

WEST NEWBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE

Date, Time, Location: Th. Sept. 16, 7 PM, 1910 Building, 1st Floor Hearing Rm (& remote)

Attendees: Gary Roberts, Nathan Kelly, Joe Heyman, Jim Sperelakis (remote),
Angus Jennings, Stephanie Frontiera, Rick Parker, Wendy Reed, Nancy
Pau, Sargent Johnson

Not in attendance: Chuck Wegrzyn

Meeting Minutes – Sept. 16, 2021

1. Call to Order: 7:02 PM
2. Public Comment: None
3. Late File Items: None
4. Approval of Minutes: None to approve tonight
5. Review Articles for Special Town Meeting:
 - a. Nine amendments to the approved FY22 Budget were proposed, as follows:
 - i. Special Counsel & Town Clerk: Offsetting \$20,000, net effect \$0
 - ii. Four Conservation related line items, totaling a \$10,495 increase
 - iii. Planning Salary & Wages, a \$7,000 increase
 - iv. Pentucket Education, a \$93,357 decrease
 - v. Essex County Retirement Fund, a \$31,178 decrease
 - vi. The FY 22 Budget Amendments above, total \$107,040 decreaseGR – motion to approve Budget Amendments, with the exception of the Planning Dept. \$7K increase, pending approval by Select Board. NK- 2nd.
Fin Comm unanimously approved the remaining Budget Amendments 4-0
 - b. Board of Health: Expand usage of \$100K approved in Article 9 of STM to include seasonal flu vaccine & contact tracing efforts. No addit. money to be expended.
 - i. NK – motion to approve. JH – 2nd. Fin Comm approved unanimously 4-0.
FC booklet narrative: JH
 - c. Funding for invasive species internship program - \$8,000, for spring/summer '22
 - i. NK – motion to approve. JH – 2nd. Questions/comments:
 1. JS: similar article withdrawn at STM, due to uncertainty with intern oversight. RP: Conservation Agent (Michelle Green) & Nancy Pau will supervise interns and provide guidance.
 2. NK: will this include invasive eradication, e.g., on Town owned land at Pentucket School. RP: will include some mechanical treatment & planting native plants in their place.
 3. GR: homeowner education is crucial. NP/RP: will encourage education & outreach. This is not a one year task.
 4. Fin Comm approved unanimously 4-0. FC booklet narrative: JS
 - d. Adoption of Mass General Law (MGL), Chapter 59, Section 8A – Local option for Exemption of Excise Tax on Farm Machinery and Animals. Per Chief Assessor, if adopted will result in loss of approx. \$8,000 in tax revenue.
 - i. NK – motion to approve. JH – 2nd. Questions/comments:
 1. GR: what animals are included, e.g., horses? AJ: only animals used for active farming, not recreation purposes.

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2. JH: where does excise tax go? AJ: general revenue, similar to car excise tax, etc.
3. JH: does the entire excise tax collection go to WN, or do we share a portion with State. AJ: believe all goes to WN.
4. JS: any repercussions for prior years? AJ: can go back up to 3 years, if taxpayer applies
5. Fin Comm approved unanimously, 4-0.
- e. Adoption of MGL, Ch. 59, Sec. 57A, combining low tax bills. Tax bills <\$100 will be due and payable in one installment. Per Kaitlin Gilbert, Treasurer/Collector, WN's current system allowing quarterly installment payments, for low balances, is inefficient.
 - i. GR – motion to approve. JH – 2nd
 - ii. Fin Comm approved unanimously, 4-0
- f. Adoption of MGL, Ch. 33, Sec. 59, statute for employees serving in military. Presented by Sargent Johnson, WNPd.
 - i. NK – motion to approve. JH – 2nd. Questions/comments:
 - ii. JH: does this law apply to part-time, as well as full-time employees? SJ/AJ: no definitive answer on this in statute, but service member will receive a stipend for the difference in wages, between their regular (WN) salary vs. military salary.
 - iii. Fin Comm approved unanimously, 4-0
- g. Adoption of MGL, Ch. 44, Sec. 55C, establish affordable housing trust fund.
 - i. GR – motion to approve. JH – 2nd. Questions/comments:
 - ii. JS: how will this work in practice and how does it differ from CPA, which also contains an affordable housing component? AJ: Select Board would establish a framework for the trust fund, with no initial funding as part of this article. If funded in future, 100% will be earmarked toward affordable housing, vs. CPA where as little as 10% can be allotted to Aff. Housing.
 - iii. Fin Comm approved unanimously, 4-0
- h. Green Communities Grant (matching) Funds, up to \$10,000, earmarked for HVAC repair in 1910 & Council on Aging Bldg. Grant applic. Due Oct. 2021
 - i. NK – motion to approve. JH – 2nd. Questions/comments:
 - ii. JH: Must we go with B2Q, or will this service be bid-out via RFQ? AJ: BtQ is on state bid list, and with an amount this small, will not require us to follow a bid process.
 - iii. NK: In B2Q proposal, total cost is \$50K. Will we be asking the Town for an addit. \$30K in future? AJ: No, we don't anticipate this, as Nat'l Grid will also offer incentives.
 - iv. Fin Comm approved unanimously, 4-0
6. Review Special Town Mtg Calendar & Upcoming Meeting Dates:
 - a. Next Fin Comm mtg scheduled for Th. Sept. 23, 6:30 PM, 1st Fl. Hearing Rm.
 - b. Fin Comm booklet must be prepared & distributed by Oct. 8, 2021.
7. Adjournment: Motion to Adjourn, approved 4-0. Approx. 8:05 PM