



Topsfield Finance Committee  
Minutes to the Meetings  
Town Hall: COA Activities Room  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Floor)  
March 9, 2020

**I. Call to Order:** Chair Jon Guido called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM with Karen Dow, Karen Duval, Mike Hartmann, Eric Menzer and Lou Ross. Che Elwell was not present for the meeting. Also present: Catherine Gabriel, Town Accountant; Steve Whelan, Town Moderator; Charise Nulsen, School Committee; Andrew Prazar, School Committee; Meredith Sokolowski, School Committee; Matt LaCava, Tri-Town School Union; Scott Morrison, Superintendent of Schools; Boyd Jackson, Town Selectman (arrived 9:15PM); Dick Gandt, Selectman (arrived 9:15PM); and Kevin Harutunian, Town Administrator (arrived 9:15PM) Members of the public signed the sign in sheet (attached).

**II. Minutes:** Karen Dow made a motion to accept the minutes as amended from February 24, 2020. Lou Ross seconded the motion, voted in favor 4-0-2. Jon Guido and Eric Menzer abstained, as they were not present for the meeting.

Minutes of March 2, 2020 will be reviewed and voted at the next meeting.

**III. FinCom Model Status-** Mike Hartmann handed out an updated model, a discussion followed. He discussed that Masco and Elementary Schools are in the model with a 3% increase. He decreased the COLA down to 1.60%, with these changes the amount over the levy limit is \$548,677. Karen Dow went on to discuss that the maximum tax rate can not exceed \$25 per 1,000 given prop 2 1/2. Jon discussed that if home values decrease, and there isn't any additional funding available, and COLA increases continue at the rate they are now, ~~an override we will be up against that \$25/thousand limit be needed to fund the base budget.~~

**IV. Department Budget Presentations, including:**

- a. **Elementary (7:15PM)** Karen, liaison, introduced members of the School Committee and Tri-Town Union. A discussion of the budget followed. They are working through the deliberation process~~ing~~. At this point the elementary school budget is 8% over guidelines. Charise discussed that the budget requests this year are a continuation ~~from last year of last year's cuts's list of needs.~~ Some of the requests discussed~~;~~ adding a line item in the operating budget for technology, free 5-day kindergarten, smaller class size, and a grant

writer. Charise went on to discuss that the school committee's focus is on building capacity in a way that would set it up to not need an override each year. Jon Guido discussed that the community and boards support the schools but discussed if there are new ways to be creative with the budget process and save additional money. He went on to express his concern over a possible override and how that would affect citizens with a fixed income. A brief discussion on salaries followed. Steve Greenburg stated that many of the personnel have maxed out on the grid. The Finance Committee members went on to discuss that given the difficulty of trying to balance the Town operating budget, support of an override would be difficult, and asked if the school committee could find more ways to cut costs.

## **V. Department Budget Review and Approval**

1. Karen Duval briefly discussed that for Masco, Topsfield's portion ~~ed~~ has increased. There may need to be an override.
2. Lou discussed that there will be no planning board meeting with the Fincom as there are no warrant articles that need to be clarified by the planning board.

Karen Dow made a motion that the Committee reserves the right to supersede or modify the following Department budget approvals by future vote. Lou Ross seconded the motion, voted in favor 6-0.

The Finance Committee reviewed the List of Requests over Finance Committee Guidelines, dated January 2, 2020.

Karen Dow recommended no action on Selectmen Wage Minutes Secretary, in the amount of \$906, seconded by Lou Ross, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Dow recommended no action on Selectmen Special Legal Services, in the amount of \$10,000, seconded by Karen Duval, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Duval recommended no action on Accounting Dept. Assistant Town Accountant, in the amount of \$9,378, seconded by Karen Dow, voted in favor 6-0.

Mike Hartmann recommended positive action on Accounting Dept. Computer/Printer Supplies, in the amount of \$500, seconded by Eric Menzer, voted in favor 6-0.

Eric Menzer recommended positive action on Accounting Dept. Audit Services, in the amount of \$1,300, seconded by Lou Ross, voted in favor 6-0.

Mike Hartmann recommended positive action on Assessor Map Updating, in the amount of \$150, seconded by Karen Dow, voted in favor 6-0.

Lou Ross recommended positive action on Assessor Publications, in the amount of \$242, seconded by Eric Menzer, voted in favor 6-0.

Lou Ross recommended no action on Town Hall Facility Management Services, in the

amount of \$10,000, seconded by Mike Hartmann, voted 3-3.

Eric Menzer recommended positive action on Town Hall Facility Management Services, in the amount of \$10,000, seconded by Karen Duval, voted in favor 4-2-0.

Karen Duval recommended positive action on Town Hall Office Supplies, in the amount of \$1,371, seconded by Eric Menzer, voted in favor 6-0.

Lou Ross recommended positive action on Town Hall Copier Expense, in the amount of \$2,280, seconded by Eric Menzer, voted in favor 5-1-0.

Lou Ross recommended positive action on Town Clerk Election Workers, in the amount of \$1,959, seconded by Karen Dow, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Dow recommended positive action on Town Clerk Building Rental, in the amount of \$150, seconded by Karen Duval, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Duval recommended positive action on Town Clerk Election Expense, in the amount of \$3,062, seconded by Karen Dow, voted in favor 5-1-0.

Eric Menzer recommended no action on Conservation Admin Assistant, in the amount of \$1,488, seconded by Karen Duval, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Duval recommended no action on Police Wages Admin Assistant, in the amount of \$6,6601, Police Wage Clerical, in the amount of \$3,616, Police Wages Admin Overtime for Topsfield Fair, in the amount of \$3,508, seconded by Mike Hartmann, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Duval recommended positive action on Police Building Maintenance, in the amount of \$1,238, seconded by Karen Dow, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Dow recommended nopositive action on Fire Wage Clerical, in the amount of \$6,849, seconded by Karen Duval, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Dow recommended positive action on Fire Wage Call Firefighters, in the amount of \$65,000, seconded by Eric Menzer, voted in favor 5-1-0.

Karen Dow recommended positive action on Fire Water, in the amount of \$500, seconded by Lou Ross, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Dow recommended no action on Fire Printing, in the amount of \$100, seconded by Karen Duval, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Dow recommended positive action on Fire Professional Services- Ambulance Billing, in the amount of \$5,000, seconded by Eric Menzer, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Dow recommended positive action on Fire Medical Supplies & Equipment, in the amount of \$1,000, seconded by Karen Duval, voted in favor 6-0.

Lou Ross recommended no action on Fire Personnel/Uniform Expense, in the amount of \$1,000, seconded by Mike Hartmann, voted in favor 6-0.

Mike Hartmann recommended no action on Inspectional Services Alternative Inspectors, in the amount of \$221, seconded by Eric Menzer, voted in favor 6-0.

Eric Menzer recommended positive action on Inspectional Services Publications, in the amount of \$350, seconded by Lou Ross, voted in favor 6-0.

Eric Menzer recommended no action on Tree Warden Dept. Tree Removal-Contracted, in the amount of \$2,925, seconded by Karen Dow, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Dow recommended no action on Tree Warden Dept Misc Supplies, in the amount of \$380, seconded by Mike Hartmann, voted in favor 6-0.

Lou Ross recommended positive action on Tree Warden Dept. Dues, Publications & Memberships, in the amount of \$35, seconded by Karen Duval, voted in favor 5-1-0.

Eric Menzer recommended no action on Snow & Ice, in the amount of \$2,285, seconded by Karen Dow, voted in favor 6-0.

Lou Ross recommended positive action on Landfill Monitoring Contract, in the amount of \$7,000, seconded by Karen Duval, voted in favor 6-0.

Eric Menzer recommended no action on Board of Health Admin Assistant, in the amount of \$4,007, and Board of Health Board Secretary, in the amount of \$2,289, seconded by Lou Ross, voted in favor 6-0.

Eric Menzer recommended positive action on Board of Health Dead Animal Pickup, in the amount of \$2,678, seconded by Karen Duval, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Duval recommended positive action on Council on Aging Dues, Publications, & Memberships, in the amount of \$31, seconded by Eric Menzer, voted in favor 5-1-0.

Karen Duval recommended positive action on Library Dept. Water, in the amount of \$225, seconded by Lou Ross, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Duval recommended positive action on Library Dept. Contracted Cleaning Services, in the amount of \$2,357, seconded by Eric Menzer, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Duval recommended positive action on Library Dept. Unanticipated Maintenance & Repairs, in the amount of \$9,606, seconded by Eric Menzer, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Duval recommended no action on Holiday on the Green Misc. Expense, in the amount of \$5,000, seconded by Mike Hartmann, voted in favor 6-0.

Karen Dow recommended positive action on Comp Absences, in the amount of \$100,000, seconded by Eric Menzer, voted in favor 6-0.

**VI. Town Meeting Warrant Articles-**  
**a. Assignments**

ATM Warrant Article	Fincom Member
	Initials
1	JG
2	JG
3	MH
4	LR
5	CE
6	CE
7	JG
8	LR
9	KDUVAL
10	KDUVAL
11	JG
12	KDUVAL
13	JG
14	MH
15	KDOW
16	KDOW
17	KDOW
18	KDOW
19	EM
20	EM
21	LR
22	KDUVAL
23	LR
24	LR
25	EM
26	EM
27	JG
28	JG
29	JG
30	EM
31	LR
32	KDOW
33	LR
34	JG

35	KDOW
36	CE
37	CE
38	CE
39	KDOW
40	LR
41	JG

- b. **Recommendations-** Jon asked members to review the articles, voting will begin at the next meeting. Warrant will be sent to get printed on March 31<sup>st</sup>.

**VII. Correspondence-** The Beacon

**VI. 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 on March 16<sup>th</sup>, and March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 at 7:00 PM in the Town Hall Council on Aging Activities room.

**X. Adjourn:** A motion was made by Karen Dow to adjourn at 10:09 PM, seconded by Lou Ross and voted in favor 6-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Davis

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**Attachments:**

1. Agenda
2. Model dated 3/9/20
3. Draft List of Warrant Articles dated 3/7/20
4. FinCom YTD budget, 3/4/20
5. 2/24/20 Draft Minutes
6. Fincom sign in attendance sheet

7. TSC Budget Overview sheet
8. Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School District  
FY2021 Preliminary Assessments
9. The Beacon