



## **Town of Swampscott**

### **Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

Monday, January 6, 2020

1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room, Swampscott Town Hall  
22 Monument Avenue, Swampscott, MA 01907

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Tim Dorsey (Chair), Mary Ellen Fletcher (Vice Chair), Joan Hilario, Gail Rosenberg, Cinder McNerney, Jill Sullivan, Eric Hartmann

#### **MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

#### **OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

Ron Mendes (Assistant Town Administrator), Allie Fiske (Assistant to the Town Administrator)

Chairman Tim Dorsey called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 7:07pm.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

#### **FINAL DISCUSSIONS RELATING TO TOWN MEETING:** None

#### **PLANNING FOR UPCOMING FINANCE SUMMIT**

The Committee discussed the 10-year Summary Project Revenue and Expenditures. Cinder requested that Ron remove the debt service in order to see what the operating deficit is, which is helpful for unused levy capacity discussion. The Committee would like to set up a Finance Committee meeting dedicated to reviewing the 10-year Summary Projected Revenue and Expenditures document with Ron to understand the numbers and the spreadsheet.

The Committee discussed the Financial Summit scheduled for Saturday, January 25 which is focused on understanding the state of school finances and the context between costs and revenue. Tim will do a presentation along with Town Administrator Sean Fitzgerald, Martha Sybert, Pam Angelakis, and Ron Mendes.

The Committee briefly discussed the current draft of the Middle School Feasibility Study. This will be distributed and finalized, and a separate meeting will be held regarding that project.

#### **REVIEW THE CALENDAR FOR THE UPCOMING BUDGET CYCLE**

Tim met with Carin Marshall, Martha Sybert, Ron Mendes, Patrick Luddy, and Gargi Cooper to better coordinate Finance Committee's involvement in school budget development. The preliminary school budget will be issued by Martha subject to review on January 27<sup>th</sup>. Finance Committee members will attend the January 29<sup>th</sup> School Committee meeting to hear the review of the budget, and the entire preliminary FY21 budget will be presented at

the February 6<sup>th</sup> Select Board Meeting. The final vote of the school committee will be February 12<sup>th</sup> at a public meeting.

The ways that the Finance Committee can be engaged in the development of the School Budget is through attending January 29<sup>th</sup> and February 5<sup>th</sup> meeting. Currently the plan is for Martha, Pam, and Gargi to come to the February 10<sup>th</sup> Finance Committee meeting to have a dialogue about the School budget.

The Committee discussed the uncertainty concerning whether the School Department was requested to develop a budget with a 2% or 2.88% increase. Tim stated that the Committee and the Select Board had approved last year a guideline that the town's overall operating budgets be developed with a requirement that the budgeted property tax levy increase no more than 2%, plus an additional \$425,000 representing "new growth." The \$425,000 mathematically comes to approx. 0.88% at today's budget levels; adding that to the 2% is where we get the 2.88% figure. Mr. Dorsey indicated that he believed the initial request was for 2%, but that the committee would need to confirm whether the request to the School was 2% or 2.88% as either approach could work within the guideline.

Some committee members expressed concern about the decision to move technology expenses from the capital budget to the School operating budget. The decision was based on the projected life of modern technology which is limited, particularly in schools where equipment is commonly shared.

In 2019 the Finance Committee submitted a list of requests of information regarding the School Budget. Tim brought this list up to Martha, Gargi, and Pam this year for consideration.

The Finance Committee will schedule a meeting every Monday between February 24 and April 13 to meet on budget.

#### **OTHER:**

The Finance Committee reviewed an example of the FY20 budget and requested that this year there be a clear delineation between the various department sections for ease of reading.

The Retirement Board provided answers to questions and asked for a meeting to talk about the answers and advocate for their COLA adjustment.

Mary Ellen wants to revisit Police and Community and Economic Development Budget questions.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 11/12 AND 11/18 MEETINGS**

Some changes were recommended for the November 12 meeting minutes. Jill Sullivan **MOTIONED** to approve the November 12 meeting minutes with the amendments discussed, and prospective meeting minutes from November 18 which will state only that there was no discussion at that meeting. Mary Ellen Fletcher **SECONDED**. All in favor.

On **MOTION** (Jill Sullivan) **SECONDED** (Cinder McNerney) it was **VOTED** (unanimous) to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned 8:36pm

Respectfully submitted,

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Allie Fiske, Assistant to the Town Administrator

*Minutes APPROVED by vote of the Finance Committee 2/24/2020*