

Event Details

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Finance Committee

Tuesday, March 28, 2023

Date: March 28, 2023

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: Community Meeting Room

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

Douglas Finance Committee Agenda

Town Hall

Depot Street

March 28, 2023

Call to order

Budget presentation/review

Capital Improvement

Board of Health

Water/Sewer

Blackstone Valley Tech

Review special articles

Snow and ice update

Town administrator update

Upcoming dates:

April 4—stay tuned

April 11: public review of the Warrant articles, possible votes

Town Meeting: Monday, May 1—we will meet 30 minutes before to wrap up loose ends

Reserve Fund transfers as needed

Open session for topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance

Adjournment

Douglas

MASSACHUSETTS

CONTACT

The Town of Douglas

Municipal Center

29 Depot Street

Douglas, MA 01516

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FINANCE COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2023
MUNICIPAL CENTER

Attendance: Chair Dick Vandenberg, Vice chair Sandy Kuipers, Howard D'Amico, Ryan Hogan, Carol Gogolinski, Lynne Mussulli, Heather Morin, Mike Hutnak

Chair Dick Vandenberg called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

1. (7:02 PM) (0:20 TS) Budget Presentation / Review

a. (7:02 PM) (0:30 TS) Board of Health

Kristen Harris, the Board of Health administrative assistant stated that for the expenses the only change is the monitoring wells went up \$1000 because the lab fees and water samples increased. Regulations are of some concern to the board because they need updating, like water quality and animal control regulations and food regulations. Mr. Vandenberg asked how they are dealing with the issue that the state recycling website says the town will take things like 48-inch fluorescent bulbs that the town doesn't, Ms. Harris has contacted the state to see if it has been removed and is waiting to hear back from her. Mr. Hogan asked if with the increased sticker price will they be able to cover their costs and has if affected retained earnings. Ms. Harris stated that the sticker purchases are at 948 and last year at this time it was 1022 but she cannot say if that number will increase, they are hoping to sell the same number of stickers. Jeanne Lovett, the finance director stated that the transfer station budget is about \$350k dollars so that is the number they are trying to get to. The sticker prices should have increased a year ago, they have not changed for about 7 years and the hauling costs have increased over the years. Mr. Hogan asked if the increase in sticker price and if the sticker sales stayed at 948 would they be funded. Ms. Lovett and Ms. Harris stated that they are currently at \$295,600. Mr. Hogan asked if they see BP increasing their costs again when the contract is up on June 30th. Ms. Harris stated that they are looking into different options of possibly going single stream to make it easier and more appealing to the residents to recycle or getting another compactor, and right now it is in Mr. Wojcik's hands, and they are trying to figure out the best way to move forward. The Board of Health is also focusing on their emergency preparedness with the help of Dave Balbi who joined in October of 2022. He has worked for 15 years for the Department of Health and Center for emergency preparedness response. They have been working on updating the Emergency Dispensing Site plan (EDS plan), they are going to do some in-town training for personnel. They have been working on getting updated PPE equipment and they are in the process of acquiring a trailer that is being decommissioned from another jurisdiction to use for their storage of supplies and transportation of supplies. Mr. Balbi stated that there shouldn't really be any budget implications because all the resources they are requesting they are getting for free from the state. The insurance for trailer is the only additional expense. There was question to what the nurse hours is going to be used for now that COVID and vaccination clinics are over. The Town Nurse stated that she now has time to do the things that were not getting done during COVID and she is starting a new program for new mothers and infants to help with their needs. The Town Nurse has also is being certified to be a food inspector for the town because that is important to her that the food establishments in town are up to code and safe for the public. Carol Gogolinski asked if they have looked into the

towns zoning bylaws about using trailers for storage. She mentioned that the town of Douglas does not allow the use of trailers for storage and there was even a case that went to court and suggested that they investigate that. The board of health stated that they were not aware of the bylaws that stated that. Bob Sullivan asked Ms. Gogolinski if the utility trailer is under that as well. She stated that it was a trailer and they also decided that shipping containers were included in that.

b. Water/Sewer

Bob Sullivan is presenting his enterprise budget to the committee. With the proposed comp reform there is some increase in the salary portion. Mr. Sullivan has passed out a budget form to the committee with FY23 and FY24 columns and then another column to show the increase amount. He explained that when people are home and using water and sewer that helps their budget. His biggest issue is the need for staff, and financially they are doing okay. The staff additions are funded in their budget, and to get the grants they needed for the projects they are doing in town they needed to spend about \$50k-60k out of the enterprise fund for the engineering part of the project.

c. (7:46 PM) (44:00 TS) Blackstone Valley Tech

Dr. Fitzpatrick and the local school committee rep liaison to Douglas Mark Potter are present for the presentation and Dr. Fitzpatrick handed out his budget summary sheet. Dr. Fitzpatrick stated that there are two sources of money he would like to suggest the town explore that are outside of BVT, one being the Rural School Coalition that increases the number of dollars made available to rural schools recognizing the unique challenges faced by rural communities like Douglas. The other source is that the state increased the FY24 budget for PILOT program by 14%. The total increase that they are requesting in a budget that was just approved last Thursday is \$63,052 that is an increase of 3.9% and the town continues to maintain an ownership of 9.2% in BVT and is represented by 115 students. They are in the 19th year of the debt in FY24 so there is one more year of payment and then all debts are addressed. The cost per student is \$13,991, Dr. Fitzpatrick went over the budget summary in detail with the committee. The overall assessment increased by 6.7% but Douglas increased by 3.9% because of the way the state calculates the contribution of each town. Mr. Hogan asked if he could speak to the decrease in the amount they contributed for the excess in deficiency fund. Dr. Fitzpatrick stated that the excess in deficiency must be certified by the Department of Revenue, and it was certified at \$801k which is still \$500k less than the maximum and they are allowed to keep 5% maximum, so the school committee thought it best to draw on a little lesser for the assessment offsets. Mr. Vandenberg asked if the increase from 2022 of 11%, 2023 of .3% and 2024 of 3.9% is figured by the state, and Dr. Fitzpatrick responded that yes, the state figures those increase amounts. The health insurance increases this year were 2%. Mr. Hutnak asked if there was any look to expand in the trades offered, when the debt is paid his suggestion would be a 20-million-dollar bond to continue to make little improvements during FY25 impacting FY26 and beyond.

d. (8:16 PM) (1:14:50 TS) Review special articles

Matt Benoit the Community Development Director is present to talk about article 11 on the warrant addressing the mandate by the state and federal government to update the bylaws to maintain the towns flood insurance. Ms. Gogolinski questioned the wording of section 8.3.5 that stated review of all subdivision proposal is required, and she didn't think that it said that on the paper from the state that she had previously read. Mr. Benoit stated that he hasn't changed or added anything that was not written as required by them. Ms. Gogolinski is going to review and investigate this further. Mr. Benoit stated that the state said there was an error in the maps they issued, and they would be sending new maps out, but the town

has not received them yet. Ms. Gogolinski doesn't think it's right for them to have to vote on this before seeing the maps from the state. Most of the things stricken were old definitions and Mr. Benoit went over the other changes that they wanted to be made. Ms. Gogolinski would be interested in knowing what parts of the town are being covered by flood insurance. The planning board did not recommend any changes to the wording at their meeting last week.

(8:31 PM) (1:29:45 TS) Article 12 on the warrant is Cobblestone Lane and Meetinghouse Lane are the two leftover pieces of Stonegate Development for road acceptance. This has been peer reviewed, and the recommended changes have been made, and the towns consultant signed off on it last summer. The planning board voted unanimously to support this article.

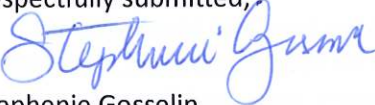
(8:33 PM) (1:31:30 TS) Bob Sullivan was present to talk about article 13 of the warrant is having engineers come in and evaluate all the town's assets on the water portion and they were approved for the grant they just need to get it approved at town meeting. The project is a \$140k dollar project and the state grant is providing \$84k and they must cover the other half between in town services and the other \$28k will come from retained earnings through water and sewer.

2. (8:35 PM) (1:33:48 TS) Snow and Ice Update
Mr. Benoit stated that there are no further changes from the last update.
3. (8:36 PM) (1:34:10 TS) Town Administrator's Update
Mr. Wojcik went over the comp reform packet slide that shows the summary of the financial impact of the town. Mr. Wojcik is measuring the difference between what the compensation reform proposal will cost versus what today's existing system will cost if it stays in place and there is a COLA, and that bottom line amount is about \$161k which is below the initial target of \$225k. The Selectboard just took five votes, the most important one was they endorsed the plan overall with some minor changes to it. Two other votes were to take a Board of Health hourly position and move it up to a management position and take that position out of the transfer station budget and put it in the general fund budget and take the part-time office assistant and put it in the transfer station budget. The board also voted to increase the salary of the Economic Development Facilitator from an M1 step 5 to an M1 step 25. The board voted to also move the Building Commissioner from a step 5 to a step 10. Mr. Wojcik went over what the document he gave to the committee goes through. The committee will take the document and review it and meet on April 11th with any questions they have for Mr. Wojcik. The emphasis on this comp reform was about getting the majority of the new funds in the hands of hourly employees and not management, so out of the \$161k only about \$23k is going to a management level person and a little less than half of the funds are going to the highway department. The committee will email Lisa Freeman with their questions, and she will get the answers from Matt Wojcik and the questions and answers will be printed out a packet for the committee members to avoid open meeting law violations. Mr. Wojcik spoke about the capital and the town's bond rating to be able to do a conceptual design for the highway barn.
4. (8:58 PM) (1:56:25 TS) Upcoming dates:
 - a. April 4: No meeting for Finance Committee – Selectboard has a meeting to review the entire warrant.
 - b. April 11: Public review of the Warrant articles – Possible Votes
 - c. May 1: Town Meeting, Finance Committee will meet 30 minutes before to wrap up loose ends.

5. (9:00 PM) (1:58:42 TS) Reserve Fund Transfers: NONE

(9:03 PM) (2:01:55 TS) Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Mike Hutnak, 2nd by Carol Gogolinski. All members in favor.

Respectfully submitted,


Stephenie Gosselin