

Event Details

 View Map

Finance Committee

Tuesday, June 27, 2023

Date: June 27, 2023

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: Resource Room

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

Douglas Finance Committee Agenda

Town Hall

Depot Street, Douglas MA

June 27, 2023

1. Call to order
2. Budget presentation/review: School Department
3. Town administrator update
4. Reserve fund transfers
5. Report, FinCom expenses and payroll
6. Approve minutes
 - a. March 21, 2023
 - b. March 28, 2023
 - c. April 11, 2023

- d. May 1, 2023
- 7. Update on the duration of the term of each committee member
- 8. Upcoming meetings: September 12 or 26?
- 9. Open session for topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance
- 10. Adjournment

Douglas

MASSACHUSETTS

CONTACT

The Town of Douglas

Municipal Center

29 Depot Street

Douglas, MA 01516

[Contact Us](#)



Live Edit is off. Click this button to turn it on so you can edit your page content and menus.

FINANCE COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, JUNE 27, 2023
RESOURCE ROOM

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

Absent: Lynne Mussulli, Mike Hutnak

The Chair Dick Vandenberg called the meeting to order.

1. (0:25 TS) Budget Review for the school department

School superintendent Paul Vieira and school business manager Cortney Keegan stated that they met with both Matt, Wojcik and Jeanne Lovett three or four times to discuss the gap in the budget of \$334,000, and where they're at now is they have to wait for FY 23 to close out and for new growth for the town to get certified and once that is done, they're going to have a final meeting to discuss what that reallocation looks like of funds to lessen the budget deficit for the school for FY24 and looking forward into FY25. They closed the gap for this year's budget by taking the money out of school choice account and did not cut. Any employee positions. Mr. Hogan asked about the cuts made to the different departments, specifically the athletic department. Ms. Keegan stated that yes, there had been cuts to all departments, but as far as the amount that was cut specifically for athletics, she is unsure of. There was talk about a \$100,000 cut to the athletic department around town. Mr. Vieira stated that there have been cuts but there is the same sports and same programs as last year. What the town is currently waiting for FY 24 is the cherry sheet numbers from the state and the new growth amount. Ms. Lovett expects the cherry sheet to come in July and expects new growth numbers by the end of the summer. Mr. Wojcik feels the need to point out that the school department has two major operating components to the budget, there is chapter 70 (a formula block grant from the state to distribute aid to the towns for education) which has been relatively stable. The change over the last four years has been less than half a percent and Douglas is around \$8 million, the rest of the school's budget comes from the town from what is raised and appropriated, and the use of the school's reserve account. School choice being one of those accounts that has had a steady increase over the years especially since the override. Mr. Wojcik wanted to point out the unnecessary attack from teachers' union members at the last meeting regarding pink slips being handed out and hopes that that would not happen again at any future meeting, especially since it was easily rectified by using the school choice reserve account, and no layoffs were needed. Mr. Wojcik would like to take the schools budget and look for the sources of change, what is driving the need for additional resources from one year to the next. Mr. Wojcik talked to the committee and explained again what his plan had been for subsidizing the school's budget over a two-year period to help them stabilize their bottom line. He also mentioned one of the driving factors in the budget deficit was the out of district rate which is an unfunded state mandate that for the school department that went from 2 1/2% to 14%, a \$150,000 increase from last fiscal year. Mr. Vieira stated that the state is still working on figuring this out and trying to lessen the amount, but they do not know what that is at this point, and as far as day, no at this point, this will be a reoccurring amount for the school and as a Town, they must figure out how to close that gap going forward. Mr. Vieira stated the other big dollar thing at the state level being discussed now at the state level is the reimbursement for breakfast and lunch. Mr. Wojcik stated that another wild card is charter school reimbursement and fees because this

fluctuates significantly from year to year, so it is an unreliable amount that they do not count as revenue. Mr. Wojcik handed the committee an activity code breakout, which is a form of analysis that they do every year when the school department comes before the finance committee to talk about their budget. Mr. Wojcik suggests starting the school budgeting discussion with the finance committee earlier in the budgeting process. Mr. Vandenberg stated that the next time they meet in the fall they will discuss the process and come to an agreement on that. Mr. Hogan asked for a deeper understanding of the increase to the OSD (operational services division), which the superintendent and business manager, and Mr. Wojcik explained in more detail. Mr. Hogan also suggested trying to come up with a better document source from the 50-page budget document of the school that is easier to understand and would be very helpful. Ms. Keegan stated that they would be happy to produce a document that maybe summarizes the 50 pages.

2. (52:30 TS) Town Administrator's update

Mr. Wojcik stated that the finance committee needs to determine what they would like to see as part of the budget process.

- Mr. Vandenberg asked when the bridge the new warehouse will be finished, Mr. Wojcik said the holdup is the time it takes the concrete to cure, and national grid also must install conduit under the bridge and conduit to the various sources of electricity going into the building. Mr. Wojcik stated they were supposed to receive drawings a while ago, and they still have not even started the drawings on the bridge. They are still on target for the building to be open and the lights turned on in November.
- There is a potential tenant for the Blackstone Valley logistics building across 146, which is the tri-town building, the ongoing conversation with this potential tenant is about certain tax treaties or payment in lieu or a tiff. The three town administrators met this week with Mass Business Development, and Mr. Wojcik is not interested in a conversation about the notion of tax increment financing on a building that's already built, and infrastructure is already installed.
- The town has received their buy in from the Massachusetts strategic health group which was over \$200,000 which was basically one month of claims, this health collaborative group has grown from 8 to 15 towns in school districts.
- Mr. Wojcik stated that he doesn't think there is any problem implementing comp reform, and that they will need to revisit either in November or in May they call firefighter chart to take into consideration the fact that they're having a hard time getting even fill in paramedics, because the towns rate is not even close to being competitive.
- Mr. Vandenberg asked how building permits are going, and Mr. Wojcik stated that the town is doing well.
- Mr. Wojcik stated that it's time for the town to decide and discuss where they want to be as a Town in 10 to 20 years, and do you want it to stay a rural town. There are two ways that a town can keep it from becoming overcrowded and overpopulated and one is you have a land trust that begins to aggressively purchase at market rates from landowners and preserve the land for conservation, the other way is to take an aggressive approach to chapter 61. When a property comes out of chapter 61 the town has a right of first refusal. He believes the town of Douglas needs to be in a position to have the resources available to preserve that Town meeting wants to try and preserve, this could change the way the town of Douglas looks and feels forever.

APPROVED
NOVEMBER 6, 2023

- Mr. Hogan wanted to confirm that the CRG warehouse has to be assessed by December 30 or 31st in order to get that revenue for the FY 25 budget, Mr. Wojcik replied that is correct, and they will be assessed on what is built by that time.

3. (1:09:20 TS) Reserve Fund Transfers: NONE
4. (1:09:35 TS) Report, FinCom expenses in payroll
Ms. Lovett provided the committee with a report for the year of what has been spent out of the finance committee account and to make the committee aware of what the chair approved.
5. (1:10:55 TS) Approve Minutes: March 21, 2023, March 28, 2023, April 11, 2023, and May 1, 2023
(1:11:07 TS) motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 21, 2023, with Ryan Hogan's verbal amendment of replacing the netting behind the soccer goals made by Howard D'Amico, seconded by Heather Morin. The vote passed unanimously.
(1:12:30 TS) motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 28, 2023, as written, made by Heather Morin, seconded by Howard D'Amico. The vote passed unanimously.
(1:13:05 TS) motion to approve the meeting minutes of April 11, 2023, as written, made by Sandy Kuipers, seconded by Howard D'Amico. The vote passed unanimously.
(1:13:35 TS) motion to approve the meeting minutes of May 1, 2023, as written, made by Sandy Kuipers, seconded by Ryan Hogan. The vote passed unanimously, Howard D Amico, and Heather Morin abstained.
6. (1:14:05 TS) Update on the duration of the term of each committee member
Howard D'Amico received a letter from the town moderator about renewing being a part of the committee.
7. (1:14:55 TS) Open session for topics, not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance.
Mr. D'Amico asked when they reformulate the structure for the next year, Mr. Vandenberg stated after July 1. Mr. D'Amico stated that if the school committee is not going to have the information needed by September, he would rather put off the meeting till October when they have more information for the committee. Ms. Lovett agrees and suggests penciling in the next meeting for the end of September for the 26th.
8. (1:16:05 TS) Upcoming meetings: September 12 or 26
September 26, 2023, and October 10, 2023
Mr. Hogan would like to have the board of health come to the next meeting and give an update on the sticker costs and their revenue covering the transfer station. Ms. Lovett stated that she would get a revenue report of the transfer station to the committee.

(1:21:35 TS) Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Sandy Kuipers, seconded by Carol Gogolinski. The vote passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,


Stephenie Gosselin