

## WEST NEWBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE

### Meeting Minutes

Date, Time, Location: **Wed. March 22, 2023, 6 PM** (1910 Bldg.)

Attendees (& initials): Chris Wile (CW), Rob Phillips (RP), Walter Burmeister (WB), Dan Innes (DI), Ross Capolupo (RC), Jim Sperelakis (JS), Angus Jennings (AJ). Guests/Participants: Town Acct: Jenny Walsh (JW); SB: Wendy Reed (WR), Rick Parker (RP), David Archibald (DA). DPW: Wayne Amaral (WA); PEG: Kelly Scott (KS); Flag issue: Pat Skibbee (PS), Jillian Knowles (JK).

1. Call to Order: 6:00 PM
2. Public Comment: None
3. Approval of Minutes: 3/15/23 FC Mtg Minutes tabled to next FC mtg.
4. Resolution to redesign the Massachusetts State Flag: Per AJ, this non-binding resolution will be part of the TM warrant. Advocates JK and PS attended the FC meeting to present the purpose of the resolution and the perceived issues of symbolism in the current MA state flag. The FC does not foresee a financial impact to the Town and no vote was taken. Chair CW and the FC members thanked JK & PS for their informative presentation.
5. Warrant Article Review (Annual/Special) (Note: article #s can/will change):
  - Draft #25: DPW Sidewalk Plow: \$172,000 requested from Stabilization, to purchase a 'Bombardier' snow plow, on tracks, to replace an aging 15 year old 'Holder' wheeled sidewalk plow. Per WA, the heavier duty Bombardier will be more efficient in clearing the heavy wet snow, which has become more prevalent in recent years. CW noted that the existing plow is clearly leaking oil, but asked if we can purchase a less expensive (e.g., Kubota or Holder) tractor, and/or is it perhaps more prudent for the Town to hire a sidewalk snow removal subcontractor, to plow the roughly 5 mi. of Town sidewalk? RC commented that he has seen the existing sidewalk plow, as part of the CIC (Capital Improvements Cte.) and the old unit is, indeed, showing signs of age/wear. RC also stated that, from his experience, 'subbing out' sidewalks is fraught with availability/timing issues. JS asked how high this plow was on CIC's list of necessary capital expenditures? RC replied #4. DI inquired about the appropriateness of 'snow blowing' vs 'snow plowing' for this work. WA replied that 'hard pack' snow is more easily removed with plows. Motion to approve: CW. 2<sup>nd</sup>: RP. **Approved 6-0**. Sunset: 6/30/2025. Rationale: RC

- Draft #27: Page School HVAC: \$115,000 requested from Stabilization, to replace a broken HVAC compressor and four split heating/cooling units at the Page School Main Office & entry area. WA mentioned the existing (broken) HVAC system was installed in 2014, shortly before this particular system had been discontinued, with replacement parts unavailable. The existing unit has poor heating capacity. Cost estimates are \$85K to replace the actual HVAC unit, inclu. labor, plus \$15K for the electrical work & an addit. \$15K contingency. CW suggested a multi-year warranty and ideally a 5 year service contract, be part of the RFQ. RP mentioned that although this will go out to bid after TM approval, it would be advantageous if the TM voters had a more accurate number to consider. In addition, RP suggested we leave the existing baseboard heat in place to help handle the coldest weather. DI questioned why the Town of WN buys/install the unit at Page, then the School (Pentucket) maintains the unit - seems challenging. Motion to approve: CW. 2<sup>nd</sup>: RP. **Approved 6-0**. Sunset 6/30/25. Rationale: RC
- Draft #31: Route 113 Corridor Planning (esp. at Page/Pipestave Hill): \$59,500 requested from Free Cash, by SB, to fund advance planning and design for pedestrian safety improvements on Route 113 (Main St) near, but not limited to, the Page School & Pipestave Hill crosswalk. In early 2022, the Town undertook a Safety Audit of the Page/Pipestave/113 intersection. Following the results of this study, the Town pursued a 'Safe Routes to Schools' (SRTS) grant in autumn 2022, which unfortunately was not approved by the State. Through this article funding, addit. planning, design & engineering, with support of a consultant, will be done to further advance this pedestrian/cycling safety initiative along the Route 113 corridor through Town. Although this initiative will not make these projects 'shovel ready', it will take them to the permitting stage. The overall objective being to better position these projects competitively for future State and/or Federal infrastructure 'TIP' funding, when it becomes available. Pipestave/Page area will require approx. \$23K of funding, with the addit. \$36.5K for the remaining Rt.113 corridor. WB asked "what is the problem we are trying to solve here"? AJ and others responded that no one feels safe crossing at Page/Pipestave and several other spots in town, and this funding is meant to begin addressing that. Motion to approve: CW. 2<sup>nd</sup>: RP. **Approved 6-0**. Sunset 6/30/2025. Rationale: RC
- Draft #15: Funds for study of 31 Dole Place: \$50,000 requested from Free Cash, by the SB, to further study the potential land acquisition at 31 Dole Place, WN. The funding is to meant to conduct additional study of the property as a potential well field, inclu. water quality, design/engineering, regulatory, infrastructure costs and financing alternatives. This will provide the Town the info needed to make a fully informed decision re: whether the

proposed acquisition of the property is in the public interest. Considering the potential large infrastructure investment, this study is meant as an important '2<sup>nd</sup> opinion' (peer review) to the original work done by 'Tata & Howard' our long-standing Water Dept. Consultants. The proposed study will also take into account 'Pfas' ('forever chemicals') and more recent water quality considerations. WB asked about water 'regionalization'. WR commented that this study, and it's related costs, may even help to encourage that effort, but they are not 'mutually exclusive'. Motion to approve: RP. 2<sup>nd</sup>: WB. **Approved 6-0**. Sunset 6/30/2024. Rationale: RP

- Draft #20: Appropriation of PEG Reserved Revenues: \$90,000 requested by SB, from the PEG Access and Cable Related Fund, to fund the Cable Advisory Cte's FY24 cable-related expenses. This PEG (public, educational, governmental) revenue is generated from fees applied to Comcast and Verizon cable bills, and are not available for non-cable related expenditures. CW asked why \$90K, with only \$7.7K of FY23 funds expended thru end Jan.'23? KS outlined the planned FY24 expenditures, inclu. a new replacement server, estim. at \$30-\$40K, wiring the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor hearing room in the 1910 Bldg., and other programming needs. Motion to approve: CW. 2<sup>nd</sup>: JS. **Approved 6-0**. Sunset 6/30/2024. Rationale: WB

#### 6. FY24 Budget Line Item Reviews:

- Town Manager: \$326,258 requested, a \$1,832 increase (+0.6%) vs. FY23. AJ highlighted the overall budgeted expenditures, which do not reflect the 3% COLA increase in wages. AJ also mentioned that Rebecca Ambra has been promoted to Exec. Asst. to the Town Manager. The asst. Town Clerk position will be posted. Motion to approve: CW. 2<sup>nd</sup>: RP. **Approved 6-0**
- Finance Committee: \$62,000 originally requested, a \$20,000 decr. (-24%) vs FY23. CW asked, "do we really need \$60K in the reserve fund"? After discussion, and citing examples from previous years, the FC decided to decrease the reserve balance from \$60K to \$40K + \$2K for expenses. CW: Motion to approve, modified amount of \$42K. 2<sup>nd</sup>: RP. **Approved 6-0**
- Animal Control: \$27,503 requested, a \$645 (+2.4%) increase vs FY23. The Town has an intermunicipal agreement with Newburyport, with an adequate level of service. Motion to approve: CW. 2<sup>nd</sup>: DI. **Approved 6-0**
- Harbormaster: \$4,000 requested, same as FY23. AJ explained that WN is part of an intermunicipal agreement with Salisbury, which has worked well for both towns. WN owns the boat, which is garaged in Salisbury. The boat's engine was recently replaced, funded by a grant from the 'Clean Vessels Act'. In addition, this funding source reimburses the Town for 75%

of our boat pump-out costs. The increased enforcement on local waterways has been seen as a positive. Motion to approve: CW. 2<sup>nd</sup>:DI. **Approved 6-0**

- Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School: \$262,917 requested, a \$7,818 decrease (-3%) vs FY23. The Town's share of the Whittier budget (1.6% in FY24) is proportional and based on student enrollment. Motion to approve: CW. 2<sup>nd</sup>: DI. **Approved 6-0**
- Essex Ag Technical High School: \$46,327 requested, a \$3,114 (+7%) incr. vs FY23. AJ stressed that this number is an estimate, based on a projected enrollment of two WN students. If it's a different enrollment number (e.g., 1 or 3 students), we will need to modify the exact figure at Town Mtg. Motion to approve: JS. 2<sup>nd</sup>: CW. **Approved 6-0**
- FICA Medicare Insurance: \$57,199 requested, a \$5,714 (+11%) increase vs FY23, which reflects the 3% COLA salary increase slated for FY24. Motion to approve: CW. 2<sup>nd</sup>: RP. **Approved 6-0**
- Insurance & Bonds: \$219,643 requested, a \$19,778 (+10%) increase vs FY23. AJ shared a spreadsheet, detailing the source of the budget request, which includes bonding and liability insurance on several key Town employees, MIIA worker's comp and property/casualty insurance, etc. Motion to approve: CW. 2<sup>nd</sup>: DI. **Approved 6-0**
- Revenue Projections: AJ shared the Town's FY24 (non-property tax) revenues for the past 10 FYs, from FY14 to present. FY23 revenues are projected at approx. \$1.4M, with the largest contributors being Motor Vehicle Excise (63% of total), followed by License & Permits (14%) and rentals (11.5%).

7. Town Manager updates: AJ mentioned that the complete budget, which reflects all the FC meeting votes, will be available at our Mar. 29 FC meeting.

8. Communications & future FC meeting schedule:

- W. Mar. 29, 2023 (6 PM) – Tim Cronin of Planning Board will discuss the solar bylaw and the FC and SB will discuss Draft Article #5 (re: water).

Adjournment: Motion to Adjourn: DI. 2<sup>nd</sup>: CW. **Approved 6-0** at 8:43 PM