



Town of Topsfield Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

In Person Meeting
January 09, 2023 6:30 PM

Topic: Finance Committee

Time: January 09, 2023 6:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

COA Conference Room at Town Hall

- I. Call to Order 6:30 PM
- II. **Attendance:** David Larson- Acting Chair, Tim O'Malley, Catherine Hodges, Karen Duval, Mike Hartman (Remote), Catherine Gabriel-Town Finance, Kevin Harutunian-Town Administrator
 - a. **Absent:** Mike Hartmann, Che Elwell, John Guido
- III. **Review open Meeting Minutes**-deferred
- IV. **Department Presentations to be completed:**
 - a. January 23rd, 2023 Masco to present budget at **7pm**
 - b. Assessor, Accountant and Recreation Dept. **8pm**
 - i. Recreation Department Fincom liaison will be Katherine Hodges
 - c. January 30th, 2023 Police Animal Control, Recycling, Street Lights 7pm
 - d. February 6th, 2023 Fire Department and Town Clerk 7pm
 - e. February 13th, 2023 Elementary Schools, Water Dept 7pm
 - f. February 27th 2023 Council on Aging, DPW, Cemetery, Landfill 7pm

- V. There was a brief discussion on the working Financial Model.
- VI. Discussion occurred around the concerns about lack of attention to the Revenue side of the budgets.

An example was a detailed discussion about the Fair and the various revenue sources which are generated by the Fair. This includes taxes charged on real estate, food, concessions and police and fire detail. Total revenue from the Fair is estimated to be approximately \$125,000 per year.
- VII. A general discussion occurred around revenues and where the town may be able to increase revenues in an effort to spread the tax base out, besides relying on real estate taxes.
- VIII. Catherine Gabriel shared a page showing Massachusetts towns and their real estate tax levels, we then reviewed early budget worksheets from the departments.
- IX. A discussion occurred around employment contracts and their impact on Salary Reserves. Also discuss if Salary Reserves are being used for other purposes-something the group would like more insight regarding.
- X. Salaries have been reviewed through a salary survey, some proposed adjustments will be proposed as a result.
- XI. Discussion occurred around the Essex County Retirement fund and its spending growth year over year. It has been averaging approximately 8% per year.
- XII. Town employees are budgeted for based on their base salary, plus a 25% added employment cost.
- XIII. A discussion occurred about the Elementary Schools and the projected budget increases. FinCom made the recommendation of \$243,500, or 2.5%. It is anticipated that they will be presenting approximately a \$1M increase. It was felt that more transparency was required around the school budgets and how money has been spent in the past, and how that may impact the future spending request. It was also discussed that a 3-5 year detailed plan may be a good exercise at this time.
- XIV. A motion to adjourn by Tim O'Malley, and seconded by Karen Duval.
 - a. All agreed

The listings of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair which may be discussed at the meeting. Discussion on agenda topics is at the discretion of the Chair. Discussion during meetings should always be courteous and respectful. You must be recognized by the Chair before any comments, questions or discussion may be offered or considered.