

Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

March, 26 2024

7:30 PM

Present: Christi Andersen (Chair), Jason Cole (Vice Chair), Roland Bourdon, Steve Noone, Scott Sullivan (remote), Dave Wellinghoff, Christine Russell, Adam Nolde and Greg Jarboe

Ms. Andersen called the meeting to order.

1. Citizen's Concerns

None

2. Override Mechanics Presentation

Ms. Andersen made a comment that this document was approved by the FinCom before numbers were finalized, but very close.

3. Point of View (POV)

Ms. Andersen summarized the POV that was presented and voted on at the last Finance Committee meeting.

Is the FY25 Hayward Light is still on the list? Ms. Andersen commented that because FinCom voted before the final budget, hence why Hayward Road light is still on.

Brewster Conant - more strategic to ask for \$5.4m than \$6.6m? And do it each year? B budget - doesn't work out over time, why? Because that is supposed to be balanced budget? Ms. Russell answered by giving an example of a year-to-year comparison of a budget versus the fixed expenses increasing at a higher percentage. Town has been cutting the discretionary funds as an ongoing process. Mr. Cole also commented of a list of "what is available" funding-wise has been presented year-to-year. Mr. Cole answered about revenue limits discussions that happened during this budget cycle, a time where FinCom had to decide upon an override number which is the \$6.6m and were pleased to see \$5.4m.

Some value in not having to potentially come back each year.

Mr. Conant commented we hear that a disproportionate share/percentage of taxpayers money is going to the School budget. How much money do we spend on our schools

compared to our comparable communities. Ms. Andersen suggested Mr. Conant go to the School budget presentation, their “Budget Saturday”.

4. Budget Hearing

An opportunity for the FinCom and the public to ask questions.

Mr. Mangiaratti commented on the number of iterations this budget cycle took, receiving very helpful feedback.

Level-services budget presented in November, over the allowed prop 2 1/2 allowed, made reductions.

February 26, 2024 an “A” budget and “B” Budget were presented

* Reduced staffing, including important positions

- Introduced offsets, i.e. using \$300,000 OPEB money
- Cemetery Commission to fund \$50,000 from their Trust
- Refined estimates; were able to apply for Grants, for example
- \$38,993,663, \$350,000 offsets and \$540,000 for subsidies bringing it to \$39,183,663
- Extensive Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), took cuts in that plan. Projects proposed represent important \$560,000 debt service with a 5% borrowing rate and \$1,000,000 of projects funded by Free Cash (equipment replacement, sidewalks and road work)
- A total spending package of \$40,772,801

Capital projects:

- Fueling Station at the DPW used by Town and Schools including CASE. This is an immediate need. \$2.6m. School and CASE plan on contributing
- Aerial ladder truck - Current truck is 2009 and is in the repair shop more than what we want it to be. This is an immediate need.
- \$1.2m Prospect and Main Streets and improvements to Great Road
- Stormwater Compliance

Free Cash projects:

- Traffic Calming Initiatives
- SCBA
- Police Department equipment
- Facilities
- Cyclical Data Collection project (required every 10 years)
- July 4th celebration

Mr. Mangiaratti republished his Transmittal letter, “26-liner (renamed Year-to-Year Expense Report) and the individual department revised budgets.

1.7% for salaries, is that correct? Yes, Ms. Fleckner responded, majority is union.

Mr. Noone asked about public safety standards National - both have requested additional staffing, but we had to say no in this budget. Mr. Mangiaratti discussed the Fire impact shift and also when you look at Fire staffing. The B budget affects the Police Department Clinician, which is an essential part of the social work component of police work. Not so much as “standards” but as of “services”

Ms. Russell thanked Mr. Mangiaratti for pursuing other funds, such as grants to continue to provide services.

Mr. Jarboe commented about no weekly newspaper anymore, so critical decisions go underreported. Number of people who visit the website is important, have we noticed an uptick? Mr. Mangiaratti commented that we do track it and sometimes it spikes around certain events such as July 4th Mr. Jarboe for marriage licenses and food pantry information.

Mr. Bourdon commented we’re not the only town: Westford, Concord, Carlisle and Andover to name a few, who are facing a prop 2 ½ override. Thanked Mr. Mangiaratti for doing a great job.

Ms. Andersen commented about how we don’t show the consequences of these cuts.

Mr Noone moved to approve the budget as transmitted. Mr. Nolde seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

5. Special Town Meeting

Ms. Friedrichs on behalf of Janet Mosebrucker. MBTA Article to amend for town to include performance of detailed impact studies

- housing critical need and MBTA language allows this

Ms. Friedrichs commented on her particular concerns:

- A concern of thousands of market-rate housing
- Increase displacement of Dover Heights if zoning articles pass and landlords evict many of the low income renters
- Enough water in the aquifer?
- We’ll know more about the Town of Milton if we wait
- Not a public emergency - already building enough condos; just allow to build more million-dollar condos
- Acton water district is already saying it’s not paying for PowderMill project
- Stormwater concern and costs to taxpayers

- Would an additional school have to be built if 2 developers, for example, submit a proposal to build 300 housing units each

Therefore, please wait for the Fall to decide.

Mr. Cole has asked for a template of each of the specific tasks Ms. Friedrichs is requesting the FinCom. She is willing to create such template, but is here tonight to hear from what the FinCom would like to see for metrics.

Mr. Cole commented on cost of new growth and a task FinCom wanted to complete but got overridden by the Override. Personally, not able to sign onto an Article with little information.

Ms. Friedrichs requested to come to next FinCom meeting with a metric template such as number of units and the many various impacts on the town. Add in probable FTE impact.

Mr. Nolde asked Ms. Friedrichs if she read all the MBTA language and, specifically, what is the total number of units.

Ms. Friedrichs commented that Kristen Guichard, Planning Director, agreed to use the State's calculator.

Ms. Friedrichs commented on how much money FinCom wants to commit for an impact study. Mr. Nolde answered at this point, FinCom not willing to put an amount to it before they are presented the metric template that Ms. Friedrichs will come back with at the next FinCom meeting. Mr. Nolde suggested to take into account the socio-economic affects.

Mr. Mangiaratti presented a summary of grant money the town will lose if the town doesn't comply with the MBTA mandate. For example \$1.83m climate action and many other projects; \$1.4m in dam seawall grant, Milton just lost their dam seawall grant money. We bring in millions of dollars each year and the town would be jeopardized in losing that grant money. A comment about housing barriers made by Ms. Friedrichs is disingenuous.

Mr. Jarboe commented on cost of the STM and Ms. Russell commented on the cost of possible legal fees.

MBTA zoning, can it be pushed off to the Fall timeframe? Mr. Mangiaratti can look into that, but commented much community engagement work was already done.

Ms. Friedrichs: When will zoning Articles be put on the Agenda? Ms. Andersen commented when they're presented.

6. ALG

Ms. Andersen summarized the ALG meeting that was held on Monday, March 25, 2024. Ms. Andersen recommended to ALG to have the ALG group continue on. ALG models were voted on to be included in Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

7. Public Education

POV to be presented at School Committee meeting April 4, 2024

8. Finance Committee Business

Members provided liaison reports

Next meeting FinCom April 9, 2024.

Mr. Nolde will not be available for Special Town Meeting

MBTA zoning, December 31, 2024 district compliance application to show mandate was approved at Town Meeting

Mr. Jarboe moved to adjourn. Mr. Bourdon seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

Override Document

Point of View Presentation