

**FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes**  
 Zoom Number 870 7203 9674

2024 MAR 19 AM 7:47

WILLEY, MASS

Date: March 11, 2024

Time: 6:30 p.m.

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

Absent: Cooney

Meeting called to order at 6:33 p.m.

Motioned by Wells, seconded by Kuphal to accept the minutes of March 4, 2024 as written.  
 Unanimous.

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

Motioned by Cooper, seconded by Kuphal to re-open the Public Hearing for the FY2025 budget, continued from February 12, 2024, at 6:34 p.m. Cooper, yes; Kuphal, yes, O'Connor, yes; Wells, yes; Pratt, yes; O'Connell, yes.

There was no public comment or questions.

Motioned by Cooper, seconded by Kuphal to close the Public Hearing at 6:35 p.m. Cooper, yes; Kuphal, yes; O'Connor, yes; Wells, yes; Pratt, yes; O'Connell, yes.

Jen O'Connell: Is the Warrant closed?

Jennifer Barrett: No more articles can be added. The last day to submit articles was on Friday. We did have a couple come in last week, but I don't think they are going to make it in. There is some language that has to be added.

Jen O'Connell: So, tonight, I think we can vote on the budget.

Jen O'Connell: Is Health Insurance a firm number?

Jennifer Barrett: We are basing the budget on our census from February, with the 2025 rates in place. We do not have the retiree rates.

Russell Wells: Do we perceive this line becoming reasonable again. We cannot afford a 10% increase a year.

Jen O'Connell: It doesn't make sense that they do not go out to bid to get competitive pricing.

Jen O'Connell: We can go vote each budget or we can vote by section. I will read through each budget and if there are questions, you can put a hold on that budget.

Judith O'Connor: My only concern is that we did not have any questions on any of the salary increases. Jen O'Connell: Can you update the list of salaries?

Jennifer Barrett: I don't believe we changed anything, but I can get that for you.

Karyn Clark: We added to some salaries, but that was per the request of the Committee.

Judith O'Connor: I had questioned, that we put on hold last year, was what our secretary was getting. I believe there was a slight increase last year, but I do not know what that was.

Jennifer Barrett: The salary for your secretary is going up to \$25.00 starting July 1, 2024.

Jen O'Connell: Sandie has not gotten a raise since 2021.

Jennifer Barrett: She may have been getting them within budget.

Jennifer Barrett: She has been getting increases based on what the departments have been getting as far as percentage.

Judith O'Connor: What is a Head Clerk getting per hour?

Jennifer Barrett : Head Clerk rates range from Step 1 at \$21.89 to Step 7 at \$25.39. There are also rates for 15 years and 25 years. The rate for a Head Clerk at 25 years is \$27.34 and a General Clerk is \$24.91. We have not increased the budget for salaries, but we have increased the rate within the budget depending on what everyone else was getting.

Jen O'Connell: We will look at that when we get to it.

Jen O'Connell: They didn't form that Committee yet concerning boards getting paid, did they?

Charles Cooper: Has there been any money set aside for that?

Jennifer Barrett: I have not budgeted anything for this. If this is something that you want to do, I can set money aside for that.

Charles Cooper: If we don't do anything and a board decides on an increase, how does that work?

Judith O'Connor: I thought they would have to go through the Town Manager on that.

Jennifer Barrett: If we set an amount in the budget for their salary and they decide to increase it, it would have to come from a transfer from the Reserve Fund or they would have to ask for it at Town Meeting. We could set aside money for this or it could wait until next year.

Judith O'Connor: Have any of the Committees asked for increases in their salaries?

Karyn Clark: Not to me personally.

Jennifer Barrett: I level funded all of the paid elected board salaries.

Russell Wells: How many paid boards do we have?

Jennifer Barrett: There are 7 paid boards.

Karyn Clark: I researched the salary for a Public Health Director in several area towns. Oxford's Public Health Director receives \$99,000. Auburn pays \$104,000, which was in 2022. Leicester pays \$96,997 and Northboro pays between \$97,672 and \$126,000. Julie has taken on additional responsibilities with Inspectional Services and I would like to have her continue with this. Her level of expertise in the field is a big plus. She also does our Title 5's which is \$2,000-\$5,000 per year.

Judith O'Connor: We had concerns last year when the position started in January.

Karyn Clark: I believe her conversation with Sean was that she would get what she would have received if she stayed in Worcester.

William Pratt: I think the problem we had last year was the job description.

Charles Cooper: Is there a possibility, in the future, of adding positions in this department?

Karyn Clark: In time we can look at grants to fund staffing in this department. There will need to be more staff in the future.

Charles Cooper: Can the OPIOID money be used to help staff this department?

Jennifer Barrett: We use \$17,000 to offset the department.

Judith O'Connor: What else can we use the OPIOID money for?

Karyn Clark: I have been speaking to other communities about this. When we started receiving the money, no one knew what to do with it. I would be happy to have Julie get you a report on what we use the money for. She has been working in the schools doing Narcan training. She is working with the Police Department and doing staff and community training. She has been working with Spectrum and Sunrise and doing a lot of programs in the pipeline.

Judith O'Connor: How much do we get for OPIOID money?

Jennifer Barrett: We received a lump sum which will be used over 5 years. We also receive annual payments. In 2023 we received \$17,500. Once the 5 years have expired, the annual amount will increase.

Russell Wells: If part of the salary in the Health Department budget is paid for with OPIOID funds, it should be explained, so that the townspeople know about it.

#### FY25 Budget

Jen O'Connell: Should we increase the salary for the Moderator?

Charles Cooper: I think we should wait until the Committee is formed and see what their thoughts are on increasing the salaries.

Jen O'Connell: We had talked in the past about changing some of the elected committees to appointed, but it ended up not changing.

#### Town Manager

Jen O'Connell: Will there be enough in the Town Manager's budget to cover the salaries?

Jennifer Barrett: We should probably add another \$10,000, so that the Deputy will be covered fully.

Russell Wells: What does the paid intern do?

Karyn Clark: She is used as a backup for Amy.

#### Technology

Charles Cooper: There is no rate per hour shown for the IT hourly person.

Jennifer Barrett: The correct amount in the budget line should read \$21,995. The pay is based on 52.2 weeks per year and 16 hours per week. The current rate is \$25.00.

Motioned by O'Connell, seconded by Cooper to recommend that \$2,563,306 be raised and appropriated for the purpose of funding Total Town Government. Unanimous.

Motioned by O'Connell, seconded by Kuphal to recommend that \$4,907,281 be raised and appropriated for the purpose of funding Total Personal Protection. Unanimous.

Jen O'Connell: Did you hear back from the School?

Jennifer Barrett: No, I have not.

Jen O'Connell: We will hold off voting the Schools.

Jennifer Barrett: Blackstone Valley Tech and Norfolk Agricultural budgets have been adjusted to the correct figures.

Motioned by O'Connell, seconded by Wells to recommend that \$3,415,765 be raised and appropriated for the purpose of funding Total Public Works. Unanimous.

Russell Wells: Why did the Professional Services go up?

Jennifer Barrett: That is for the MS4. If the MS4 article passes, this line item would be reduced.

Jen O'Connell: How does this affect our levy limit?

Jennifer Barrett: It would bring us to the levy limit. Right now we are over.

Motioned by O'Connell, seconded by Pratt to recommend that \$570,175 be raised and appropriated for the purpose of funding Total Health Services. Unanimous.

Jen O'Connell: Is the salary for the ASA Waters Director the correct number?

Karyn Clark: Yes, it is.

Motioned by O'Connell, seconded by Wells to recommend that \$715,712 be raised and appropriated for the purpose of funding Total Culture and Recreation. Unanimous.

Motioned by O'Connell, seconded by Kuphal to recommend that \$17,025,235 be raised and appropriated for the purpose of funding Total Administration. Unanimous.

Russell Wells: Where is OPEB?

Jennifer Barrett: It is not in the General Fund. It is in a Warrant Article.

Russell Wells: I believe there is a recommended amount that we should be adding to it.

Jennifer Barrett: It is based on our census.

Reserve Fund

Jen O'Connell: I do not like to spend the Reserve Fund unless it is absolutely necessary.

Motioned by Wells, seconded by O'Connell to recommend that \$110,000 be raised and appropriated for the purpose of funding Total Reserve Fund. Unanimous.

Jennifer Barrett: This would be close to ½% of the General Fund Budget.

Motioned by O'Connell, seconded by Cooper to recommend that \$2,506,753 be raised and appropriated for the purpose of funding Total Sewer Department. Unanimous.

Jennifer Barrett: You are done with the budget with the exception of the Schools.

Judith O'Connor: What about Cable?

Jennifer Barrett: That is in a warrant article. I put in a 4% increase in salaries. The total budget is \$253,895.

Karyn Clark: He originally asked to have Travis come on Full Time.

Jen O'Connell: We are meeting with the Selectmen tomorrow night. When should we open our meeting?

Jennifer Barrett: You can open it at the same time as the Selectmen, if you have a quorum. They have a couple of Public Hearings and the Stormwater Presentation before the Reserve Policy.

Jen O'Connell: I added a meeting next Monday, so we should be able to vote on the Warrant at that time.

Motioned by Cooper, seconded by Wells to adjourn at 7:45 p.m. Unanimous.

*Jen O'Connell*  
*Jennifer Barrett*  
*Russell Wells*  
*W. H. Pratt*  
*Chris Cox*