

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

A meeting of the Finance Committee (FC) was held on Wednesday, April 10, 2019 in the Municipal Center. Ms. Holmes called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM.

ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT: Pamela Holmes (Chair), Howard D’Amico (Vice Chair), Carol Gogolinski, Michael Hutnak, Heather Morin (left 9:30 PM), Lynne Mussulli, Dick Vanden Berg

ABSENT:

NON-VOTING: Matt Wojcik (Town Administrator), Jeanne Lovett (Finance Director)

1. PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING-Matt Wojcik (Town Administrator):

Ms. Holmes opened the public hearing. Ms. Lovett reviewed the Revenue Summaries for a total Revenue of \$29,513,389. She reminded the FC that the budget will be seen in two pieces because Blackstone Valley Tech (BVT) is separated out. Next, Ms. Holmes presented the Expenditure Report.

Mr. D’Amico had concerns regarding the FC Economic Development (EDC) budget in the amount of \$4,233. He would like to see a five-year, or other long-term plan, for economic development. He asked Mr. Wojcik if this line item would be increasing over the next fiscal year. Mr. Wojcik answered that it will definitely be going up over a period of time. This budget is for grant writing or other assistance. Much of the cost for grant writing can be reimbursed through the grants themselves. If some of the current proposals in the pipeline warrant applying for a MassWorks grant, there may be need for a Special Town Meeting for funding.

Mr. D’Amico asked for more information on the plan for that EDC success. Mr. Wojcik expects that he will be able to begin briefing the FC as early as summer/early fall.

Mr. Wojcik hopes that FC will help the Town work through the Revenue projection and help educate the townspeople.

Ms. Holmes next presented the budget for Public Safety. Police Chief Nick Miglionico joined the meeting and explained that the Police Dept. currently has six line cruisers. The plan was to buy two cruisers in FY19, two in FY20 and two in FY21. After two cruisers were purchased in FY19, one older cruiser was involved in an accident, totaled and replaced, meaning that the Police had three new cruisers for FY19. Now, the plan is to buy three cruisers in FY20 because the equipment for the new 2020 model Ford will not be compatible with any of the department’s current cruisers. Under this model, no cruisers will need to be purchased until the cycle begins anew with two cruisers in FY24.

Ms. Holmes next presented the budget for Public Works, including a \$45,000 increase to the Snow & Ice Account and Street Lighting at 1/3 the cost of last year due to the street light replacement with LEDs. Next, she presented Health & Human Services, Culture & Recreation with a new line item for Parks to maintain the common, and Education which does not include the BVT assessment.

School Superintendent Kevin Maines, School Business & Operations Manager Cortney Keegan and School Committee Chairman Brett Argall joined the meeting. Mr. D’Amico is concerned that Transportation increased by “a couple \$100,000”. Mr. Wojcik stated that Special Education transportation is included in that line item. He explained that, after reviewing recommendations from an outside consultant, the School Committee (SC) voted to reduce the bus routes by one route, which saves approximately \$62,000. There is the possibility for further review in the future. Mr. Wojcik stated, if a department goes along with suggestions for saving money, they achieve those savings and they have a need, they should be able to reabsorb the savings into their operations.

Mr. Argall confirmed the SC's vote and the thought process behind it. Ms. Lovett explained that the savings from dropping one route could close to Free Cash, or there could be a transfer at the fall or spring Town Meeting. She explained the mechanism. Ms. Keegan reminded the FC that the School still needs to go out to bid for the bus contract, and there is no way to know what that amount will be. The substantial increase in overall Transportation is largely due to Special Education, over which the School Dept. has no control. Special Education Transportation cannot be paid for through Circuit Breaker. A discussion was held.

Ms. Holmes next presented the budget for Total Insurance & Employee Benefits. Mr. Wojcik explained Douglas' participation in the Health Insurance Joint Purchasing Group with the Town of Webster and the Dudley/Charlton School District. The Douglas Teachers Association ratified the new model this afternoon. Mr. Wojcik described how the new self-insured model will work, which will exactly mirror the current model that Douglas offers its employees. Without this joint purchasing agreement, Douglas would have seen an 11% increase in health insurance premiums. As a cost of entry, each participating member must put one month's worth of claims into the fund. That amount will come from Free Cash.

Ms. Holmes next presented Debt. Ms. Lovett stated that Debt has gone down by approximately \$100,000 due to the refunding of a long-term bond.

The total budget is \$28,235,626, plus the BVT budget of \$1,277,763.

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to close the public hearing. Ms. Mussulli seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

A discussion on the budget was held, including an explanation of the School's budget request. Mr. Wojcik explained that the main reason that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) did not vote to support a higher than 2% over last year's appropriation for the School is due to overall sustainability.

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to recommend the FY2020 budget as presented to the Annual Town Meeting (Article 2). Mr. Hutnak seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

2. REVIEW AND VOTE RECOMMENDATIONS ON TOWN MEETING ARTICLES:

Annual Town Meeting (ATM): **Article 10:** Capital Improvement Plan \$601,240: Chair Kent Vinson joined the meeting. He described the Capital revised ranking process and how they ranked capital requests for the next five years. Ms. Holmes asked for a copy of the process. Mr. Vinson listed the projects on the article. Mr. Wojcik and Mr. Vinson presented an explanation of the Town-wide Public Safety high-frequency radio system. Mr. Wojcik explained the matching grant the Town has applied for to hopefully be able to purchase two Highway dump trucks for the price of one. Ms. Holmes asked for a Highway vehicle inventory. The \$30,000 for tablets includes tablets for Police and Ambulance.

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to recommend Article 10 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Mussulli seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Articles 15 & 16: Town Engineer William Cundiff joined the meeting and stated that some parcels in Town were designated MGL 43D several years ago for expedited permitting. Article 15 removes a number of parcels from 43D that are now owned by the State, and Article 16 designates different parcels as 43D.

Mr. Hutnak made a motion to recommend Articles 15 and 16 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Mr. D'Amico seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 17: Mr. Cundiff explained that the Town Clerk has requested the authority to restructure the zoning bylaws. This does not allow the Town Clerk to change the content of the bylaws, just perform administrative tasks just as renumbering sections. The Planning Board voted unanimously to support this article.

Ms. Gogolinski made a motion to recommend Article 17 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Mr. D'Amico seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 18: Mr. Cundiff stated this article is a request from the EDC to rezone a section of Residential Agricultural to Industrial. The location is in the northeast corner of Town near Uxbridge Street. The Planning Board voted to support this article by majority vote.

Ms. Gogolinski made a motion to recommend Article 18 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Mr. D'Amico seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 19: Mr. Cundiff stated that this article is a request from the BOS to rezone the Schuster property downtown from Village Residential to Village Business. This would allow a business opportunity for the property as a function hall/wedding venue. This change would not affect the approved subdivision at that location. The Planning Board voted to support this article by majority vote.

Ms. Gogolinski made a motion to recommend Article 19 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Morin seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 22: Mr. Cundiff stated that Darling Way and Brandywine Circle were accepted as public ways at the last Town Meeting. There was an oversight such that a small 50' x 50' portion of Darling Way was excluded from the approval. This article would correct that oversight.

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to recommend Article 22 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Mr. Hutnak seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 1: Finance Committee Report:

Mr. Hutnak made a motion to recommend Article 1 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Morin seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 3: Salaries of Elected Officials: Ms. Lovett explained the Town Clerk's stipends.

Mr. Hutnak made a motion to recommend Article 3 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Gogolinski seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 4: Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District FY20 Budget: Mr. Wojcik stated that the Superintendent of BVT restructured their health insurance. Mr. D'Amico is fundamentally concerned with the disparity of Douglas Public School's appropriation at 2% over last year's appropriation and the BVT request is over 3% over last year's request. He is reluctant to encourage an increase that is over Douglas School's increase. The reduction in the number of Douglas applications to BVT and the number being accepted to BVT suggests to Mr. D'Amico that the Douglas School District is doing a better job at competing. A discussion was held.

Ms. Gogolinski made a motion to recommend Article 4 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Mr. Hutnak seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-6, No-1.

Article 5: Transfer Station:

Ms. Gogolinski made a motion to recommend Article 5 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Mussulli seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 6: Water/Sewer Enterprise Fund:

Ms. Gogolinski made a motion to recommend Article 6 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Mussulli seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 7: Cable Receipts Reserved for Appropriation:

Ms. Mussulli made a motion to recommend Article 7 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Mr. Hutnak seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 8: Recurring Business:

Mr. Hutnak made a motion to recommend Article 8 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Mr. D'Amico seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 9: Personnel Bylaw Classification Update: Mr. Wojcik presented the changes: COLA 1.75%, adoption of and implementation of the State minimum wage law to the chart where it applies, movement of the Senior Center Director from M2 to M3 and the new title for the Working Foreman/Municipal Maintenance Manager under PM5.

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to recommend Article 9 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Mr. Hutnak seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 11: Short Term Rentals: Mr. Wojcik explained that Land Use Counsel recommended that the Town adopt MGL 64G. If the Town does not adopt 64G, the Town would not be able to tax a hotel should one be built in Town. A discussion was held, including the effects on summer rentals.

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to recommend Article 11 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Mussulli seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-6, No-1.

Article 12: Personnel Bylaw Amendment: Mr. Wojcik explained that Labor Counsel has made revisions to the Personnel Bylaw and Personnel policies to conform with the Town Administrator Act.

Mr. Hutnak made a motion to recommend Article 12 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Mr. D'Amico seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 13: General Bylaw Change:

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to recommend Article 13 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Mussulli seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 14: Reduce Fin Com Members:

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to recommend that the BOS remove Article 14 from the Annual Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Vanden Berg seconded the motion.

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to withdraw his prior motion and moved to request that the BOS remove Article 14 from the Annual Town Meeting warrant, and in the event that they do not, to express no position. Mr. Vanden Berg seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Articles 20 & 21: PILOTs: Douglas Renewables, LLC & Wallum Lake Road Solar: Mr. Wojcik explained that the rates for the PILOTs for Articles 20 and 21 were set at \$7,500/megawatt hour with a 2.5% inflator every year. No payments would come in until the farms have been up and running for one year. Legal Counsel helped prepare and approves of both agreements. The BOS approves of both agreements. A discussion was held.

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to recommend Articles 20 and 21 to the Annual Town Meeting as presented. Mr. Vanden Berg seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-6.

Special Town Meeting (STM) Article 1: Budget Transfers. Ms. Lovett stated that the increase to Community Development Expenses was for a plotter, and a couple of decreases have been added.

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to recommend Article 1 to the Special Town Meeting as presented. Mr. Hutnak seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 2: Increase FY19 Debt Principle and Interest: Ms. Lovett explained that this article is needed as a result of the refunding.

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to recommend Article 2 to the Special Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Mussulli seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 3: Snow & Ice Account transfer:

Mr. Hutnak made a motion to recommend Article 3 to the Special Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Morin seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 4: Health Insurance Equity Portion: This article is for the buy-in for the joint purchasing agreement.

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to recommend Article 4 to the Special Town Meeting as presented. Mr. Hutnak seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 5: Ambulance purchase: Ms. Lovett explained that the Town received \$100,000 in FY19 as an earmark for the purchase of a new ambulance. This article will close out capital items that were completed in 2019, and the residual for the ambulance will be funded from Free Cash.

Ms. Gogolinski made a motion to recommend Article 5 to the Special Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Mussulli seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Article 6: Library Security System:

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to recommend Article 6 to the Special Town Meeting as presented. Mr. Hutnak seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

3. RESERVE FUND TRANSFERS/ VOUCHERS/ SNOW & ICE REMOVAL:

There were no transfers.

4. MEETING MINUTES: October 9 & 23, 2018

Approval of the October 9 & 23, 2018 Finance Committee meeting minutes was deferred to the next meeting.

5. OLD/NEWBUSINESS:

New Business: A discussion was held regarding whether or not the FC needs to vote on all warrant articles.

Old Business: There was no old business.

6. ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Gogolinski made a motion at 9:37 PM to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting. Mr. D'Amico seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-6.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Wright
Recording Secretary