



Town of Swampscott
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday May 10th, 2021 7:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

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

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT

Michael McClung, Town Moderator; Peter Spellios, Chair, Select Board; Sean Fitzgerald, Town Administrator; Amy Sarro, Finance Director/Town Accountant; Patrick Luddy, Asst. Town Accountant

Meeting called to order 7:01 PM

Article 3 ATM – Free Cash Transfer for Public Safety MOUs

Mary Ellen Fletcher commented that it was discussed at the most recent Select Board meeting that MOUs may not be equivalent to signed contract, and that the language may need to be committed in a signed CBA for the article to proceed. MaryEllen also recapped that there was mention of pushing the article out to the fall town meeting because of this.

Tim Dorsey commented that he has had a subsequent conversation with Peter Spellios after the Select Board meeting to follow up on those points. The board has been corrected, and the article can proceed because a signed MOU or CBA are both acceptable.

MaryEllen Fletcher felt that it may be prudent to develop a plan B to move the COLA amounts out of the salary lines in the police and fire budgets and into salary reserve in the event Article 3 did not pass. (i.e. vote on article 3 before article 2).

MaryEllen Fletcher asked Amy Sarro for the exact figure of Free Cash that will be requested relative to Article 7.

Amy Sarro confirmed for the committee that the amount of free cash required to fund the one-time payments for FY22 was \$157,500 (\$75K for Police and \$82.5K for Fire @ \$2,500 each).

MaryEllen Fletcher asked for clarification about where the education incentives and physical fitness incentives are paid out of. Amy Sarro confirmed that those incentives are accounted for in the police department's operating budget.

Delegation of Presentation – FINCOM Recommendations to Town Meeting

ARTICLE 2 – Tim Dorsey
ARTICLE 3 – Tim Dorsey
ARTICLE 4 – Mary Ellen Fletcher
ARTICLE 5 – Mary Ellen Fletcher
ARTICLE 6 – Jill Sullivan
ARTICLE 7 – Jill Sullivan
ARTICLE 8 – Eric Hartmann
ARTICLE 9 – Eric Hartmann
ARTICLE 10 – Eric Hartmann
ARTICLE 11 – Cinder McNerney
ARTICLE 12 – Cinder McNerney
ARTICLE 15 – Jill Sullivan

There was discussion surrounding Article 11 and how best to represent the discussion had and recommendations made by the finance committee relative to the Town Hall Basement project and the Harbor/Waterfront project. Specifically, Cinder McNerney asked for clarification surrounding what the \$20K and \$80K components of the harbor plan appropriation were for specifically should that be asked. Members will follow-up with Cinder McNerney individually with their suggestions on the presentation of Article 12.

Tim Dorsey cautioned to the committee around perception should anyone reporting on Article 12 live in proximity to the proposed pier or living reef projects. Cinder McNerney responded that the projects will not affect her because she doesn't live in immediate proximity to them and will report on Article 11.

Cinder McNerney asked the moderator if it would be possible to amend the name of the Harbor/Waterfront Plan capital project to align with the title and scope of the grant that the town received from the Seaport Economic Council.

MaryEllen Fletcher recapped the exact title of the grant received: *“Initial Design and Permitting for the Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, and Resilience Upgrade to the Town Pier at Fisherman’s Beach in Swampscott Harbor”*

Michael McClung found that to be acceptable, assuming there are no major objections from the Capital Improvement Committee or the Harbor Waterfront Advisory Committee.

Other Topics of Discussion in Anticipation of Town Meeting

School Financing

Cinder McNerney commented that an appropriate response to any questions that may arise related to the financing of the new school could be deferred to future meetings in anticipation of special town meeting in the fall.

Peter Spellios commented that the new school's schematic design has been submitted to the MSBA; the project is estimated to cost appx. \$98M, 35% of which is anticipated to be reimbursed by the MSBA.

Cinder McNerney asked for clarification regarding the timing of the fall special town meeting.

Michael McClung commented that he anticipates an early September special town meeting and a town-wide vote by October 21st.

Old & New Business

None.

Public Q&A

Steve Iannacone was recognized in the meeting and commented on the presentation of average single-family tax bill vs. median single-family tax bill. He asked the committee if it would be possible to present the impact of the new school project to the median single-family tax bill.

Tim Dorsey elaborated briefly on the average single-family tax bill/median single-family tax bill figures and how the committee uses that information to aid decision making/measure impact of financial decisions to taxpayers.

Peter Spellios commented further on the advantages of using the median single-family tax bill vs. the average single-family tax bill to measure impact of projects such as the new school. He referenced materials obtained from the town's financial advisor which calculated the estimated impact to the median single-family tax bill of the proposed project which was in the \$400-500 range.

Cindy Nichols was recognized in the meeting. She asked the finance committee to comment on the reduction to the Emergency Management line in the FY 2022 proposed operating budget.

Amy Sarro commented that the reduction to the emergency management line reflects normal cost in a non-pandemic year.

Cindy Nichols also commented that those in her precinct desire larger trash barrels.

Gary Callahan was recognized in the meeting. He echoed the sentiments of Cindy Nichols related to the changes made to the solid waste program and the cost-impact of the change to the taxpayers.

Tim Dorsey responded to Gary Callahan's comments, stating that the underlying thought behind the program seemed to be to moderate the cost of the program through a reduction of waste.

Cinder McNerney also commented that there is no limit to how much an individual can recycle which can help relieve the challenge a smaller barrel may post to some.

Gail Rosenberg also commented that the town now offers free composting which can help reduce the amount of waste that makes it into the trash stream.

Cindy Nichols asked for clarification surrounding how the library's budget was calculated, considering the impact of the pandemic to its operations. MaryEllen Fletcher responded that the library was open throughout the pandemic and continues to provide essential services to many.

Gary Callahan asked for clarification regarding why the estimated boat excise tax receipts are only \$4,000 for FY22.

Jill Sullivan responded that the excise rate is set by the state and is currently \$10 for every \$1000 in assessed value.

Gary Callahan also asked for clarification surrounding the significant drop in the expected revenues from investment income. Tim Dorsey commented that interest rates have been very low and the budget is reflective of the current interest rate environment.

On **MOTION** (Jill Sullivan) and **SECONDED** (Cinder McNerney) it was **VOTED** by **ROLL CALL** to **ADJOURN** the meeting at 8:56 PM.

ROLL CALL: Tim Dorsey (YES); Mary Ellen Fletcher (YES); Eric Hartmann (YES); Joan Hilario (YES); Matthew Kirschner (YES); Cinder McNerney (YES); Gail Rosenberg (YES); Jill Sullivan (YES)

True Attest,

Patrick Luddy

Patrick Luddy, Treasurer/Collector

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