) Motion by Douglas Shea and seconded by Kathleen Foley Greulich for **Favorable Action on Article 12.**

The motion passed 12-0-0.

Adjournment (2:42:45)

Motion by Audrey Grace and seconded by Adrienne Rogers to adjourn.

The motion passed 12-0-0.

The Finance Committee adjourned at 9:45pm.