

Topsfield Finance Committee Minutes to the Meetings

Meeting was held

via Videoconference

October 6, 2020

*Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Topsfield Board of Selectman was conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the Topsfield website, at www.topsfieldma.gov.*

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Che Elwell called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM with Karen Dow, Karen Duval, Jon Guido, Mike Hartmann, Eric Menzer and David Larson present. Also present: Catherine Gabriel, Town Accountant; Dick Gandt, Selectboard member; and Kevin Harutunian, Town Administrator. Chairman Elwell announced that BCATV was recording the meeting. He also announced that Mr. Menzer would be taking the minutes, as Jen Davis has resigned as recording secretary. All votes at the meeting were taken by roll call, as this was a meeting via remote participation.
2. **Update on the current finances and outlook for Elementary School, Masco and Town:** 
   * Mr. Menzer updated the committee on the elementary school budget process. The administration’s focus has been on health and safety and moving students to a hybrid setting. No information on the FY22 budget is available at this time.
   * Mr. Harutunian updated the committee on a) FY21 spending (froze hiring and discretionary spending); and b) the FY22 budget process for town departments. Conversations with elementary schools on FY 2022 budget will ensue in the coming weeks. Indications are state aid will be level funded for this year. Focus has been on optimizing costs given lost Topsfield Fair revenue and reduction in local receipts. Mr. Harutunian also meeting with department heads, including elementary schools, on capital planning. Follow up item for Mr. Harutunian is to confirm when teacher contract terms are up and report back.
   * Mrs. Duval provided an updated on the Masco budget process. Conversations are beginning but it is too early for any FY22 budget information.
3. **Liaison Assignments:** Chairman Elwell discussed the Open Meeting Laws as related to liaison assignments. Assignments will be on a single liaison basis with no formal backup for any department; another member will be available to attend a committee/board meeting if the liaison isn’t available. The committee discussed the current assignments; new assignments were discussed to distribute Lou Ross’s former responsibilities, and to account for Mr. Elwell now being Chair. Mr. Larson has assumed many of Mr. Ross’s assignments while others have been shared by the rest of the group. Chairman Elwell to finalize the list and share out to the committee.
4. **Finance Committee FY 2022 Budget Guidelines Discussion:** Discussion on setting budget guidelines took place. Some of the key considerations included potential for decline in future state aid and local receipts, an estimate for new growth, and the size of an anticipated increase in healthcare and pension costs. New growth estimated to be approximately $100k according to Town Accountant Catherine Gabriel. Concerns over annual salary increases across all departments continues to be a focus area for balancing the overall Town budget. No key decisions were made. Target is for the committee to issue guidelines to the departments by early November.
5. **Confirmation of Training and Swearing in:** All members have been sworn in whose terms have renewed. The required ethics and open meeting laws training must be completed by all except Mr. Larson and Mr. Menzer.

**VI.** **Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting:** None

1. **Upcoming Meeting Schedule:** The next meeting of the Committee will occur on October 26th, 2020 at 7:00 PM via Zoom teleconference.

**X. Adjourn:** A motion was made by Karen Dow to adjourn at 8:40 PM, seconded by Karen Duval and voted in favor 7-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Menzer,

Finance Committee Clerk

Attachments: none