

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2019

A meeting of the Finance Committee (FC) was held on Tuesday, October 29, 2019 in the Municipal Center. Mr. D'Amico called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT: Howard D'Amico (Chair), Michael Hutnak (Vice Chair), Carol Gogolinski, Sandy Kuipers, Phil Landry, Heather Morin, Lynne Mussulli, Dick Vanden Berg

ABSENT:

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

The members of the FC introduced themselves.

1. OVERVIEW OF FY2021 BUDGET YEAR PROCESS

Mr. Wojcik stated that the October enrollment figures for Blackstone Valley Tech (BVT) show that Douglas' enrollment has increased by 7 students, which is a 6.5% increase. Therefore, the version of the budget that he is working on will include a 10%-11.5% increase in BVT, which is an approximately 4% organic increase in BVT assessment related to their expenses and a population adjustment.

The Town is also expecting a large increase in Property/Casualty Insurance premium tied to a large flooding claim at the schools (\$960,000 reserve) where water ran for three days before it was discovered. The premiums include a three-year lookback. Mr. Wojcik stated his opinion that town buildings should be monitored at least once every 24 hours in the winter to be sure there are no freezing/flooding issues. Grant money is being sought to purchase sensors.

Regarding health insurance, the Town has been self-insured for four months. The first two months of claims data is in and Douglas is at 60% of the assessment.

Mr. Wojcik reminded the FC that all the School Dept. contracts are up for negotiation this year. Mr. D'Amico stated that the School Committee will be coming to the FC in December.

2. DISCUSS SPECIAL TOWN MEETING (STM) OF NOVEMBER 18, 2019

Ms. Lovett stated that the FC will be meeting at 6:30 PM in the History wing at the high school prior to Town Meeting.

3. REVIEW WARRANT ARTICLES FOR STM

Ms. Lovett stated that the articles are in final format.

Article 5: Mr. Wojcik stated that the Moderator is planning a short PowerPoint presentation at STM explaining Article 5 and what economic development is and what Douglas is planning to do, which is to match properties with parties of interest. He stated that economic development is critical to being able to sustain the Town government and the school system at an appropriate and competitive level.

The Town cannot afford to extend water and sewer to users who cannot generate the volume to support a project along Rte. 146. Extension of services cannot happen

without a MassWorks grant. In order to win the grant, a shovel-ready project is needed. Article 5 seeks to set aside \$501,200 from Free Cash for engineering plans for water/sewer connections if Douglas receives the MassWorks grant. This money will not be spent if critical milestones are not achieved.

Mr. Wojcik explained the steps that have already been taken to promote this development, namely rezoning and switching of expediting permitting to this area. Also, the Town is in the process of titling parcels with unknown ownership. A discussion was held including the process and what will happen to the funds if the project does not go forward.

Mr. Wojcik explained the procurement process and explained that a town cannot obligate a contract without the money already being approved.

Ms. Lovett stated that Free Cash was certified at \$1,551,312. If all articles are accepted as proposed, this Town Meeting would appropriate \$569,355, leaving \$981,957 in Free Cash.

The FC would like Mr. Wojcik to come back to the Committee once all the details of the project are known.

Mr. Vanden Berg made a motion to clarify the language and vote on Article 5 this evening. Ms. Gogolinski seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7, No-1.

A discussion was held including TIF agreements, and Giboa Street vs. Davis Street as potential economic development sites.

It was decided to change the wording for article 5 to "...water main and approximately 3500 linear feet of sewer main in order to extend services along Davis Street, including all incidental or related costs or take any other action related thereto."

Ms. Gogolinski made a motion to recommend Article 5 to Town Meeting as amended, subject to it being adopted by the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Vanden Berg seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7, No-1.

Mr. Landry would prefer that the language include a trigger point. Mr. Wojcik explained why he does not approve of adding a trigger point to the warrant language.

Article 1 – Budget Transfers. Mr. Hutnak made a motion to recommend Article 1 to Town Meeting as presented. Mr. Vanden Berg seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-8.

Article 2 – Ms. Lovett stated that this amount closed into Free Cash as part of this year's end-of-year process. Mr. Vanden Berg made a motion to recommend Article 2 to Town Meeting as presented. Mr. Hutnak seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-8.

Article 3 – There was one bill missed from FY2018 in the amount of \$53.48 for Verizon, to be paid from the Water/Sewer Dept. Ms. Morin made a motion to recommend Article 3 to Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Mussulli seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-8.

Article 4 – Ms. Morin made a motion to recommend Article 4 to Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Gogolinski seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-8.

Article 6 - Mr. Hutnak made a motion to recommend Article 6 to Town Meeting as presented. Mr. Vanden Berg seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-8.

Article 7 - Mr. Hutnak made a motion to recommend Article 7 to Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Morin seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-8.

Article 8 - Mr. Vanden Berg made a motion to recommend Article 8 to Town Meeting as presented. Ms. Mussulli seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-8.

Article 9 – Ms. Lovett explained that Douglas received a Green Communities grant. As part of this project, within the grant there was a National Grid incentive (\$18,155). The Town cannot spend without appropriation, so the Town is “fronting” the money. When the Town receives the incentive, it will go into Miscellaneous Revenue and will be part of Free Cash next year.

Mr. Hutnak made a motion to end discussion and have a vote. Ms. Morin seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-8. Ms. Mussulli made a motion to recommend Article 9 to Town Meeting as presented. Mr. Hutnak seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-8.

4. RESERVE FUND TRANSFERS/ VOUCHERS

Ms. Lovett stated that Ms. Morin signed the postage voucher and some payroll vouchers for the Recording Secretary.

Ms. Lovett reminded the Chair that warrant language is needed for Suzanne Kane by Thursday.

5. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS

Old Business: There was no old business.

New Business: There was no new business.

Next Meeting Dates: The next meetings will be 11/16/19 at 6:30 PM at the high school and 12/10/19.

6. MINUTES:

There were no minutes to approve.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hutnak made a motion at 8:24 PM to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting. Ms. Morin seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-8.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Wright
Recording Secretary