



Town of Swampscott
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, April 13th, 2022 - 7:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Tim Dorsey (Chair), Mary Ellen Fletcher (Vice-chair), Naomi Dreeben, Eric Hartmann, Joan Hilario, Matthew Kirschner, Cinder McNerney.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Suraj Krishnamurthi, Erik Schneider

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT

Michael McClung, Moderator; Sean Fitzgerald, Town Administrator; Amy Sarro, Director of Admin. & Finance; Patrick Luddy, Treasurer/Collector, Trang Vu, Assistant Town Accountant.

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM

Approval of Minutes

Deferred to next meeting.

Discussion of FY2023 Budget

Town Administrator Sean Fitzgerald mentioned the Town's efforts to both financially and non-financially improve the work-life balance that Town staff seem to struggle with. He has made a few adjustments to the FY 23 Budget that will be needed for contracts and a few efforts to enhance retention and benefits for Town employees. These changes are as follows:

- Decrease Finance Committee Reserve by \$50,000
- Increase HR Manager by \$20,000 for new hire
- Increase Employee Recognition/Assistance by \$20,000 (assistance added to line)
- Increase Salary Reserve by \$6,535
- Increase Community Dev Director by \$2,713
- Increase Fire Chief by \$752

Sean Fitzgerald reflected on the contributions of some staff to the Town's development. He stressed that making these adjustments in the budget to secure employees' retention is critical to the Town's success. He stated that the increase in "Employee Recognition/Assistance" is aimed at supporting for employee that might have childcare burdens while attending night meetings, supporting individuals who are dealing with some of the challenges of the pandemic.

Tim Dorsey would like to know the difference between \$30,000 in "Performance Management" line and \$20,000 in "Employee Recognition/Assistance" line.

Sean Fitzgerald responded that “Employee Recognition/Assistance” line is created to support staff with unique challenges such as healthcare, elderly, and childcare needs. He mentioned that the Town management have been working on the plan to develop this program in detail.

Eric Hartmann asked for clarification on the new HR Director who does not have HR background.

Sean Fitzgerald commented that the new HR Director has some HR experience in working as a supervisor and helping to manage staff. Mr. Fitzgerald expects that within the first year, the new director would get SHRM certification that allow him to transition successfully into this role.

Naomi Dreeben asked if we would combine HR function for both school and town or have separate HR directors.

Sean Fitzgerald confirmed that we now have an HR manager to oversee school, but he would like to have discussion with school Superintendent to have one combined HR director for both town and school in the future.

Tim Dorsey repeated the budget concerns with different school budget recommendations and would like to hear perspectives from Town Administrator and Finance Committee members.

Mr. Fitzgerald mentioned that education is one of the highest priorities of Town of Swampscott. He has been working with School Superintendent and Town finance team, trying to balance the budget within financial policy. He is fully aware of ongoing difficulties including the unpredictable costs associated with Special Education, technology replacement costs, and the structural components of the CBA, including those that result in aggregate salary cost increases at levels in excess of the agreed upon COLAs. However, due to of many challenges such as COVID, increased employee group health care expense & Contributory pensions, other departments’ needs, he thinks it would be fair to keep school budget as his recommendation. He would still meet with School finance staff and School committee before Town meeting to discuss and come to the best compromise.

Administrator personnel

MaryEllen Fletcher asked why this line item is higher. Sean Fitzgerald and Amy Sarro confirmed that there is a change in FTE for an additional part-time assistant for FY2023.

Salary Reserve

Mr. Dorsey would like to know the flexibility of this line item to help with COLA, CBAs, vacant recruitment. Amy Sarro confirmed that the current amount in this line item is less likely to cover all mentioned needs but it’s feasible within the budget to follow town’s financial policy.

Select board expense

MaryEllen Fletcher asked if there is a list of community programs and estimated costs under this “Community program” line item. Sean Fitzgerald commented that we have some programs planned and estimated and are trying to apply for grant to support those programs.

The committee spent time going through all the financial-impact and citizen petition articles in town meeting warrant.

Article 2: Approve bills of prior FY

Article 3: Appropriation for FY23 budget

Article 4: Approve transfer of free cash-CBAs

Amy Sarro mentioned that we are currently negotiating all five unions and will have the details updated after the agreements are ratified. Naomi Dreeben commented if there was a way to change the length of time each of CBAs so that we would not have to negotiate all five at once. Sean Fitzgerald mentioned that it’s hard due to COVID, the unique nature of some contracts.

Article 5/6: Approve transfer of Water/Sewer enterprise fund retained earnings

Article 7: Appropriation from transportation infrastructure fund

Article 8: Foster care transportation reimbursement

Article 9: General bylaws – revolving funds

Article 10: Acquisition of Land – Placeholder

Article 11: Appropriation for Chapter 90 roadway improvements

Article 12: Appropriation for recommended capital projects

MaryEllen Fletcher confirmed that CIC completed the vote on these projects but need more discussion on some certain projects.

Article 18: Citizen petition – Repair and/or replace middle school windows

Article 19: Citizen petition - Amend the method of appointment of the Finance Committee

Committee Updates

Updated by MaryEllen Fletcher

- Discussion relating to whether DPW design should be advanced
- Reconsider to vote on auditorium

Old and new business

None.

Public Comment

Mr. DiMento was recognized with the question relating to new HR Director and Assistant Town Administrator's duties.

On **MOTION** (Naomi Dreeben) and **SECONDED** (Eric Hartmann), it was **VOTED** to adjourn the meeting at 8:59 PM. **ROLL CALL**: Cinder McNerney (YES), Matthew Kirschner (YES), MaryEllen Fletcher (YES), Joan Hilario (YES), Tim Dorsey (YES).

True Attest,

Trang Vu

Assistant Town Accountant

Approved by vote of the finance committee 06/06/2022