

## Event Details

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### Finance Committee

**Tuesday, October 10, 2023**

**Date:** October 10, 2023

**Time:** 7:00 PM

**Location:** Resource Room

Douglas Finance

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

Committee Agenda

Town Hall

Depot Street, Douglas MA

October 10, 2023 @ 7:00

PM

1. Call to order
2. Review warrant articles for the Special Town Meeting of Nov. 6- votes and recommendations
3. Town Administrator Update
4. Upcoming meetings: Nov 6, 2023 DHS
5. Open session for topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance
6. Adjournment

# Douglas

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## MASSACHUSETTS

### *CONTACT*

The Town of Douglas

Municipal Center

29 Depot Street

Douglas, MA 01516

[Contact Us](#)

FINANCE COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2023  
RESOURCE ROOM

Attendance: Chair Dick Vandenberg, Vice chair Sandy Kuipers, Lynne Mussulli, Howard D'Amico, Carol Gogolinski

Absent: Ryan Hogan, Mike Hutnak, Heather Morin (all excused)

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

1. (0:45 TS) Review warrant articles for the Special Town Meeting of November 6, 2023 – votes and recommendations
  - Article 1 – Jeanne Lovett, Finance Director stated that article 1 is strictly used to support the FY24 budget
    - Increase Economic Development expenses for \$500.00
    - Increase Cemetery expenses for \$2,900.00
    - Increase Selectman wages \$5,563.00
    - Increase Selectman expenses \$7,000.00
    - Increase Town Hall Office expenses \$3,000.00
    - Increase Awards and Recognition expenses \$300.00
    - Increase Town Accountant wages \$2,700.00
    - Increase Town Accountant expenses \$3,200.00
    - Increase Assessors expenses \$10,000.00
    - Increase Treasurer expenses \$5,000.00
    - Increase Police wages \$34,000.00
    - Increase Fire wages \$47,500.00
    - Increase Ambulance wages \$107,500.00
    - Increase Fire expenses \$22,000.00
    - Increase Community Development expenses \$35,000.00
    - Increase Tree Warden expenses \$50,000.00
    - Increase Douglas Public School Personnel expenses \$187,347.00
    - Increase Building Department expenses \$3,000.00
    - Increase Highway Maintenance expenses \$15,000.00
    - Increase Nurse expenses \$500.00
    - Increase ZBA \$2,000.00
    - Decrease Highway wages \$20,000.00
    - Decrease Community Development wages \$35,000.00

Total of \$489,010.00

The Committee asked for more information on the increase in school department personnel expenses and Mr. Wojcik stated that the school department ended the spring cycle being short \$327k and held a series of meetings with the school business manager and superintendent and came to a conclusion that the town could fund in recurring fashion most of this number that is needed. The school department stated that they had balanced their budget using their reserves and this would put money back into their reserves. It is Mr. Wojcik's recommendation to the town that they not completely refund the entire amount or build back the entire amount, at some point the reserves must be balanced between town and schools. He suggests if the Committee needs a more detailed explanation to ask the administration in the school department. Paul Vieira the superintendent and Cortney Keegan school

business manager came to the table and asked where the number \$187k was derived because it is significantly less than the \$327k that they were short. Mr. Wojcik stated again as before that the town was not going to refund the full amount, they will pick up a portion of it that they think they can largely sustain as a recurring amount. Dr. Vieira asked if that was the amount going forward that the school will receive on top of the additional 2 to 3%. Mr. Wojcik stated that the \$187k is to back fill the school's reserves, the base that will be used to calculate the schools budget next year is what they were given this year not with the \$187k in it but with what the school department received from Spring Town Meeting. The 2% would be added to the amount voted at the May Town Meeting, and Mr. Wojcik's intention is to make that 3% for FY25 and what that adds to next year's budget is another \$147k. Dr. Vieira stated to the Committee that not adding the full amount back to the school creates a significant structural budget deficit. Ms. Keegan handed out budget information to the Committee and Mr. Wojcik to review. Ms. Keegan discussed with the Committee what the issues would be for the school if they did not get fully refunded, for future budget years with 3 contract renewals coming up and having to use more school choice funds than they feel they should, and her concerns for FY25 and that this will not only be bad for the school but stated it will be moving them backwards. Mr. Wojcik explained that the town is providing in the 2% is about a \$1 million dollar increase and that the end of year balance for the school department keeps growing because of the amount of funding the town is contributing. Mr. D'Amico went over numbers provided by the school and calculated about a 2.14% increase for FY24 and stated for the record that there was an illusion made tonight to a concept that the Finance Committee has asked over the years for the town and the school department to lead the way for the town to make an effort for the town to have a fantastic school department and he feels that effort has been met and done very well. That being said Mr. D'Amico stated that other parts and segments of the town need to also be able to operate well. He stated that the town and its allocation of resources and the efforts that the school department has made have been fantastic and would caution people within the town fighting for dollars not to suggest that if they don't get everything, they believe they want or need that that somehow would move the town in any manner whatsoever backwards because it would not. Carol Gogolinski asked what the highest enrollment is that the Douglas Public School system has ever had, and Dr. Vieira stated that about 10 years ago they had about 1600 students. Monique Salvis a Douglas resident stated she has 2 children in the Douglas school district and that she feels that there should be more offered.

Lynne Mussulli asked to go over the Ambulance wage increase. John Furno, Fire Chief stated that they are hoping to staff another person during the day, 10 hours a day to be, they are currently short staffed. (52:40 TS) Motion to recommend that the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$429,010.00 and transfer the sum of \$60k from ambulance receipts reserved for appropriation for a total of \$489,010.00 to fund the following amendments to article 2 of the Annual Town Meeting of Monday, May 1, 2023, made by Sandy Kuipers, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Carol Gogolinski. The vote passed unanimously.

- Article 2 – Capital Improvement Supplemental Budget, Adam Furno, acting Highway Superintendent and also Town Maintenance Manager explained that the main roof estimate came in higher and the elevator roof came in lower and they would like to combine the projects so they can use the extra funds from the elevator roof to supplement the main roof and also add \$80k to completely fund the project, and they cannot go out to bid unless the entire estimated amount is funded, they are hoping that they won't need all of it and can return some once the project is completed but will not know that until they go to bid. The other item is the brush cutting head attachment for the sidewalk tractor for \$45k, right now they subcontract this out and can only get 1/3 of the town done in the 3 weeks allowed and it costs the town \$16k. With this attachment they could do it all year round.

(56:40 TS) Motion to recommend that the town vote to transfer from free cash \$110,438.36 and from the following previously approved projects new sidewalk article 9, 5508 \$9503.25, Financial software

article 8 from 5514 \$1275.00, Building vehicle article 10, ATM 5222 \$3,783.39 for a total sum of \$125k to amend article 10 adoption of revised fiscal year 24 to FY28 Capital Improvement Plan of Monday, May 1, 2023, ATM for \$80k for the municipal center roof project amend article 10 of 5/15/21 and \$45k for a brush cutting head for a sidewalk tractor and all associated costs, made by Sandy Kuipers, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Lynne Mussulli. Jeanne Lovett added to make it clear that the two roof projects are being combined at Town Meeting as well. The vote passed unanimously.

- (1:00:30 TS) Article 3 – Transfer from free cash to stabilization, this is the equity buy in that was returned to the town when they joined the multi town health group, and it came from free cash, and they are putting into stabilization.

(1:01:35 TS) Motion to recommend the town vote to transfer the amount of \$227,367.63 from free cash to the stabilization fund, made by Sandy Kuipers, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Howard D'Amico. The vote passed unanimously.

- (1:02:10 TS) Article 4 – Waterways Dive Rescue Team account – Kelly Manning, Assistant Fire chief stated Douglas is part of a regional dive team and this will allow them to perform preventative maintenance to their boats and scuba gear, and some replacement of scuba that is over 15 years old.

(1:03:45 TS) Motion to recommend the town vote to transfer \$10k from the waterway's receipts reserved for appropriation account for the purpose of purchasing water rescue equipment, repairs and maintenance for the boats and any other associated costs, made by Sandy Kuipers, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Carol Gogolinski. The vote passed unanimously.

- (1:04:20 TS) Article 5 – Changes to Personnel Compensation chart – Mr. Wojcik stated that there was an inadvertent error in not including a library assistant and adding the new van drivers for the COA bus.

(1:05:45 TS) Motion to recommend the town to note to change the personnel compensation chart by adding the positions, titles, and grades/steps of library assistant at an OA-1 and a COA bus driver at MS-2, made by Sandy Kuipers, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Lynne Mussulli. The vote passed unanimously.

- (1:06:20 TS) Article 6 – Amend General Bylaw Language Senior Tax Work off program – Chris Pupka, Principal Assessor and stated that this is bringing the town's general bylaw into accordance with the state law that the town has been using and following.

(1:07:35 TS) Motion to recommend the town vote to amend the general bylaw language as printed in the warrant, made by Sandy Kuipers, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Howard D'Amico. The vote passed unanimously.

- (1:08:00 TS) Article 7 – Ratify Douglas Police, Fire, EMS, Public Safety Communications contract – Police Chief Nick Miglionico and Mr. Wojcik spoke to this article. They recognized that they were far behind in terms of the wages paid to this classification of employees and were losing good people to other towns. This is a second part to a contract for a newly formed union that both sides have come to agree upon and are happy with the results.

(1:10:50 TS) Motion to recommend the town vote to ratify the Douglas Police, Fire, EMS, Public Safety Communications contract executed by the Board of Selectmen and the Douglas Police, Fire, EMS, Public Safety Communicators on October 3, 2023, made by Sandy Kuipers, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Lynne Mussulli. The vote passed unanimously.

- (1:11:30 TS) Article 8 – Amend Zoning Solar Bylaw – Matt Benoit stated this was a bylaw that was brought before town meeting last fall and at the time there was also an ongoing case law that may change the bylaw, come May they received the bylaw back from the Attorney General's office comments and some suggested changes which then went to Town Council who then amended some changes to make sense for the town of Douglas. What is before the committee tonight is a fully recommended bylaw amendment already reviewed and approved by the Planning Board.

(1:13:50 TS) Motion to recommend the town vote to amend section 6.8 of the Douglas Zoning Bylaws as printed in the warrant, made by Sandy Kuipers, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Howard D'Amico. The vote passed unanimously.

- (1:14:30 TS) Article 9 – No Solicitation – Chief Miglionico stated that this article is intended to regulate the door-to-door solicitation, by regulating a permitting process which would include submitting to a background check and information on their vehicles and set up at time frame from 9 am to 7 pm to solicit and set up a no solicitation registry that residents can register through the clerk's office if they do not want solicitors coming to their house. This will only apply to for profit companies and non-profit groups will not be affected by this.

(1:18:30 TS) Motion to recommend the town vote to article 9 as printed in the warrant, made by Sandy Kuipers, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Carol Gololinski. The vote passed unanimously.

- (1:19:00 TS) Article 10 Water/Sewer Department, water main updates engineering design for Depot Street – Mr. Wojcik stated that money is not coming from taxpayers or from free cash it is coming from the water/sewer departments retained earnings and the actual project is being funded with ARPA funds.

(1:22:35 TS) Motion to recommend the town vote to raise and appropriate and or transfer from retained earnings from the water/sewer enterprise funds the sum of \$300k, water system development \$82k, retained earnings \$218k for the purpose of design and engineering costs involving a water, sewer, stormwater culvert infrastructure upgrade and road resurfacing project on Depot Street from Main Street to the end of Depot Street and completing the water loop to Martin Road via Maple Street or parcel 189-14 whichever is deemed appropriate through the design and engineering process, made by Sandy Kuipers, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Lynne Mussulli. The vote passed unanimously.

- (1:23:55 TS) Article 11 – Bylaw Amendment regulation of property section 5, Scenic Roads – Justin Picharello, a resident of Attleboro and property owner and taxpayer in Douglas. This came about because there were concerns from residents about some proposed development in town. The purpose is to maintain the character and appearance of the 5 scenic roads (Common Street, Church Street, Oak Street, Orange Street & Northwest Main Street) in the town of Douglas and not allow earth removal on these roads. Carol Gogolinski stated that she is against this article and feels that the town Planning Board does a good job of monitoring and regulating the earth removal in the town.

(1:37:35 TS) Motion to recommend the town vote to amend article 11 as printed in the warrant, made by Sandy Kuipers, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Lynne Mussulli. Sandy Kuipers abstained, all other members NOT in favor.

- (1:38:15 TS) Article 12 – Justin Picharello stated that the intent of this article is to limit the number of new residential construction permits to 5 in a year.

APPROVED  
DECEMBER 12, 2023

(1:52:05 TS) Motion to recommend the town vote to amend article 12 as printed in the warrant, made by Sandy Kuipers, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Lynne Mussuli. Sandy Kuipers abstained and all other members NOT in favor.

2. (1:53:30 TS) Town Administrators update – Mr. Wojick is asking department heads to come to the Select Board meetings to brief the town on the status of their department and those meetings are important for the Finance Committee to watch, he is building many of the department head requests into the budget. Mr. Wojcik would like to go on record stating that once he puts a number into public debate, he intends to propose that number, and there will not be a number less than \$15,003,847 to the Douglas Public Schools but it doesn't mean it won't be more.

Upcoming meeting: November 6, 2023

Mr. Vandenberg stated that if any member of the committee would like to be on the Master Plan Committee.

(1:57:45 TS) Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Lynne Mussulli, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Howard D'Amico. The vote passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Stephenie Gosselin