

WEST NEWBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE

WEST NEWBURY CLERK
'22 NOV 18 AM 7:26

Meeting Minutes

Date, Time, Location: Tu. Aug. 30, 2022, 6 PM (1910 Bldg.)

Attendees (& initials): Chris Wile (CW), Rob Phillips (RP), Walter Burmeister (WB), Dan Innis (DI), Ross Capolupo (RC), Jim Sperelakis (JS), Angus Jennings (AJ). Guests/Participants: Stephanie Fronteira (SF)

1. Call to Order: 6:00 PM
2. Ross Capolupo, a newly appointed member of the FinCom, was welcomed to his first mtg. Ross has an impressive background, which will be useful to committee.
3. Approval of Minutes: 7/13/22 FC Mtg Minutes. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: RP. **Approved 5-0** (RC abstained).
4. Review 8/24/22 Pentucket informational mtg with reps from W.Newbury, Groveland, Merrimac, re: Pentucket Regional Agreement, next steps, etc. AJ & WB attended the Aug. 24 mtg and AJ clarified the following items:
 - This newly founded group is not a 'true committee', with governmental authority, like the Pentucket School Com., Select Board, FinCom, etc.
 - Per AJ, WB & CW, the objective, purpose and hopeful outcome of this group is to foster closer cooperation, swift communication and mutually beneficial collaboration amongst Towns, School Com., FinComs, Pentucket admin., etc.
 - Per AJ, any potential amendments to the Pentucket Regional Agreement would need approval from all 3 Towns' Select Boards & School Com., with a final endorsement by MA State Dept. of Education. In WN, a recommendation would need to be brought to the SB for their consideration. Spring 2023 Town Mtg seems to be the right timing to vote on any potential modifications or amendments to the Agreement.
 - WB stated that the School Com. 'owns' the Pentucket budget, but only the Superintendent and/or Bus. Mgr. actually present it. WB suggested that all 3 Towns proactively discuss and agree to the budget, prior to its final form. CW added that while the School Com. does 'own' the budget, they are free to appoint anyone to present it to the FC, SB, TM, etc.
5. Investment Policy Committee – update from FinCom Rep., Dan Innes
 - Cambridge Trust has been hired to manage the Town's OPEB (pension) and 'Free Cash' accounts. OPEB, being longer term, is managed for growth of principal, so WN can meet its future obligations. 'Free cash' is managed much more conservatively.
 - At some future point, the Town will put out an RFP and/or procurement process to solicit and interview a broader array of money mngmt. firms. Per

AJ, at the present time, due to workload and more pressing priorities, this new hiring process has been tabled.

6. Review anticipated warrant articles for fall STM, process for FinCom review & prep of FC booklet: Per AJ, typical process is as follows:
 - SB controls the warrant and often sponsors the individual articles. Articles are routinely sponsored by the Planning Board, Community Preservation Com., Town Committees, Commissions, Depts, and even 'Citizen's Petitions' can get on the warrant.
 - STM articles are typically more 'urgent' in nature, where funding or a decision is needed prior to the Spring ATM.
 - Per AJ, there are currently approx. 15 articles presented for Fall STM, but he stressed the warrant hasn't been closed nor even discussed with SB.
 - The Fall STM is currently scheduled for M. Oct. 24, at 7 PM. The FinCom booklet should be available 14 days in advance of mtg, thus M. Oct. 10. From AJ's experience, W. Oct. 5 should be our 'deadline' for the editing and organizing of our rationales, to be ready for the final proofread and timely submission to printer.
7. Document delivery, storage and organization, i.e., 'Dropbox':
 - a. AJ discussed the purpose and history of 'Dropbox', which was utilized inconsistently by prior FinComs.
 - b. FC agreed to evaluate its usefulness and discuss/decide next steps at a future FC mtg.
8. FinCom e-mail account maintenance:
 - a. Per AJ, the Town has a specific e-mail account for the FC, which costs \$8 per month, i.e., \$96 annually. It is currently unmonitored and underutilized.
 - b. After a brief discussion, the consensus was to eliminate this e-mail account and save the Town the expense.
9. 'Retreat' – open discussion of FC goals & expectations:
 - a. AJ kicked off the discussion by providing context on how WN operates, since adopting the 'Town Manager' statute of 2017. The annual budget process involves five steps, as follows:
 - i. The SB sets the priorities/objectives in a '2 pager' document.
 - ii. Town Manager (AJ) prepares the budget accordingly.
 - iii. AJ presents the budget to SB, who 'refers' it to FinCom (typical timing for steps 2 & 3 is early Feb.)
 - iv. FC recommends/'refers' budget to Town Mtg voters.
 - v. Town Mtg vote finalizes the budget
 - b. AJ noted that the WN form of gov't is actually quite 'decentralized', with significant authority given to town boards and committees, making the budget process even more challenging to manage, esp. given the limited

financial staffing, i.e., Stephanie F. (Town Accountant), Kaitlyn (Treasurer/Collector) and Jennifer Walsh (Asst. to Town Manager).

- c. To assist in the smooth operation of the budgeting process, SF offered to provide a monthly (and YTD) budget by department.
- d. CW stating his over-arching 'Top 5' views, assumptions and major future Town decisions, as follows:
 - i. Downturn of economy
 - ii. Page School expense & future
 - iii. Town water supply & distribution
 - iv. School budget (which CW mentioned was >8% above prior yr)
 - v. Comprehensive Master Plan update (last was in 1999)
- e. DI & JS strongly agreed with items ii. (Page) & iii. (water) from Chris' list.
- f. A lively discussion was held on the Town budgeting processes and the FC's key role within it, inclu. philosophically whether the FC should offer more structural guidance and play a more 'proactive vs reactive' role.

10. Schedule of meeting and other important dates:

- W. 9/7/22 at 6 PM: FC mtg
- Tu. 9/13/22 at 6 PM: FC mtg
- Th. 9/22/22 at 6 PM: FC mtg
- Th. 9/29/22 at 6 PM: FC mtg
- W. 10/5/22: Finalize FC booklet
- F. 10/14/22: Distribute FC booklet
- M. 10/24/22 at 7 PM: Special Town Mtg
- Tu. 11/1/22 at 5 PM: Post STM review mtg – prep for '23 ATM/STM & discuss Pentucket Regional Agreement

11. Adjournment: Motion to Adjourn: CW. 2nd: WB, Approved 6-0 at 8:52 PM