



Town Of Webster

Massachusetts

Est. 1832

Finance Committee

350 Main Street
Webster, MA 01570

Mat Fitton, Chairman
Sarah Sansom, Vice-Chairman
Joshua Sterczala
Courtney Friedland, Recording Secretary

Michael Finamore
Scott Dziedzic
Joseph Ralph
Wilfrid Cournoyer

FINANCE COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Webster Town Hall, 350 Main Street, Webster, MA
via conference call in accordance with Governor Baker's
emergency "Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the
Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20
6:00 p.m.

The Finance Committee meeting was called to order by Chairman Mat Fitton at 6:02 p.m. via Vonage Conference Call.

Present: Sarah Sansom (via conference call), Scott Dziedzic (via conference call), Joseph Ralph (via conference call), Matt Fitton (via conference call), Michael Finamore (via conference call), Wilfrid Cournoyer (via conference call), Town Accountant, Timothy Bell (via conference call), Town Administrator, Richard LaFond (via conference call), and Finance Committee Secretary Courtney Friedland (via conference call).

Governor Baker issued an Executive Order modifying certain requirements of the Open Meeting Law, to enable public bodies to carry out their responsibilities while adhering to public health recommendations regarding social distancing. The Executive Order relieves public bodies from the requirement in the Open Meeting Law that meetings be conducted in a public place that is open and physically accessible to the public, provided that the public body makes provision to ensure public access to the deliberations of the public body through adequate, alternative means.

Meeting Minutes

Motion by Wilfrid Cournoyer, seconded by Michael Finamore, to approve the meeting minutes of January 11, 2023. Call Vote: Michael Finamore – yes, Scott Dziedzic – abstain, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Joseph Ralph – abstain, Sarah Sansom – yes, and Mat Fitton – yes.

Town Accountant Report

There was no Town Accountant's Report at this time.

FY24 Budget

February 28, 2023 was the deadline for submitting all FY24 departmental budget requests to the Finance Committee. The Town Administrator is happy to report that beyond this requirement, he was able to forward an actual Town Administrator's proposed budget to the Finance Committee. The budget honors all salary adjustments with relatively conservative accommodation for our fixed costs. The School Department administration is satisfied and accepts the budget recommendation. A final capital spending plan will be forthcoming prior to required submission of warrant articles.

Additional staffing was made in three areas. The IT Department currently has a part-time position. This will be made to a full-time position. The town also made the Conservation Agent position full-time. This has also been reflected in the FY24 budget. The Fire Department is moving the salaries of the on-call positions to fund four full-time positions. This will cost an approximately \$80,000.00 increase. The call Fire Department personnel will be phased out and replaced by full-time staff. It has been getting harder to fill on-call shifts. The Fire Department has several grant positions ending. This has been funded in the FY24 budget.

The Highway Superintendent salary has been adjusted to reflect the Wage and Classification Study completed by the Collins Center. The Highway Superintendent was put at a step and grade with gave some equity to what the Water/Sewer Superintendent is making. The Highway Superintendent has always received paid overtime to plow. Changing the line item to reflect a stipend for all weather emergencies was more transparent. He already receives this overtime pay. It is just being transitioned over to a weekly stipend pay. The Highway Department did not have any requests for additional positions in this year's proposed budget.

Unemployment costs have increased. This is a shared cost with the School Department. Although some costs are incurred by the town; most of these costs are incurred by the School Department.

The Salary Reserve line item was increased to reflect the collective bargaining currently going on with the DPW, Clerical, and Police Unions. This would also include the Fire Union; once they reach their one year "cooling off" period from the time they voted to decertify. All current contracts are set to end on June 30, 2023.

Various questions were raised about on certain line items by the Finance Committee members and answered by the Town Accountant and Town Administrator.

Town Administrator's Report

Personnel

- The Wage and Classification Study is effectively over. Implementation complete for use in FY23 and FY24 budget process.
- Collective bargaining is underway with Police, Clerical, and DPW. The town is in the early stages of the process without anything tangible to report at this time.
- Human Resource Review is underway per contract with the Collins Center. Deadline for completion is June 30th. Ms. Friedland is managing this process in her Human Resources Management role.

Massachusetts Strategic Health Group (MSHG) Contract Update

- Group has expanded this year from 3 to 8 members. This existing Joint Purchase Agreement (JPA) is not appropriate for organizational and financial administration. Representatives of the original 3 plus one new member are working on a draft for deliberation by the full MSHG Board. To that extent, the group is now working on a recommendations to the full MSHG Board in selecting legal representation independent of that used by the broker. Although there is a positive relationship between the Board and the broker, the fundamental business relationship needs to be addressed in a more appropriate way going forward.

Board of Health Vacancy

- There is a vacancy of an elected member on the Board of Health. The Board consists of 5 members. Three are elected and two are appointed by the Town Administrator.
- To fill a vacancy in an elected position requires a joint vote of the remaining members of that Board and the Board of Selectmen. The appointment would be until the next election. At the moment there aren't any applicants for the vacancy. At this time there aren't any pending matters that should require that a full Board be in place prior to the election. Based upon these two factors it makes sense to let the position be filled at the May election.

Cable Advisory Committee Survey/Update

- The Cable Advisory Committee received approximately 130 responses to the survey that was on the town's website for approximately three weeks in February. IT director, Greg Roberts has compiled the results and the Cable Advisory Committee will begin analysis at their next meeting.
- Attorney William Hewig will be joining the next meeting remotely to discuss/strategize how the committee should proceed in the town's effort to get a response from Spectrum to forward the negotiation process. The Cable Advisory Committee is frustrated by the lack of response from Spectrum to fairly basic questions that are significant for the committee to define the town's position in the process.

Veterans Agent Recruitment/Interim

- Veterans Agent Paul Brodeur gave his notice that he will be retiring at the end of March. Assistant Agent Richard Howela has agreed to assume the position on an interim basis

until the position is filled permanently. The Town Administrator intends to get feedback with various individuals and veterans' organizations in town.

DLTA (District Local Technical Assistance Program)

- CMRPC along with all other Regional Planning Agencies in the State, receive funding from the State to assist their district communities with various projects. An application process is necessary. After internal discussion with the Town Planner, Ann Morgan, Redevelopment Authority Director Carol Cyr, and EDC Chair, Carole Marchand, it was decided that the town should seek their assistance with studying feasibility of a BID. The DLTA Program is somewhat limited in hours availability for each community, but they feel this may be a good starting point to move forward.

Goals Update

- The Town Administrator will provide the Board of Selectmen with an updated schedule of goals within the next two weeks.

FY2023 Goals and Objectives

Motion by Joshua Sterczala, seconded by Sarah Sansom, to Passover the FY23 Goals and Objectives. Call Vote: Michael Finamore – yes, Scott Dzedzic – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Joseph Ralph – yes, Sarah Sansom – yes, and Mat Fitton – yes.

Proposed Future Meeting Date Discussion

The Finance Committee will meet Tuesday, March 14, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom.

The Finance Committee will meet Monday, March 20, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom.

Informational Mail

There is no informational mail.

Any Other Items Not Available at the Time of Posting

There are no other items available at the time of posting.

Adjournment

Motion by Joshua Sterczala, seconded by Sarah Sansom, to adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting at 7:04 p.m. Call Vote: Michael Finamore – yes, Scott Dzedzic – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Joseph Ralph – yes, Sarah Sansom – yes, and Mat Fitton – yes.

Respectfully submitted,
Courtney Friedland