

WEST NEWBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

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

Attendees (& initials): Chris Wile (CW), Rob Phillips (RP), Walter Burmeister (WB), Dan Innis (DI), Jim Sperelakis (JS), Ross Capolupo (RC), Angus Jennings (AJ). Guests/Participants: Town Acct: Jenny Walsh; Town Clerk: Jim Blatchford (JB); Conserv: Michelle Greene (MG) & Judy Mizner; Planning Bd: Ann Bardeen; Open Space: Graham Bachelor & Carol Decker; Bd. of Health: Blake Seale (BS) & Bob Janes; Historical: Alisa Grammar (AG); DPW: Wayne Amaral (WA); Vets: Ronald Ross; SB: Wendy Reed (WR) & Rick Parker (RP)

1. Call to Order: 6:00 PM
2. Public Comment: None
3. Approval of Minutes: 2/15/23 FC Mtg Minutes. RP made a few edits, re: draft article #s and terminology utilized when FC does not take a vote on a specific article. Motion to approve with edits: DI. 2nd: CW. **Approved 6-0**
4. FY24 Budget Line Item Reviews:
 - Board of Health: \$653.2K requested, a \$60.9K (+10.3%) incr. vs FY23. Projected recycling and waste collection expenses were the two largest contributors to the incr., at \$35K and \$19.5K, respectively. A discussion ensued about the drivers for the increases, inclu. 'tipping fees', Steele landfill monitoring, and Blake Seale (Bd of Health) stressed some of the market unpredictability, particularly with recycling. Motion to approve: RP. 2nd: WB. **Approved 6-0**
 - Conservation Commission: \$75.8K requested, a \$9.2K (+13.8%) incr. vs FY23. Key drivers are the increased hours and expenses of the Conservation Agent, due to the decision to withdraw from the Intermunicipal Agreement with Merrimac, for a shared Conservation Agent, at the end of FY23. The Conserv. Agent's salary had also been 'under market' and corrected, as a result of the recent 'Wage & Classification' study. Motion to approve: RP. 2nd: DI. **Approved 6-0**
 - Planning Board: \$79.7K requested, a \$2.6K (+3.3%) incr. vs FY23. Increase in Town Planner hours from 25 to 28 hrs/wk, and an admin assistant in the Planning Dept (shared with DPW) who now does minutes – both better accuracy and lower cost. Motion to approve: RP. 2nd: CW. **Approved 6-0**

- Open Space: \$750 requested, same as FY23. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: WB. **Approved 6-0**
- Historical Commission: \$600 requested, same as FY23. The Historical Commission promotes the preservation, protection & development of the Town's historical assets. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: WB. **Approved 6-0**
- Veteran's Services: \$35,444 requested, the majority of which (\$22,960) is West Newbury's allocation to the six town Eastern Essex District Dept. of Veteran's Services. Ron Ross explained the services West Newbury veterans receive. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: JS. **Approved 6-0**
- Town Clerk: \$155.3K requested, a \$6.3K (+4.2%) increase vs FY23. AJ mentioned this is a level staffing budget, despite the addit. tasks taken by the Town Clerk's office, inclu. the Town website and various committee formation and organizational duties. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: DI. **Approved 6-0**
- Board of Registrars: \$15K requested, a \$3K (-17%) decrease vs FY23. Per JB this is due to 2 elections planned in FY24 vs 3 in FY23. Motion to approve: CW 2nd : DI. **Approved 6-0**
- Bandstand: \$8K requested, a \$2K (+33%) increase vs FY23. The main rationale for the increased cost involves attracting professional bands to the weekly entertainment program. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: DI. **Approved 6-0**
- Cultural Council: \$100 requested, equal to FY23. Motion to approve: RP. 2nd: CW. **Approved 6-0**

5. Warrant Article Review (Annual/Special) (Note: article #s can/will change):

- Draft #16: Septic Loan Revolving Fund: \$10,364 requested by the Bd. Of Health, as part of a multi-year program, nearing completion. No sunset date. Motion to approve: RP. 2nd: JS. **Approved 6-0**. Rationale: RP
- Draft #22: Allocate/Reserve Comm. Preservation Fund Revenues: Each year, of the total CPA funds collected, a minimum of 10% must be allocated amongst the 3 required categories of historical preservation, recreation and affordable housing, and 5% for admin. The remainder (approx. 65%) can remain 'undesignated' for any of the aforementioned three uses. In FY24, per input from WR (of SB), we expect approx. \$609,037 of CPA revenues, with the required allocations being: \$30,452 (5%) for admin; \$60,904 (10%) for each of the three required categories; and the remainder, \$395,873 (65%) remaining

undesignated/budgeted reserve. No sunset date. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: JS. **Approved 6-0.** Rationale: DI RC

- Draft #23: Land Acquisition at Sawmill Brook (Poorhouse Lane): Request to transfer \$350,000 from CPA funds to purchase approx. 30 acres of open space contiguous to Mill Pond recreation area. Sunset date 6/30/2026. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: DI. **Approved 6-0.** Rationale: JS
- Draft #24: Transfer CPC Funds to Affordable Housing Trust: Request to transfer \$172,174 \$172,178 from CPA funds to the Affordable Housing Trust. Per WR (of SB) the Trust is holding a March 16 (7 PM) informational mtg, re: draft action plan. No sunset date. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: DI. **Approved 6-0.** Rationale: DI
- Draft #29: Ash Tree Treatments: \$60,180 requested transfer from free cash, by DPW Dir., as part of a multi-year funding program to combat the effects of an invasive insect (ash borer) on a targeted number of the ash trees on the Town's public land. This article generated significant discussion and reasoned debate. Town mtg had funded an ash borer study, (the results of which are on the Town website), and used to develop the gameplan for this article request. The study identified and categorized WN's ash trees into 3 levels of infestation and the likely effect/success of treatment; e.g., cannot save (287); saving possible (122); saving probable (55). The FC discussion focused largely on whether to limit the treatment to the 55 trees with highest probability for success (at a cost of approx. \$18,700), or extend treatment to the addit. 122 trees identified where treatment may/may not be effective (for an added cost of approx. \$41,480), as recommended by the DPW Dir in original article request. Motion to approve original article for \$60,180: JS. 2nd: WB. **Disapproved 2-3-1.** JS, DI voted in favor. RP, CW, WB voted against. RC abstained. A second motion was then brought forward for a smaller, more targeted program (approx. \$18,700 to treat 55 trees): RP. 2nd: WB. **Approved 3-2-1.** RP, CW, WB voted in favor. JS, DI voted against. RC abstained. Sunset date 6/30/2024. Rationale: WB
- Draft #30: Page School Security Cameras: \$8,300 requested transfer from free cash to install four security cameras on the front entrances of Page School, by DPW Dir., in alliance with the Police Chief. WB stated his concern that after these four cameras are installed there will still be Page entrance doors equipped with no alarm or camera. DI also asked why only four cameras? WA stated these were recommended by Chief Dwyer and another article can be brought forward in future years for more security at Page. Sunset date 6/30/2024. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: DI. **Approved 6-0.** Rationale: DI
- Draft #35: Funding for Cemetery Clean-up: \$4,150 requested transfer from free cash to fund a clean-up and restoration of the Quaker and Almshouse

Cemeteries, by Historical Commission. AG explained the poor state of the Quaker Cemetery (near Artichoke Reservoir), with headstones missing and that this funding will help to clean and restore its condition. Sunset date 6/30/2024. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: DI. **Approved 6-0**. Rationale: CW

- Draft #38: Invasive Species Management: \$20,000 requested transfer from free cash, by Open Space Committee, to fund an outside professional vendor to apply treatment to targeted high priority Town owned open space. 3 high priority parcels have been identified, inclu. Cherry Hill conser. land, Indian Hill fields and Riverbend trails, totaling approx. 39 acres. The targeted invasive species are phragmites, autumn olive and multiflora rose. CW asked if invasives from adjacent properties will 'pollute' the newly treated fields. MG replied that ideally we will plant native plants in their place, which will take hold. JS asked who will supervise the outside company. MG (Conserv. Agent) stated that she will. DI asked if this will be year 1 of a multi-year project. RP replied that this is the "beginning of a process". WB asked if invasive proliferation is a direct result of climate change? MG said this is certainly one factor. RP inquired do we know the project scope and whether this is spot treatments or larger scale? MG felt that the 3 aforementioned targeted areas are well defined, largely as a result of the previous mapping work done by interns. Sunset date ~~6/30/24~~ 6/30/2025. Motion to approve: RP. 2nd: CW. **Approved 6-0**. Rationale: RC

6. Town Manager Updates: None, that weren't already discussed during meeting.

7. Communications: None

8. Future FinCom meeting schedule (all start at 6 PM, unless noted):

- W. Mar. 1, 2023
- W. Mar. 8, 2023 (immediately after Pentucket Budget meeting)
- W. Mar. 15, 2023
- W. Mar. 22, 2023

Adjournment: Motion to Adjourn: DI. 2nd: CW. **Approved 6-0** at 8:25 PM