

Event Details

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Finance Committee

Tuesday, January 30, 2024

Date: January 30, 2024

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: Resource Room

Address: Douglas Municipal Center
29 Depot St.
Douglas, MA 01516

Douglas Finance Committee Agenda

Town Hall, Resource Room

Depot Street, Douglas MA

January 30, 2024

7:00 p.m.

1. Call to order
2. Town administrator update on the budget
3. Upcoming schedule:
 - a. Feb. 27
 - b. March 12
 - c. March 26
 - d. April 9
 - e. Town meeting is May 6, 2024

4. Open session for topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance
5. Adjournment



CONTACT

The Town of Douglas

Municipal Center

29 Depot Street

Douglas, MA 01516

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APPROVED
MARCH 12, 2024

FINANCE COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2024
RESOURCE ROOM

Attendance: Vice chair Sandy Kuipers, Lynne Mussulli, Heather Morin, Carol Gogolinski, Mike Hutnak, Howard D'Amico, Matt Wojcik Town Administrator

Absent: Chair Dick Vandenberg, Ryan Hogan

Sandy Kuipers called the meeting to order.

1. (0:15 TS) Town Administrator updated on the budget

Mr. Wojcik provided the committee with a preliminary budget as a snapshot reflects the highest and best information available to him as of tonight, as he does not have the PowerPoint ready yet. He went through some of the annual financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2023, and would encourage the Fin Com to familiarize themselves with it, and that it is a clean audit. As of the close of the current fiscal year the net position in governmental activities has a positive change of \$2,706,443.00, the town's net position continues to improve. The unassigned fund balance for the general fund is \$5,959,285.00, a change of \$1,374,644.00 in comparison to the prior year. The town's unassigned fund balance of general fund expenditures as a percentage now stands at 17.3%, which is a good position to be in for a town getting ready to do a new highway barn. Mr. Wojcik also wanted to point out that there is a significant change in the town's OPEB liability, which this year was revised downward by about 1 million dollars. The town has drastically reduced the cost of retiree health care by purchasing a different product and getting a better price.

(7:20 TS) Howard D'Amico joined the meeting.

Mr. Wojcik distributed an update memo to the committee members and explained that for this year's budget he went back to the fall special town meeting and determine how much of the spending that was approved by special town meeting would be recurring and added to the base of the budget for fiscal 25. He then went through some of the specific department budget lines for police, fire and ambulance and what is being added and explanation for the changes to the net. He stated that \$331,810.00 of the \$489,010.00 requested at town meeting have been incorporated into the operational budget for fiscal 25. Mr. Wojcik explained what the different columns of the budget are labeled and represent. The warehouse value and taxable growth number is \$1.891 million. Mr. Wojcik is recommending that they town sustain the 70 hours a week commitment to the medic only program, and adding a regular rank and file individual to the highway department that was cut many years ago and never restored. There have been significant changes to the pay structure in both police officers and recalibrated the table in fire and ambulance so the base wage is now the medic wage and not the fire fighter wage, and these changes will explain a large portion of the spending change. He noted the change from fiscal 24 is \$1.4 million because the assessor recommended that they hold back \$550,000.00 in overlay in order

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to sustain any tax abatement filings by the warehouse owner, and after the appeal deadline date has passed that overlay amount could be closed into free cash. When he balances the budget this year it will be in the black about \$330,000.00 with the anticipation that the \$550k overlay and say the town will take \$500k of that back so with the amount estimated of \$830k Mr. Wojcik is going to recommend to the town that that money be held back for the purchase of real estate associated with the highway barn project. Mr. Wojcik is recommending a 4% increase in the revised budget for the school department, which is an additional \$590k to the Douglas Public Schools and he explained his reason for the increase. The increase he budgeted for BVT is 9.6% and hoping that it doesn't come in that high. The next highest increase is in the police department, which is adding a school resource officer, and compensation chart changes that affect all union members and the purchase of cruisers which ends up being a \$320k increase for police. The other two highest increase budget lines are fire/ambulance and library. Fire and ambulance were making their wages more competitive was significant about \$30k and adding 70 hours a week of the paramedic level for experienced employees. The library increase is a little over \$100k which will allow them to increase the hours of the operation of the library and put a substantial investment into the library's electronic books. He went through the remainder of the budget department lines with the committee members. The entire general government is up \$49,339.00 which is about 2 – 2 ½ %. Mr. Wojcik will give an update at the Fin Com meetings on numbers that have changed as the budget process moves forward.

2. (1:00:25 TS) Open session for topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance.
3. (1:00:30 TS) Upcoming schedule: February 27, 2024, March 12, 2024, March 26, 2024, April 9, 2024, Town meeting is May 6, 2024.

Ms. Lovett stated that both schools have confirmed for the 2/27/24 meeting. The committee members asked Ms. Lovett where the money for the school choice accounts go, she stated that the school choice in goes to the school in a special revenue fund to the grant and the school choice out goes to the town. There was concern and question about the school department not seeming to want to have to use their school choice for their operating budget, and Ms. Lovett explained that they use their grants through out the year for their operating budget which include preschool, school lunch, circuit breaker and school choice.

(1:05:55 TS) Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Mike Hutnak, 2nd by Heather Morin. The vote passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,


Stephenie Gosselin