

**Town of Swampscott**  
**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**  
Thursday, April 20th, 2023 - 7:00 PM  
Virtual meeting

**FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

Eric Hartmann (Chair), Matthew Kirschner (Vice-chair), Naomi Dreeben, Joan Hilario, Sunit Shah.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT**

Suraj Krishnamurthi, Cinder McNerney, Adrian Rodriguez, Erik Schneider

**OTHER TOWN STAFF**

Joe Douillette, PEG Cordinator; Amy Sarro, Director of Admin. & Finance; Patrick Luddy, Town Treasurer/Collector; Trang Vu, Assistant Town Accountant

The meeting was called to order at 7:09 PM

**Public comment**

None

**Potential vote on Town Meeting Warrant**

Article #16:Appropriation for Recommended Capital Projects

Joe Douillette, PEG Coordinator spoke about his proposal in capital list this year *High School Auditorium Upgrade*. He emphasized that the project had two components.  The major part is an audio repair/maintenance/upgrade project because of the 20-year-old design and aging infrastructure in the auditorium.  Max Kasper and he have been working with various people to plan out this project which would reengineer and replace the wiring, patching and microphones to bring it up to today's technology.  There are several problems that keep the sound from getting through the system without degrading and adding external hums and frequencies.  The front of house system is sub-par, with the speakers not designed to reinforce the sound to all parts of the auditorium equally, leaving many dead areas which makes it difficult for large audiences to experience the content properly, whether for meetings or for performances.

There is a resident who has offered to design the project for free as a contribution.  He did the design and installation of the system at Lynn Auditorium, and although our project is not the same scope of that, he would apply many of the same elements to our space. The result would be an auditorium that would benefit our school, town and residential needs for another generation.  If done well, it could also be used for other cultural events.

The other part is a video upgrade to the facility to allow for hybrid meetings with large groups. This accounts for about 25% of the project and would include work similar to what was done in room B129, but on a larger scale, allowing us to have remote presenters, and remote participating audiences.

Finally, Mr. Douillette indicated that this project is ready to go, and that Max Kasper supports this and is ready to help with the procurement process once it is approved. His goal would be to have the project complete at the latest by the Town Meeting, spring of 2024, but hopefully prior to that.

Responding to Eric Hartmann’s question about the opportunity to generate revenue from this project, Mr. Douillette commented that it’s just a side benefit. The main purpose is to benefit the town and our residents. He also said that the lighting system is no longer in production so we cannot get parts for that system.

Naomi Dreeben asked how many days a year the system would be used if it was upgraded. Joe Douillette responded that the school uses it weekly if is not more often. Parent and sport meetings, performing arts for various schools happening there. The Philharmonic Orchestra uses it three times a year. The Police Department has been using the space a couple of times a year. We have rentals and that’s limited because the space isn’t as desirable. With the improvement, he thinks there could be 10 to 15 events in December alone.

Eric Hartmann commented that he leaned more toward favorable action for this project especially given this is not the first go around for this project. The staff have been working hard to figure out a solution that improves the system but does not hurt the town budget.

Sunit Shah shared his thoughts as it is a want project than a need and we should postpone this project.

Amy Sarro commented that if there is thought to move it to next year, it will be a much tougher conversation because as it stands right now, the capital requests included this project are $5.6M while next year stands at $9.7M, following year is $10M.

On **MOTION** (Naomi Dreeben) and **SECONDED** (Joan Hilario), it was **VOTED** to approve capital project *High School Auditorium Upgrades* by **ROLL CALL**.

**ROLL CALL**: Matthew Kirschner (YES), Sunit Shah (NO), Eric Hartmann (YES).

Article #10 and #11: Acquisition and Disposition of Land: 12-24 Pine Street, Article #12: Disposition of Land: Hadley Elementary School, Article #13: Extension of use: Hawthorne by the sea.

Director of Adm. & Finance commented that the Selectboard, at last night’s meeting, wanted to have the language changed, which is to take out any funding and borrowing language. After working with the town counsel, any acquisition of land regardless of what we can pay for it still has to go to the Town Meeting, but we were able to take out the funding language. However, the Selectboard asked the town to put the old language back in with a sum of money because at that time they did not know how much was going to come from the Affordable Housing Trust and ARPA. If things run over, they do not want to bind it that there is no way for any funding. That conversation is still evolving. For the land disposition article, they added the language for preference for veterans and a new VFW post 1240 and also including the portion of the property where the VFW currently sits less whatever portion Calyx Peak is leased to use of the parking lot. The Selectboard will report on the disposition of land of Hadley at the Town Meeting because there is not enough for them to vote. They did vote favorable action on the extension of the use of Hawthorne by the sea, with the caveat of extending it to December 31, 2025.

Naomi Dreeben commented that it is more expensive to not extend the use of Hawthorne, so it is in our best interest to extend the use of the building as indicated in the warrant.

On **MOTION** (Naomi Dreeben) and **SECONDED** (Matthew Kirschner), it was **VOTED** favorably to support the approval of *Article #13: Extension of Use: Hawthorne-by-the-Sea* by ROLL CALL.

**ROLL CALL**: Joan Hilario (YES), Sunit Shah (YES), Eric Hartmann (YES).

Amy Sarro reminded the committee of the warrant close deadline on Monday.

There was some discussion about the committee letter. Amy Sarro made all updates received by the committee members as of this afternoon.

Eric Hartmann also discussed the presentation plan at the Town Meeting.

**Old and new business**

None.

On **MOTION** (Naomi Dreeben) and **SECONDED** (Joan Hilario), it was **VOTED** to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 PM by **ROLL CALL**.

**ROLL CALL**: Matthew Kirschner (YES), Sunit Shah (YES), Eric Hartmann (YES).

True Attest,

Trang Vu

Assistant Town Accountant

*Approved by vote of the finance committee xx/xx/xxxx*