



**Town of Swampscott**  
**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**  
Monday April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021 7:00 PM  
Virtual Meeting

**FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

Tim Dorsey (Chair), MaryEllen Fletcher (Vice-chair), Eric Hartmann, Joan Hilario, Matthew Kirschner, Cinder McNerney, Gail Rosenberg, Jill Sullivan

**OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT**

Amy Sarro, Town Accountant; Patrick Luddy, Asst. Town Accountant

Meeting called to order 7:03 PM

Approval of Minutes

None.

Public Comments

Tasia Vasiliou, Resident:

- Urged the finance committee to prioritize the town's school buildings in budget discussions and capital plans over any other capital projects that may be considered optional.
- Suggested window replacement at the middle school in conjunction with the recently approved middle school roof project to further mitigate water damage.

Terry Lorber, Resident:

- Lead petitioner for the citizens' petition that is in the town meeting warrant for the middle school roof.
- Seeking to amend the citizens' petition on the floor of town meeting to modify the amount of the appropriation and the nature of the project since the middle school roof was authorized at the prior special town meeting.

In response to Terry Lorber and Tasia Vasiliou, Tim Dorsey recapped a portion of the joint meeting with the Capital Improvement Committee held a week prior where there was discussion of establishing an emergency capital fund to address defined and undefined emergency projects. Originally proposed at \$400,000, the Capital Improvements Committee allowed for \$200,000 as a capital project for defined emergency repairs to school buildings, with the thought that the other \$200,000 of undefined emergency repairs at the school could be added to the finance committee reserve, however that is still a topic for discussion.

Review Capital Warrant Article for Annual Town Meeting May 2021

*Reconstruction of Johnson Park*

MaryEllen Fletcher asked to push this project in Fiscal 2023 on the grounds that a design is not completed, and the \$100,000 appropriation would be better spent on a project that we can benefit from immediately, for example the schools.

Gail Rosenberg asked if the entire appropriation was for construction, or if some of the funds were needed to complete the design work. MaryEllen Fletcher responded that there are three different designs in the works, but that they are funded separately and this requested appropriation is solely for construction.

Jill Sullivan stated that Max Kasper should be involved in discussions surrounding repairs at the middle school, because there are multiple repairs that he is looking into and it might not make sense to approach the repairs in a piecemeal manner.

Amy Sarro stated that the capital plan includes replacement of middle school windows in FY2028, to which MaryEllen Fletcher objected stating that is too far in the future. Jill Sullivan added that maintenance would be needed in the meantime.

The committee will follow-up on whether the Johnson Park project is shovel-ready, and if not, whether the funds could be reallocated to a middle school repair. There will also be follow-up regarding the timing of other projects/improvements at the middle school with Max Kasper.

#### *Emergency Capital/Finance Committee Reserve Fund*

The estimate of needs for unknown emergency projects on an annual basis would be approximately \$50K. Max Kasper's estimate is that there are approximately \$200K worth of undefined emergency repairs that could be funded in Fiscal 2022 through an increase in the finance committee reserve.

MaryEllen Fletcher stated that based on analysis of historical emergency expenditures provided to her by the Treasurer, it would be appropriate to add \$50K to the finance committee reserve for this purpose; \$200K would be more than is needed to address undefined capital emergencies.

There will be follow-up regarding amounts included in the finance committee reserve and whether they are to be earmarked for certain areas of emergency need.

#### *Town Hall Basement Build-Out*

MaryEllen Fletcher stated that she did not support appropriations for this project in Fiscal 2022 or 2023; the project does not present as an immediate need, and there are projects with greater priority.

Cinder McNerney agreed that the project did not appear to be a priority and would support not funding the project in Fiscal 2022.

The committee will follow-up with CIC regarding the prioritization of this project.

#### *Fish House Renovations*

Cinder McNerney commented that she supports maintaining the fish house building but would like to follow up on the terms of the lease pertaining to the second floor of the fish house because the public cannot utilize that space at this time.

MaryEllen Fletcher stated that she would support \$100K to maintain the building but would like to see that building made accessible to the public.

There was discussion surrounding grant funding that may be available for repairs because the Fish House is on the historical buildings register. Matthew Kirschner commented that the fish house is currently operating as a commercial fish house, but upgrades to the fish house may attract additional commercial fishing, opening opportunities for more grant funding.

### *Fire Dept. Service Truck*

MaryEllen Fletcher stated that she does not support the number of vehicles that the fire dept has requested in Fiscal 2022 given the number of vehicles they have on hand and their uses.

Jill Sullivan and Joan Hilario commented that they felt the Fire Chief made a good case for the necessity of all the vehicles he requested.

### *Town-Wide Security Cameras*

MaryEllen Fletcher stated that the project is designed to mainly address surveillance of remote areas in town and acknowledged that the Police Department has demonstrated a need for funds to repair their antiquated system. She suggested a revision to the project description.

Jill Sullivan suggested that the committee follow-up with the CIC regarding the project description because the areas of surveillance in the proposal did not appear to all be remote.

### *Harbor/Waterfront Development Plan*

MaryEllen Fletcher briefly summarized the studies that have been performed to date for harbor/waterfront development. She has requested from the town a summary of all receipts and expenditures relative to these studies to date. The Select Board has approved the plan and the plan is separate from the town's master plan.

Cinder McNerney stated that it may not be wise to invest \$100K to plan redesign of the pier/waterfront when the planning and studies performed thus far have only been approved by the Select Board and it is unclear if the public is interested in moving forward with this redesign or if the proposal has been properly vetted.

Jackson Schultz, Chair of the Harbor/Waterfront Advisory Committee was recognized in the meeting. He clarified that the Seaport Economic Council has awarded the town with an \$80,000 grant, which requires \$20,000 of matching funds. He stated that the town has not been asked to invest any funds in this project to date. The \$100,000 request in the capital plan is comprised of a \$20,000 match for the SEC grant for design and engineering of the pier, and an additional \$80,000 for feasibility studies to identify the merits of this project.

Additionally, the commercial fishing fleet is bottoming out in the harbor. If the harbor needs are not addressed, the commercial fishing fleet that exists in town may go elsewhere. Should that happen, the town would lose eligibility for certain grants that are available to active commercial fishing communities. Currently, the town has approximately 25-30 commercial fisherman during peak season. Also, granting agencies are more likely to fund projects for towns that make their own investments in projects.

Cinder McNerney suggested modifying the project description to narrow its scope given the broad nature of the proposal. Jill Sullivan agreed that a modification of project description in the warrant would be called for and the project would have a better chance of being funded if the description was more clear.

### Recap Open Items – FY22 Budget Proposal

#### *Fincom Reserve*

- Current proposal is to increase the line by \$50K

#### *Human Resources/DEI Coordinator*

- Proposal currently remains the same; as of now the town is proposing to fully fund the DEI coordinator position (no cost-share with school dept.)

#### *Community & Economic Development*

- Review is completed

#### *Facilities*

- MaryEllen would like to review year-to-date information and follow-up

#### *Police & Fire*

- Will be discussed at next meeting with town administrator and the Chiefs

*Department of Public Works*

- \$30K adjustment to the DPW budget by staff related to contracted field maintenance based on public input; needs to be discussed

*Solid Waste*

- MaryEllen wanted to review and follow-up

*Senior Center*

- Budget has been revisited since last discussed; Amy Sarro is expecting a formal revision to be available by the end of the week; overall estimated impact to budget will be small (salaries increasing, expenses decreasing to offset)

*Debt Service*

- Review is completed

*Employee Benefits*

- COLA Base is proposed to increase from \$13,000 to \$14,000. The COLA is a % of pension, up to the base. Approving to increase the COLA Base to \$14K aligns our system with what other systems are doing. There will be appx. a \$70K increase to the assessment in Fiscal 2023; does not impact the assessment that will be due in Fiscal 2022.
- Healthcare number has been updated as previously discussed.

There will be a meeting next week on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday to continue review of warrant articles.

Meeting Adjourned 9:18 PM.

True Attest,

*Patrick Luddy*

Patrick Luddy, Treasurer/Collector

*Minutes APPROVED by vote of the Finance Committee 9/27/2021*