

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes
Zoom Number 870 7203 9674

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
2024 MAR 19 AM 7:47
MILFORD, MASS.

Date: March 4, 2024

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Present: O'Connell, Cooper, O'Connor, Cooney, Kuphal, Wells

Absent: Pratt

Meeting called to order at 6:46 p.m.

Motioned by Cooney, seconded by Wells to accept the minutes of February 26, 2024 as written.
Cooper, yes; Cooney, yes; Kuphal, yes; Wells, yes; O'Connor, yes; O'Connell, yes

Karyn Clark, Town Manager and Jennifer Barrett, Finance Director were present at the meeting.

Comprehensive Draft V1 Warrant

Jennifer Barrett: Warrant articles are due on Friday. The Board of Selectmen will close the Warrant at their meeting next Tuesday.

Article 1-Reports from Town Officers and Committees

Jen O'Connell: No one usually gets up to report to the Town Meeting on their Committee or Office.

Article 2-MS4 Article

Jen O'Connell: Some of the articles are standard yearly ones. Why isn't Article 2 our budget?

Jennifer Barrett: We need to do the MS4 Enterprise first.

Article 3-Fiscal Year 2025 Budget

Article 4-Sewer Enterprise Fund

Jennifer Barrett: This is normally within the budget. The DOR recommends that we put it in an article instead of the operating budget.

Article 5-PEG Access and Cable

Jen O'Connell: Did you change the numbers on this account or is it what was voted on last year?

Jennifer Barrett: I updated the numbers.

Article A-Authorization of Revolving Funds-Change

Jennifer Barrett: This is just to change the inspections to Inspectional Services.

Article B-Annual limits on Revolving Funds

Jen O'Connell: Did any of the spending caps change?

Jennifer Barrett: I may have increased the Inspectional Services.

Article C-Prior Year Bills

Article D-Sewer Stabilization Fund

Article E-Stabilization Fund

Article F-Chapter 90 Supplement Account

Jennifer Barrett: Some of the numbers may change on the Stabilization Articles once the Selectmen go over the Reserve Policy. This is to update the 2017 Policy. The language needs to be updated and the goals for each need to be checked. The Finance Committee will be meeting with the Board of Selectmen on Tuesday, March 12, 2024 as they go over the second reading.

Jen O'Connell: We will be canceling the Wednesday meeting next week and since I will not be traveling, we will add a meeting for May 18, 2024. The Stabilization Fund is supposed to be at 10% or is it an aggregate of all of our reserves?

Jennifer Barrett: That is what we need to figure out. We have added 3-4 new Stabilization Funds since the Reserve Policy was enacted. We need to have it spelled out. I will check the actual balance in the Stabilization Fund. We just want to make sure that the language of the policy is accurate.

Russell Wells: Shouldn't the rationale read "20% of Free Cash or \$100,000, whichever is higher?"

Jennifer Barrett: It does say that in the policy but we need to see if it is 20% before or after funding other projects.

Jen O'Connell: I don't think \$100,000 is going to be enough. It isn't enough to pave a road, only fill in the holes.

Nicole Cooney: What do we get for Chapter 90 Funds?

Jennifer Barrett: We are getting \$419,000.

Charles Cooper: How does this article align with Article H?

Jen O'Connell: That is separate.

Karyn Clark: The project on Howe Ave is about \$½ Million and the other \$½ Million is going to pave other roads in Town.

Jen O'Connell: We have the Free Cash, but if we use it for this, it would take away from something else.

Article G-Health Insurance Stabilization

Jen O'Connell: What is this used for? Is it to offset the premiums?

Jennifer Barrett: We can use this for that. We also could use it for mitigation. We need a Town Meeting vote to use anything out of this account.

Article H-Road Improvement-Howe Ave Intersection/additional paving

Article I-Sewer Stabilization and Retained Earnings

Jennifer Barrett: This is to authorize the money that we needed to fix a sewer main break. The amount would come out of Retained Earnings and any money from the insurance company will go back to the Retained Earnings.

Article J-Reauthorization of Prior Year Articles

Jennifer Barrett: This may or may not increase. I have not heard from everyone yet.

Article K-Snow and Ice Deficit

Jennifer Barrett: I should have a more accurate figure soon. Right now it is at \$84,000. Last week it was at \$60,000.

Consent Agenda-Financial Business

Jennifer Barrett: We have grouped these articles to vote on all at once. People can still put a hold on any one of them.

Jen O'Connell: I don't like grouping things together unless we absolutely have to.

Judith O'Connor: I am not in favor of this either. People want to vote on each article on its own.

Nicole Cooney: The only difference from prior years is that it is not on a chart.

Jen O'Connell: The Consent Agenda groups it all together for one vote.

Jennifer Barrett: I will send out the rules and regulations on the Consent Agenda.

Jen O'Connell: We need to include in our letter, what we are using the Free Cash for.

Kevin Kuphal: People don't normally go after the budget. They go after Free Cash Articles.

Judith O'Connor: They do look at the budget and pick through it.

Article L-Firearms, Holsters and Ammunition

Article M-Additional radios for Police Department

Russell Wells: Why was this not in the budget?

Jen O'Connell: This is more of a capital item with depreciative value.

Jennifer Barrett: Anything that is a one-time thing, we put in an article.

Judith O'Connor: Anything that is unforeseen should come to us for a transfer from the Reserve Fund. The departments need to be more diligent in what they put in the budget and what they spend. Some spend all of their money at the end of the year and do not give anything back to the Town.

Karyn Clark: The department heads, myself and Jennifer are very frugal when it comes to money.

Kevin Kuphal: Only one-time items should be in the articles. Everything else should be in the budget. This would reduce the Free Cash.

Russell Wells: I agree with that. Free Cash would be reduced but budgets would be more balanced.

Article N-Replace Carpet at Library

Article O-Digital Filing

Article P-Technology-Town Hall/Police etc.

Article Q-5-year revaluation

Article R-Furniture for Municipal Buildings

Article S-Gutters at the ASA Waters

Jennifer Barrett: This is in their Capital Plan. We may need to increase it to include permitting fees.

Article T-HVAC Units at the Senior Center

Judith O'Connor: I have a problem with replacing 4 units. We already replaced 2 of them, so I think this needs to be reduced. I spoke to Mark the other day and he was unaware that 2 were already replaced.

Karyn Clark: That is not what he told me.

Jen O'Connell: Is there a chance that we can see the quotes for this project?

Karyn Clark: Yes, you can.

Jennifer Barrett showed the Committee the quotes received for this project.

Jen O'Connell: Do we have to replace all of them at once or can we stagger them?

Jennifer Barrett: We were told that they all needed to be replaced.

Article U-Street Lights

Jennifer Barrett: We will be pulling this article until the Fall Town Meeting.

Karyn Clark: I spoke to Keith and he has not heard back yet.

Article V-Expansion of Central Cemetery

Article Z-Replacement of Personal Protective Gear for Fire Department

Russell Wells: Did we get the occupancy permit for the new station?

Karyn Clark: We do not. We are very close. There are still some punch list items that need to be completed.

Article X-School Department Technology

Article Y-Replacement of existing fire alarm system at Elmwood Street School

Article W-2 New Fire Engines

Russell Wells: How do we manage the \$2M?

Jennifer Barrett: This is to authorize us to borrow. With this authorization, we can place the order. Once we place the order, this locks in the price and puts us in line. It has been taking 2 years to complete the order. Once the trucks are complete, then we borrow. This price would be firm and we will only borrow what we need.

Jennifer Barrett: The By-law articles have gone to legal to make sure the wording is correct.

Article AA-Finance Committee By-law

Article BB-General By-law-Warrant Article Closing

Jen O'Connell: Who gives the recommendation on this article?

Jennifer Barrett: It is a financial article, so you would give the recommendation.

Article CC-General By-law-Independent Audit

Jen O'Connell: Shouldn't it read "Replace the entire team?"

Jennifer Barrett: We usually have 1 primary and 2 secondary auditors come in. There are so few firms that handle this. The flow is interrupted each time we change auditors. You lose a year and a half of the 6 years.

Article DD-Stabilization Fund for Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational School District

Jen O'Connell: We spoke to BVT last week. They have a fund that they can add up to 5% of their budget to (E & D). They want to create a Stabilization Fund, then they would have 2 excess funds to work with.

Charles Cooper: In Town, we have a Stabilization Fund and we have to go to Town Meeting to spend from it. Do we have any say on what they use this money for?

Russell Wells: Their School Committee has to approve it.

Article EE-Roof and HVAC Replacement

Jen O'Connell: Our share of the \$10M, is \$56,000 per year for 10 years.

Kevin Kuphal: Is our share dependent on the number of students from our Town?

Jen O'Connell: Yes.

Karyn Clark: Nicole had asked if they could use some of their E & D.

Jen O'Connell: The State may be contributing to this also.

Nicole Cooney: All of the Towns have to accept this before MSBA even looks at the application. How do the other Towns feel about this?

Karyn Clark: I have a meeting with 5 of the Town Managers and will ask them how they feel.

Nicole Cooney: This is also the last year of their current debt.

Jen O'Connell: I just want everyone to be aware that their actual per pupil cost is \$26,000, which is higher than they indicated at our meeting.

Jennifer Barrett: The next two articles came in during the week from the Assessors.

Article GG-Mass General Laws Chapter 59, Section 5, Clause 56

Jennifer Barrett: This would only include active duty and deployed people and they would have to apply for this exemption.

Article HH-Mass General Laws Chapter 59, Section 5C1/2-Property Tax Exemptions

Charles Cooper: Is there a number associated with each of these groups?

Jennifer Barrett: I didn't get a chance to add in those numbers. I plan to get this to you.

Jen O'Connell: I cannot believe that there are no zoning articles or citizen's petitions.

Jennifer Barrett: There are no zoning articles and I haven't heard of any citizen's petitions.

There are still 6 or so more articles that I haven't received all of the info on that I need to write them. The Fire Chief still needs to submit for replacement of pagers. I may do this in two years depending on the quantity and the pricing. I still need the wording on the Solar Pilot, Leased Vehicles, the Conservation issue and pricing on the lighting for the parking lot.

Jen O'Connell: 90% of this will sail right through with the exception of BVT and the fire trucks.

Russell Wells: So the Stormwater Management article will be handled in the Fall?

Jennifer Barrett: The Enterprise Fund will be done in May. I do not believe we need to have that bylaw needs updating yet. The Board of Selectmen will decide on the rate schedule next Tuesday.

Russell Wells: So, we want to enact the Enterprise Fund then over the next several months figure out how to fund it?

Jennifer Barrett: The Board of Selectmen are going to meet and decide the preferred rate schedule.

Karyn Clark: They wanted different scenarios.

Russell Wells: Once it is voted on, when do the bills go out?

Jennifer Barrett: Once it is approved and rates are set, the bills will go out. It will be a fast turn around. If we cannot get it out in the preliminaries, it will be a double for the first year on the actuals, but if we get it in the preliminaries, we will get it in for the quarterlies thereafter.

Charles Cooper: Do you have any sense in regards to the Mall? I know that it's a lot of money.

Jennifer Barrett: It all depends on which model the Selectmen choose.

Jen O'Connell: When are they deciding that?

Jennifer Barrett: Next Tuesday.

Jen O'Connell: I am sensitive to the fact that businesses are coming into Town and having to deal with the extra amount, but the Mall is already here. They do help with a lot of the Town Services. We are updating McCracken Road for their benefit. If they have to pay a little more for stormwater, then so be it.

Charles Cooper: This isn't just happening in Millbury. It is happening all over the State.

Russell Wells: This is not the only Mall that they own. They must be seeing it in their other locations.

Karyn Clark: They are aware of this. They were at the first meeting when it was discussed. They were there for another reason, but they did hear the plan. They have been very good about offering to help with some of our funding, for example, the chain of lights. The Board of Selectmen is very sensitive to finding a balance between residential and business.

Kevin Kuphal: It is not really the Mall that I am concerned with. It is the message that we are sending to the other businesses coming in.

Jen O'Connell: This is all based on real estate.

Karyn Clark: The Mall has the largest footprint. We will be proactive and get this information out.

Motioned by Wells, seconded by Cooper to adjourn at 8:15 p.m. Unanimous.

Jennifer Barrett
Jen O'Connell
Charles Cooper
Russell Wells
Kevin Kuphal
Karyn Clark