



Town of West Newbury
Select Board and Finance Committee Joint Meeting
Thursday, September 14, 2023 @ 6:00pm
381 Main Street, Town Office Building
www.wnewbury.org
Meeting Minutes

Open Session: Chairman Phillips opened the session at 6:00pm.

Participation at the Meeting:

- Rick Parker, Wendy Reed, Chris Wile- Select Board
- Rob Phillips, Ross Capolupo, Dan Innes, Ann O'Sullivan- Finance Committee members
- Angus Jennings- Town Manager
- Jim Blatchford- Town Clerk
- Jenny Walsh- Town Accountant
- Christine Marshall- Council on Aging/SAGE Center representative
- Michael Dwyer- West Newbury Police and Fire Chief
- Bob Janes- Board of Water Commissioners member

Regular Business

A. Call to Order

Chairman Phillips opened the session at 6:00pm.

B. Public Content

No motion was made at this time.

Item E was taken out of order at this time.

C. Approval of Finance Committee Minutes

a. Meeting of August 16, 2023

Minutes tabled until September 27, 2023 Finance Committee Meeting.

b. July 13, 2023

Minutes tabled until September 27, 2023 Finance Committee Meeting.

Item F was taken out of order of this time.

D. Review and discuss Articles for Fall Special Town Meeting to be held on October 23, 2023

Prior to getting started, the Chairs of the Board and Committee explained the purpose of the joint meeting: to better discuss and vote on Town Meeting draft Articles in greater harmony. Jennings provided further elaboration on the status of the Articles and the numbering system.

On Article 19 (amending of West Newbury Bylaws to establish a COA Revolving Fund) and Article 20 (amending the West Newbury Bylaws to cap the COA Revolving Fund at \$30,000) Christine Marshall spoke. Marshall explained the need for the fund by providing recent examples of where it could come in handy with respect to events and trips undertaken by the COA. Jennings explained that no more money could be expended than received for events and trips by COA participants. The group discussed the limits on the Fund and whether the \$30,000 was a good amount. Parker asked about how the SAGE Center would avoid any unanticipated expenses and Phillips explained how the Fund would manage this. **Wile motioned to approve draft Article 19. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Wile motioned to approve draft Article 20. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No,**

0 Abstain). Finance Committee member Innes motioned to approve Articles 19 and 20. O’Sullivan seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (4 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).

On Articles 8 through 10, Chief Dwyer spoke to the joint hearing. On Article 8 (the purchase of public safety audio recorders and affiliated storage), Dwyer explained the scope of what the recorders capture, and that the Commonwealth was no longer planning to pay for them as they had been for 20 years. Dwyer said he was pursuing grants to supplement the costs. Wile asked if there were any annual fees to the operation of the equipment, and the Chief explained the Department planned to absorb the intended costs. The lifetime of the equipment is 10 years. Phillips determined that the requests for the recorders would be pulled from Free Cash, and wondered if cable fees could be employed in defraying the expenses. Parker noted there was a fair amount of funds accumulated in cable fees. Capolupo inquired about storage options for archived audio recordings (server v. cloud-based) and why the Department had opted for servers. The cloud-based platform would have been unfeasible, admitted the Chief, though it will underpin body camera footage storage when body cameras are acquired down the line. **Wile motioned to approve draft Article 8. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Innes motioned to approve draft Article 8. O’Sullivan seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (4 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Phillips asked what the sunset date on Article 8 should be and was told it was two years. Dwyer told the room it would be about eight weeks to acquire the equipment once purchased. On Article 9 (the purchase of new gas meters for the Fire Department) Dwyer explained the need to purchase them. The meters are vital to protect firefighters, and the present units are failing. The purchase would encompass six meters of various configurations that would roughly last a decade. **Parker motioned to approve draft Article 9. Reed seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Innes motioned to approve draft Article 9. Capolupo seconded. The motion passed unanimously. (4 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** The Finance Committee set a sunset date of June 2024. On Article 10 (the purchase of a speed monitoring trailer and pedestrian safety signage), Dwyer justified the speed monitoring trailer’s purchase to enhance traffic and pedestrian safety. The Article also provides for the acquisition of mobile pedestrian crosswalk signs. The Chief stated he preferred the MPH Industries radar trailer because of its enhanced data collection ability. The Finance Committee worked to nail down a total cost of the proposal. **Parker motioned to approve draft Article 10 with a sum of \$12,000. Wile seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). O’Sullivan motioned to approve draft Article 10. Innes seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (4 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** On an unnumbered Article (not in drafts), the Chief explained that a grant had been pursued to acquire new computer technology for West Newbury police cruisers but he wanted to put additional monies toward the acquisition in case the grant award was not sufficient. **No motion was made at this time.**

On Article 4 (to amend the Expenses line in the FY24 Department budget to reduce the budgeted amount from \$445,027 to \$375,027) Bob Janes rose to speak. The Water Commissioners, looking to reduce their budget, identified \$70,000 for trimming from the Newburyport Water Contingency. The weather conditions and water usage trends were such that Janes felt that the remaining \$90,000 in the Contingency funds would be sufficient to get through the year. **Parker motioned to approve draft Article 4 to reduce the budget line item. Wile seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Innes motioned to approve draft Article 4. O’Sullivan seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (4 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

On Article 3 (encompassing technology purchases, Board of Registrars funds, and educational funds), Jennings explained the rationale behind the grouping of assorted line-item amendments despite their diverse nature. Jennings explained that the tech purchases would enable the Select Board to have new, functioning laptops (a one-time purchase). Jennings and Blatchford explained that the payroll expenses reflect increased amounts allotted to Board of Registrars salaries and expenses to manage the Whittier Tech Special Election (which would be fully reimbursed by Whittier). The additional funds for Essex North Shore Ag and Tech School reflect an increased enrollment of West Newbury pupils in the school. The group discussed having the language of the line item to hand annually since the possibility of needing to provide funds for increased enrollment could happen at any time. The Town Manager also mentioned that a line item for \$600 required to landfill monitoring needed to be taken into consideration. Jennings suggested doing a line-item transfer in the Spring instead of bringing it to

Town Meeting. The Finance Committee members agreed to the latter approach. **Wile motioned to approve draft Article 3 with the four line-items as provided in the packet. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Innes motioned to approve draft Article 3. O’Sullivan seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (4 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Phillips stated there would be no sunset date on the funds.

On Article 5 (the transfer/appropriation of money to the Pension Liability Stabilization Fund), Phillips explained the depositing and withdrawing of funds into the Fund by following a set schedule which in his words was the “definition of stabilization” of these ongoing expenses. **Wile motioned to approve draft Article 5. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Innes motioned to approve draft Article 5. O’Sullivan seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (4 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

On Article 16 (to pay unpaid bills incurred by West Newbury), Accountant Walsh explained that some of the bills were incurred due to the biller emailing incorrect addresses at Town Offices in Fall 202 and some were late submission by the biller. **Wile motioned to approve draft Article 16. Reed seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Phillips established the monies were to be pulled from Free Cash. **Innes motioned to approve draft Article 16. O’Sullivan seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (4 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

On Article 21 (to repeal the Short-Term Rental Bylaw), Reed explained the history of the weak Bylaw. The Town Meeting vote would eliminate it. The group then discussed how laborious the present Bylaw had made things for both applicants and the Select Board/Town officials. **Wile motioned to approve draft Article 21. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Phillips stated there was no funding source/sunset date. Intensive Finance Committee discussion occurred on whether the Committee should endorse the Article though it did not deal with financial matters. The Committee members debated how burdensome the Bylaw could be/has been to the Town. Capolupo said he felt the Committee should not be weighing in on land-use questions. Phillips stated that the Committee could support the repeal under the auspices of its burden on the Town administration. **Capolupo motioned to approve draft Article 21. O’Sullivan seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (4 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

On Articles 23 through 25 (to vote to accept the provision of M.G.L. regarding certification stipends), Jennings told the room that contemporary offer letters incorporated these incentivizing stipends out of hand for Clerks, Assessors, and Treasurers to encourage growth and to attract certified talent to West Newbury job openings. Under the Articles, the only major change would be a \$500 stipend to the Assistant Assessor. The Articles simply formalized what was already being done. **Wile motioned to approve Article 23. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Wile motioned to approve Article 24. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Wile motioned to approve Article 25. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). O’Sullivan motioned to approve draft Articles 23, 24, and 25. Innes seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (4 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

On Article 25 (establishing a Special Purposes Stabilization Fund to receive opioid settlement monies), Town Accountant Jenny Walsh took the floor to explain that without an earmarked Fund for the incoming money, it would wind up in the general funds for the Town. Walsh stated there would be two votes- one to establish the Fund, and one to accept the related M.G.L. It was not clear who could authorize the spending of that money. Wile felt that approving the draft Article would be foolish without understanding who would be disbursing it. The room decided to put the Article off after discussion on whether or not to approve it that night. **No motion was made at this time.**

Before concluding this portion of the meeting, Jennings told the Board and Committee about expansion in invasive species removal efforts and a potentially greater request for financial backing than the proposed \$25,000. **No motion was made at this time.**

E. Communications

No communications were read at this Meeting.

F. Review schedule of future Finance Committee meeting dates (September 18, joint meeting with Select Board; September 27, October 4)

Chairman Phillips told the members of the Finance Committee of the Select Board meeting times and the procedures/potential agendas for those meetings. He suggested the Board attend the September 27th meeting of the Finance Committee. **No motion was made at this time.**

G. Adjournment

Wile motioned to adjourn the session. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Innes motioned to adjourn. O'Sullivan seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (4 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). The session adjourned at 8:30pm.

To access a video recording of the meeting, use the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4dAqSVZgkQ>