

West Newbury Finance Committee

Date & Time: Wednesday, March 24th, 2021 6pm

Location : 1910 Building, 1st Floor Hearing Room, West Newbury, MA

Attendees: Gary Roberts, Nathan Kelly, Jim Sprerlak, Angus Jennings; remotely: Joe Heyman, Wayne Amaral, Stephanie Frontiera, Wendy Reed

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order - 6:00 p.m.
2. Public Comment - No public comment.
3. Approval of Minutes - Unclear if last minutes were approved; review at next meeting.
4. Review and discuss budgets and articles from the following departments:

a.) DPW

WA - Increase in personnel to cover for overtime. Town Building Operating Expenses is overspent every year; includes heat, etc. Department has to be conservative in other areas to cover this. A few thousand dollars had to be spent this year to heat the Carr Post building, even though it was not in use. Want to fund the hanging plants on Main Street.

Stormwater- have outflows to test that we cannot afford to do until the FY22.

NK - can you be more specific about what items are covered in Street/Paving Repairs

WA - has been used on many issues, fixing roads, manholes, edges, etc. Have not repaved many roads lately, but expect to have a large Chapter 90 program this year.

Budget Approved, 4-0

DPW ARTICLES

STM - Article 2 - Page School fire alarm box; was not part of last year's program, and makes sense to upgrade this item too. Allows control from a more central location.

Sunset Clause - end FY22

Funding Source: Capital Stabilization

Approved, 4-0

STM - Article 3 - Exterior Restoration of Town Hall; needs woodwork/rot repaired, paint is falling off, and needs to be painted. Moving fire alarm box from front to side of building.

JH - Why move the callbox? Isn't it safer there?

WA - some consider it an eyesore

GR - concerned that we have old buildings that are not put to use on a regular basis.
WA - want to protect the envelope of the building, before we consider the inside.
AJ - it does get use from groups, and collects a small amount of income.

Sunset Clause - end FY23
Funding Source: CPA funds

Approved, 4-0

STM - Article 5 - Snow and Ice - annual item to cover deficit.

GR - this is not really an emergency, it is intentionally under budgeted.

Sunset Clause - none
Funding Source: Free Cash

Approved, 3-1 (against: Kelly)

STM - Article 12 - Consulting Support for stormwater management permit; technical work that the Town needs technical assistance to complete; need to build consensus across committees and offices.

JS - is this a neighbor to neighbor issue or into the Merrimack?
AJ - from EPA perspective it is public bodies of water, like the river.

Sunset Clause: end FY22
Funding Source: Free Cash

Approved, 4-0

ATM - Article 15 - Carr Post Debt Service - \$85K from last year has not been appropriated yet and has not been sunset. Article can be removed.

ATM - Article 17 - Middle Street Bridge
AJ - things are still not agreed to yet, so project costs could still go up. Trying to get Newburyport to approve the project, and understand the urgency of rising costs.
WA - construction has been stalled for a year or two.

Sunset Clause - end of FY24
Funding Source: Capital Stabilization Fund

Approved, 4-0

ATM - Article 18 - Roof Repairs for Town Buildings

WA - a "no-brainer" article, which extends the life of roofs, including public safety building.

Sunset Clause - end FY23

Funding Source: Capital Stabilization

Approved, 4-0

b.) Town Clerk/Town Counsel

AJ - biggest change/proposal - Asst. Town Clerk Part Time to Full Time - BOS has approved expansion. Position would take on additional responsibilities that are done by Finance Dept. but are usually done by Clerk in other towns, including: Committee Appointment, start to finish; more involvement with website; Town Meeting support/logistics; Town Report. Budget represents 40 hour, midrange grade 5 position, and health insurance family plan.

Budget Approved 4-0

c.) Board of Registrars/Elections

Modest reduction, not an election year.

Budget Approved 4-0

d.) Finance Committee

AJ - suggest using the reserve fund as a place to put reduced items in case of emergencies.

Budget Approved, 4-0

e.) Town Manager

AJ - No change other than COLA

Budget Approved, 4-0

ARTICLES:

STM - Article 7 and 8 - accounting issues in two accounts

Sunset Clause - none

Funding Source: Free Cash

Approved jointly, 4-0

f.) Finance Department

AJ - many other towns have much larger budgets than we do for this department. West Newbury does not have back up for Treasurer/Collector, and the department is stretched way too thin. Looking to fund a new Full Time employee, which will help reconstitute roles within the

department. Covid has caused a lot of additional new accounting issues. We will not cut corners, but do not want to drop any balls. We know there are many needs, and with this we will be better off, but cannot be sure that it will fix everything. BOS is supportive of hiring the position.

SF - finding new old issues all the time, and trying to deal with the day to day as well. Trying to unravel an overwhelming amount of issues.

JS - does this eliminate the need for the interim position approved at the Fall Town Meeting?

AJ - yes, this is instead of that.

Budget Approved, 4-0

g.) Selectmen

Expansion of the budget is due to meeting minutes necessary expenses.

Budget Approved, 4-0

ARTICLES:

STM - Article 6 - Essex Tech, had an underestimated transportation cost.

Funding Source: Free Cash

Sunset clause: none

Approved, 4-0

ATM - Article 7 - Pension Liability Stabilization Fund - Should be \$76,261.

Funding Source: Free Cash

Sunset Clause - end FY22

Approved, 4-0

ATM - Article 9 - School Stabilization Transfer

Amount rationale is a five-year draw down of the current balance.

Sunset Clause - none

Funding Source: School Stabilization Fund

Approved, 4-0

h.) Special Counsel

AJ - contract with KP law, primarily consulted on labor issues, occasionally land use. A great asset to have in the budget. We are currently a party to a wage claim, which has caused some regular billing.

Budget Approved, 4-0

i.) Medicare (FICA)

AJ - This cost is accurately predictable each year.

Budget Approved, 4-0

j.) Essex County Retirement

AJ - This cost is given to us, the only thing we have to do is apportion to Town and Water.

Budget Approved, 4-0

k.) Health Insurance

AJ - great news: 0% premium increase for BCBS, and a one month holiday for FY22; Teamsters is not, for those union employees that choose that. As a result, we have a reduction in health insurance cost.

Budget Approved, 4-0

l.) Insurance and Bonds

AJ - Working to make sure we have the right coverages, and updated amounts.

Budget Approved, 4-0

m.) Debt Service

AJ - Only two outstanding bonds, Land Acquisition and Public Safety Complex, and both will be paid off at the end of FY23.

Budget Approved, 4-0

5. Communications

Next Meetings: 4/1, 4/5, and TBD: 4/13 or 4/14?

NK - CIC Report - making good progress

JS - Investment Advisory Committee - having good success

6. Adjournment 7:45 PM