



Topsfield Finance Committee
Minutes to the Meetings
Town Hall: COA Activities Room
(2nd Floor)
March 19, 2019

I. Call to Order: Chair Karen Dow called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM with Che Elwell, Jon Guido, Mike Hartmann, Eric Menzer, Lou Ross, and Dana Warren present. Also present: Mark Lyons, Selectman; Boyd Jackson, Selectman; Captain Gary Hayward, Police Department; Katherine Jackson, Executive Assistant-Police Department; Katrina Frere, School Committee Chair; Catherine Gabriel, Town Accountant; Kellie Hebert, Town Administrator; and Chief Jen Collins-Brown, Fire Department. Members of the public present signed the sign in sheet (attached). Karen Dow announced at 7:03 PM that Jeanine Cunniff was going to make a video recording.

II. FinCom Model Status: Mike Hartmann handed out V2.6 of the model. He noted that all votes from the March 18th meeting are included. A short discussion followed. Mike will continue to update the model to reflect all votes.

III. Department Budget Review and Approval, including Elementary Schools: Lou Ross made a motion that the Committee reserves the right to supersede or modify the following Department budget approvals by future vote. Che Elwell seconded the motion, voted in favor 7-0-0

Che Elwell discussed the Police department over guideline request to hire two additional full-time officers. Captain Hayward went on to discuss the potential reduction in OT costs. The department will see the savings in the next years. The finance committee went on to discuss reducing the Police Department budget by the anticipated net reduction in personnel costs, and adding \$66,000 to the salary reserve fund in case the anticipated OT savings have been overestimated.

Discussion continued on the elementary school override. Discussion focused on what the amount of the override will be. Selectman Lyons summarized his understanding that it seems the consensus of the finance committee is that an override would be supported but not at the full amount the school committee is requesting. The Board of Selectmen will be deliberating on March 21st. Katrina Frere noted that the Mass FY18 per pupil costs are; Boxford- \$18,534, Middleton-

\$18,091, and Topsfield- \$15,411. These numbers were just released by the State and seem odd, since the Topsfield number dropped dramatically from FY17 even though the FY18 budget was larger than FY17, for a similar number of students.

Discussion continued on the request for IT support at Town Hall. Kellie discussed the possibility of a grant between eight communities that would study regionalization of IT support. However, some funding is needed now to get IT support on various issues, as the volunteer IT support person is retiring.

Discussion continued on the request for a town facilities manager. Selectman Jackson reported that he often volunteers up to six hours a week trouble-shooting various issues. Similarly, a volunteer keeps an eye on Library building issues. Kellie discussed the need for someone to oversee the newly renovated building and to stay on top of problems with town buildings that may arise.

The finance committee discussed the elementary school capital requests for security systems. Principal Willa briefly discussed the features of the system.

The Finance Committee reviewed the List of Requests over Finance Committee Guidelines, dated March 12, 2019.

Lou Ross recommended positive action on Town Hall- Facility Management Services, in the amount of \$25,000, seconded by Jon Guido, voted in favor 7-0.

Jon Guido recommended positive action on Town Hall- Information Technology Services, in the amount of \$25,000, seconded by Dana Warren, voted in favor 5-1-1.

Che Elwell recommended positive action on PEG Legal Services, in the amount of \$1,000; PEG Prof Srvs- Boxford Cable Access, in the amount of \$6,000; PEG Prof Srvs- Website Enhancements, in the amount of \$5,000, seconded by Dana Warren, voted in favor 7-0.

Che Elwell recommended positive action on increasing the Salary Reserve by \$66,000 and reducing Police Wages by \$40,000, seconded by Eric Menzer, voted in favor 7-0.

Mike Hartmann recommended positive action on Transfer to Compensated Absences Fund, in the amount of \$40,000, seconded by Eric Menzer, voted in favor 7-0.

IV. Town Meeting Warrant Articles:

- a. **Assignments-** Responsibility for review of specific Town Meeting Articles and presentation of them at Town Meeting were assigned.

- b. **Recommendations**-The committee reserves the right to supersede or modify the following actions by future vote.

In a series of motions, the Finance Committee voted actions on the following Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles as numbered in the attached draft warrant, dated March 19, 2019:

By motion of Mike Hartmann, seconded by Lou Ross, the Finance Committee recommends positive action on Balance Transfers, Article Second, voted in favor 7-0.

By motion of Lou Ross, seconded by Che Elwell, the Finance Committee recommends positive action on Water Department Operating Budget, in the amount of \$2,091,364, Article Fourth, voted in favor 7-0.

By motion of Dana Warren, seconded by Eric Menzer, the Finance Committee recommends positive action on Masconomet Regional School District Assessment, Article Fifth, voted in favor 7-0.

By motion of Dana Warren, seconded by Mike Hartmann, the Finance Committee recommends positive action on Essex North Shore: Agricultural and Technical School District, Article Seventh, voted in favor 7-0.

By motion of Che Elwell, seconded by Eric Menzer, the Finance Committee recommends positive action on Grant Authorization for Town Projects, Article Eighth, voted in favor 7-0.

By motion of Lou Ross, seconded by Mike Hartmann, the Finance Committee recommends positive action on Massachusetts Department of Transportation Contracts, Article Ninth, voted in favor 7-0.

By motion of Che Elwell, seconded by Eric Menzer, the Finance Committee recommends positive action on Police SUV Cruiser, Article Fourteenth, voted in favor 7-0. Discussion: there is an increase in vehicle price due to a new model. It is unknown at this time what parts from the old vehicle can be used on a new model.

By motion of Jon Guido, seconded by Eric Menzer, the Finance Committee recommends positive action on Revolving Funds: Public Hall Revolving Fund, Article Twenty- Sixth, voted in favor 7-0.

By motion of Eric Menzer, seconded by Lou Ross, the Finance Committee recommends positive action on Local Meals Excise, Article Twenty-Ninth, voted in favor 6-1-0.

By motion of Eric Menzer, seconded by Dana Warren, the Finance Committee recommends positive action on Commission on Disabilities, Article Thirtieth, voted in favor 7-0.

By motion of Jon Guido, seconded by Che Elwell, the Finance Committee recommends positive action on Special Education Reserve Fund, Article Thirty-First, voted in favor 7-0.

By motion of Lou Ross, seconded by Eric Menzer, the Finance Committee recommends positive action on Donibristle Farm: Transfer from Fund Balance Reserve Account, Article Thirty-Fifth, voted in favor 7-0.

V. Finance Committee Letter: Karen will continue to prepare the draft letter. She will present the draft letter at the next meeting.

VI. Correspondence: none

VII. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting: none

VIII. Upcoming Meeting Schedule: The next meetings of the Committee will occur March 25th, April 8th, and April 22nd, at 7:00 PM in the Town Hall Council on Aging Activities room.

X. Adjourn: A motion was made by Dana Warren to adjourn at 10:37 PM, seconded by Che Elwell and voted in favor 7-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Davis

Attachments:

1. Agenda
2. Sign in Sheet
3. FY20: Possible uses for free cash and FY19 turn-backs, dated 3/19
4. Draft warrant articles, V2.1, dated 3/19
5. Article III vote tracker, dated 3/13
6. Model V2.6