

WEST NEWBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Date, Time, Location: **Wed. March 1, 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; Bldg. Commissioner: Sam Joslin (SJ); DPW: Wayne Amaral (WA); Parks & Rec: Brad Buscher (BB, remote); SB: Wendy Reed (WR) & Rick Parker (RP1)

1. Call to Order: 6:00 PM
2. Public Comment: None
3. Approval of Minutes: None. 2/22/23 minutes deferred to 3/8 mtg.
4. FY24 Budget Line Item Reviews:
 - Building Inspectional Services: \$150,622 requested, a \$5,780 (+4.0%) incr. vs FY23. This department generates revenue - via Building Permit fees – which more than adequately covers all their expenses. CW asked if the \$215K in projected revenue is all from building permits, and whether this amount has grown in the past few years? SJ responded, yes, all from bldg. permits, but there hasn't been much revenue change since 2018/19. SJ also added that WN is in the 'mid-range', re: fee structure, in the No. Shore area. DI inquired about the new software program and SJ responded that the 'Permit Link' software is useful for homeowners and builders (who can access, apply, upload 24/7) and makes the Inspect. Dept more efficient – maximizing actual inspection visits, as opposed to 'chasing paperwork'. WR asked if there is potential for other Town Depts to have access and share the same system, to promote efficiencies. SJ/AJ responded yes, and some of that is already happening, e.g., the Fire Dept. monitoring sprinkler systems. Motion to approve: JS. 2nd: RP. **Approved 6-0**
 - Dept. of Public Works (DPW): \$1,548,653 requested, a \$174,461 (+12.7%) incr. vs FY23. Key drivers of the budget are the Salary & Wage line, particularly the expansion of hours in the DPW administrative support position (from 15 to 34 hrs), which importantly, was made in lieu of re-filling the 22 hr/wk Resident Services Administrator position (through FY23, has been carried in the Select Board budget). The DPW Business Administrator/Purchasing Assistant (new title) entails signific. new responsibilities, inclu. supporting the DPW Director in his separate role as the Town's Chief Procurement Officer (CPO). The transfer of hours to the DPW admin. position provides an excellent opportunity to both add responsibilities to

this office, as well as support the CPO function more appropriately. The DPW admin. support is also actively pursuing her MCPPO (purchasing) certification. In addition, the 'Snow and Ice Removal' budget line will increase by \$50K, (from \$150K to \$200K), reflecting the Town's historical spending, which has averaged approx. \$220K over the past four FYs. Other notable DPW budgetary increases are Parks (maintenance) expense, up \$13.8K (+92%) due largely to the skyrocketing cost of fertilizer. As well as electricity, up \$14K, due to the forecasted increase in utility prices. RP/RP1 noted that our total Town electricity costs are mitigated due to the solar field and the signific. net metering credit we receive. Motion to approve: RP. 2nd: CW. **Approved 6-0**

- Parks & Rec: \$38,272 requested, a \$13,487 (+54%) incr. vs FY23, which includes \$5,072 for wages and \$33,200 for expenses. An article was voted at the Oct. 2022 Town Meeting to approve funding for ballfield maintenance expenses. The proposed FY24 budget essentially integrates these recurring expenses into the operating budget. RP provided a detailed spreadsheet of expenses, inclu. field maint. materials, portable toilet rentals, etc., which was highly useful. Motion to approve: RP. 2nd: CW. **Approved 6-0**
- Mill Pond: \$2,100 requested, same as FY23. AJ mentioned the intention of the Mill Pond Cte's expenditures, inclu. the winter carnival, which due to covid and weather, has not happened in the past few years. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: WB. **Approved 6-0**
- Zoning Board of Appeals: \$700 requested, same as FY23. Motion to approve: RP. 2nd: WB. **Approved 6-0**
- Group Health Insurance: \$527,865 requested, a \$46,008 (+9.5%) increase vs FY23. MIIA (MA Interlocal Insurance Association) confirms the rates for West Newbury, and the rate increase (vs FY23) was modest, at only 1%. In addition to budgeting current headcount, the Town also budgets for up to 2 employees switching from an individual to a (more expensive) family plan in FY24, thus leaving a contingency of approx. \$52.7K. CW asked what % of the premiums do Town employees pay? AJ responded 35%. DI asked how many employees participate in the plan vs 'opting out'? AJ said 23 participate, >50% of those eligible. The group discussed that a 'deeper dive' into health insurance (options/design/costs) would be a good 'off cycle' (e.g. summertime) topic to explore more thoroughly. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: DI. **Approved 6-0**

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

- Draft #21: Revolving Funds: Revolving funds are established annually by Town Meeting vote, and in some cases, expenses paid from Revolving Funds offset costs that may otherwise be paid from the Operating Budget, e.g., the

Police Cruiser revolving fund. Following are the Revolving Fund max levels for FY24, as requested by the Select Board. All are unchanged from FY23 unless noted:

- Section 5.1: Summer Recreation Revolving Fund: \$75,000
- Section 5.2: GAR Library Fines & Penalties Revolving Fund: \$10,000
- Section 5.3: Police Vehicle Revolving Fund: \$20,000
- Section 5.4: Pipestave/Mill Pond Maintenance Revolving Fund: \$5,000
- Section 5.5: Electric Vehicle Charging Stations Revolving Fund: \$10K
- Section 5.6: Curbside Collection of Trash, Recycling & Food Waste: deferred to future FC meeting, to allow AJ time to liaise with Blake Seale (Bd. of Health) on appropriate amount

No sunset date. Motion to approve (5.1-5.5): JS. 2nd: RP. **Approved 6-0.**
Rationale: RC

- Draft #34: Pipestave Fencing: \$9,960 requested transfer from free cash to fund the purchase, repair and installation of a commercial grade fence bordering the Pipestave soccer fields. This article is requested by the DPW Director, in collaboration with Parks & Rec. WA stated that the existing 15+ year old fencing, a non-commercial grade, is starting to bow and it's intended purpose of keeping soccer balls out of the nearby wetlands area has been compromised. This expenditure would provide heavier grade top & bottom rails and fencing. Sunset date 6/30/2024. Motion to approve: JS. 2nd: CW. **Approved 6-0.** Rationale: RC
- Draft #32: Purchase Infield Grader for Baseball Fields: \$4,425 requested as a transfer from free cash, by Parks & Rec, to purchase an infield grader to help maintain the playing surface of the Town's six baseball fields. It is intended that the P&R tractor will pull the grader and the grader will be stored in the P&R storage shed. Sunset date 6/30/2024. Motion to approve: RP. 2nd: CW. **Approved 6-0.** Rationale: RP
- Draft #33: Pipestave Field 6 Restoration: Request to transfer \$15,000 from free cash, by Parks & Rec, to fund the restoration of Pipestave Field # 6 (soccer/lacrosse). The scope of this restoration includes slice seeding, fertilization, starter and loam to fill low spots, with engagement of the Town's turf consultant. This field was heavily utilized in 2022, as the Town 'rested' Field 7, and the high school fields had limited availability due to construction. RC asked if user fees can at least partly cover these costs in future years? AJ/BB responded that the user fee schedule will be examined in future. AJ also demonstrated the 'My Rec' app on the Town website, used to reserve Town owned facilities, inclu. ball fields. Per AJ, a benefit of the software is we will have data useful in making future fee decisions. Sunset date 6/30/2024. Motion to approve: JS. 2nd: CW. **Approved 6-0.** Rationale: RP
- Draft #17: Pension Liability Stabilization Fund: \$67,514 requested transfer from free cash, by Select Board, to contribute to the Pension Liability

Stabilization Fund. FC deferred this discussion/vote during our Feb. 15 meeting to conduct more research as to the need and amount. After a good discussion on this issue, the TM/SB/FC agreed that holding a future 'off cycle' meeting to discuss the appropriate funding rationale of the Town's various Stabilization Funds seems a positive idea. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: JS. **Disapproved 1-5**. JS voted for. CW, RP, DI, RC, WB voted against.
Rationale: RP

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

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