



**Town of West Newbury**  
**Select Board and Finance Committee Joint Meeting**  
**March 20, 2024 @ 6:00pm**  
**381 Main Street, Town Office Building**  
**www.wnewbury.org**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Open Session:** Chair Reed opened the session at 6:00pm.

**Participation at the Meeting:**

- Rick Parker, Wendy Reed, Chris Wile- Select Board
- Ross Capolupo, Dan Innes, Dennis LaMalfa, Rob Phillips, Jim Sperelakis- Finance Committee
- Angus Jennings- Town Manager
- Jim Blatchford- Town Clerk
- Sue Brown- Town Planner
- Corinn Flaherty- GAR Library Director
- Sam Joslin- Inspections Agent
- Michelle Greene- Conservation Agent
- Molly Hawkins- Conservation Commission representative
- Brian Murphey- Planning Board representative
- Fred Chania- Library Trustee
- David Archibald- Resident

**Announcements:**

There were no announcements read at this meeting.

**Regular Business:**

**A. Convene**

**B. Public Comment**

No public comment was made at this meeting.

**C. Review and discuss Budgets and Articles for Spring Town Meeting to be held on April 29, 2024.**

Chair Phillips of the Finance Committee explained the Budgeting process and the context of the evening's activities.

Library Operating Budget: Jennings said he had carried forward numbers from last year submitted by the Board of Library Trustees, with a COLA for employees factored in. There were no questions from Board or Committee. **Wile motioned to approve the Library Budget. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Sperelakis motioned to approve the Library Budget. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed.**

Conservation Operating Budget: Jennings discussed at length the proposed administrator position. In the Budget, salary line items account for the shared administrative position that will cover CPC, Conservation, Inspections, and Planning. It will be a full-time position with partial funding from CPA. With staffing levels improved in other Departments, Jennings felt that the cross-trained administrative aide would be a good next step. The Conservation Budget accounted for summer intern/land steward funding as well. **Wile motioned to approve the Conservation Budget for the sum of \$102,249. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Sperelakis motioned to approve the Conservation Budget. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Planning Department Operating Budget: **Wile motioned to approve the Planning Department Budget for the sum of 87,921, to be verified. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Sperelakis motioned to approve the Planning Department Budget. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed.**

Article 50: Wetlands Protection Bylaw. Reed lauded Greene for the clarity of the Bylaw's text. Wile felt that the conditions of the Bylaw were logical, and endorsed it, as did Parker. Reed felt that it was important to get it passed, as well. Wile and Jennings both spoke up and agreed that the ability to impose fines was a huge leap forward for enforcement of the state-mandated regulations. Greene said that public feedback had been incorporated into the document. **Wile motioned to recommend the Bylaw. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** To the Finance Committee, Greene explained that the Bylaw would give the Conservation Agent permission to issue fines rather than rely on the Commonwealth to do so- whose bandwidth is stretched too thin to resolve violations quickly and efficiently. The Finance Committee debated whether they should make a recommendation on the Bylaw or if it fell outside their purview. They agreed to attend the next information session on the measure to learn more. Parker pointed out that the financial aspects of the Bylaw would concern the Finance Committee. As the Board and the Committee wound down discussion, former Board member David Archibald expressed his unhappiness at the "expansion" of government (in his opinion) the Bylaw promised saying that it would have a tremendous impact on the community.

Inspections and Zoning Board Operating Budget: The ZBA Budget's \$700 would accommodate a Minutes-taker and/or legal postings. Jennings felt that the Minutes-taker would go by the wayside in the Operating Budget once the new full-time administrator is hired to take on those duties. Reed asked if they could remove the line item, but Jennings felt leaving it in place was the right thing to do. Level funding this particular Budget could still allow it be used for other costs, Wile pointed out, and Jennings agreed that it could be used for Town-sponsored legal postings. **Wile motioned to approve the ZBA Budget for the sum of \$700. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Jennings suggested the money could also be put toward trainings for the ZBA, too. **Sperelakis motioned to approve the ZBA Budget. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Phillips and Jennings lauded the work Inspections Agent Joslin has done to date. Joslin said he wanted to add a use table in the Zoning Bylaw to help make terminology clearer for all. **Wile motioned to approve the Inspections Department Budget. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** **Sperelakis motioned to approve the Inspections Department Budget. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Article 57: Proposed amendment to the Zoning Bylaw concerning definitions. Joslin said that there were no changes of substance- the proposed amendments were a clerical action more than anything. Wile asked if there was a hearing on these definitions, and Jennings said that it had taken place at a Planning Board meeting the night before. **Wile motioned to recommend Article 57. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** **Sperelakis motioned to take no action on the Article. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Open Space Committee Operating Budget: Jennings said the Budget was level funded at \$750. No Budget was submitted to the Manager's Office. Reed wondered why keeping this line item made sense given the lack of response. The Board and Manager debated rolling it into another line item for potential use. **Wile motioned to reduce the Open Space Committee Budget to \$0. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** **Innes motioned to reduce the Open Space Committee Budget to \$0. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Parker raised his concerns about eliminating the Committee Budget but Phillips reassured him that the Committee could still come before the Select Board or Manager and get funds if they were available. Wile pointed out that providing unused money to any Town body was not good business.

Bandstand Coordinator's Operating Budget: Jennings spoke to the success and efforts of the Bandstand Coordinators. The amount requested was a level-funded \$8,000. The money has attracted decent talent year after year, he reported. **Wile motioned to approve the Bandstand Budget for the sum of \$8,000. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Sperelakis motioned to approve the Bandstand Budget. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Park and Recreation Commission Operating Budget: Jennings noted that the Parks & Rec budget was reduced as much of the funds are now in the DPW budget. **Wile motioned to approve the Park and Rec Budget. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Sperelakis motioned to approve the Park and Rec Budget. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Mill Pond Operating Committee: Over the course of the discussion, it was revealed that the Mill Pond Committee has \$1,000 in their gift account and more than \$5,000 in their Pipestave/Mill Pond Care and Maintenance Revolving Fund. **Wile motioned to approve the Mill Pond Committee Budget. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Sperelakis motioned to approve the Mill Pond Committee Budget. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Cultural Council Operating Budget: Jennings wondered why the Council was carrying an Operating Budget if their funding was Commonwealth-derived. The funds provided by West Newbury were untouched year to year. **Wile motioned to reduce the Cultural Council Budget to \$0. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Sperelakis motioned to reduce the Cultural Council Budget to \$0. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

PEG Funds: The Cable Advisory Committee has engaged in several new initiatives, and the local cable server was recently replaced, reported Reed and Jennings. **Wile motioned to approve \$40,000 in PEG Funds. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Sperelakis motioned to approve \$40,000 in PEG Funds. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Innes stated he would write the rationale.

Article 14: To allocate or reserve Community Preservation Fund annual revenues. While the numbers for FY25 are not yet set in stone because of numerous factors such as tax rates, the money could not be expended until 2026 regardless. **Wile motioned to recommend Article 14. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Sperelakis motioned to recommend Article 14. The motion was properly seconded. Sperelakis stated he would write the rationale.**

Article 15: Housing Fund Transfer. Transfer CPA Housing Reserve Funds to the Affordable Housing Trust. **Parker motioned to recommend Article 15. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Sperelakis motioned to recommend Article 15. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Article 49: Proposed Zoning Amendment MBTA Communities Act. Wile opined that with regard to the pending lawsuits against the Commonwealth being brought by some Towns, it might be a wise move to wait before going ahead with the Article. Phillips expressed similar reservations about Article 49. Wile pointed out that the density requirements were "brutal"- which caused Murphey to chime in and suggested a happy medium could probably be found, within the state demands, that better suits West Newbury. Jim Sperelakis brought up one of the recurring themes at the public hearing on Article 49: the impact on the taxpayer for expanded services that could be required because of a new development. Sperelakis suggested getting an answer on "impact" by Town

Meeting night would be a good idea. Wile suggested an economic analysis should be done. He pointed out that in the late 90's, when new homes were built in West Newbury, the Town actually lost money, since the tax intake did not cover the expense of providing public safety protection, education, or other amenities to those new dwellings/residents. Murphey stated that a pause on trying to pass the zoning amendments might be warranted. Sperelakis asked what the deadline was to submit the Bylaw to the state. It was determined that the Town had until December 2025. Jennings felt that in the context of the MBTA Communities planning that this would allow the Town to bring more light to the ongoing 113 Corridor Study, and wondered if a Warrant Article in future could cover costs for a fiscal impact study around the development of high-density housing. **The Board and the Committee decided to table their vote on Article 49.**

Article 16: CPA Funding for Pickleball Court Feasibility Study. The \$30,000 in the Article included siting and design for a court. The CPC had recommended the Article. **Wile motioned to recommend Article 16. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Innes wanted to know if there was sustained interest in the sport in Town, which Reed confirmed there was. Capolupo was worried about spending the money for a study without knowing the potential construction costs that might be incurred by building the courts. Reed reported that many communities have used CPA funding for pickleball court construction and these costs are reported on the CPA Coalition website. These generally range from \$150,000 to \$300,000, but could be higher if additional amenities such as lighting and rest rooms are included. **Sperelakis motioned to recommend Article 16. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** LaMalfa stated he would write the rationale. The sunset date was set as June 30, 2025.

Article 38: Funding for Page School repairs and elevator. Jennings recapped some changes to the proposal as it had gone along, saying that there had been a change of vendor (City Elevator replacing a previous company). The process would focus on an assessment and repairs, and Jennings said that the funding request would cover expenses and offer the Town a little bit of breathing room for overruns. Wile stressed the importance of getting the repairs and other projects done. **Wile motioned to recommend Article 38. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Phillips asked if the money would come out of Free Cash (Jennings said it would). Wile inquired whether the Pentucket Middle High School building project fund would be turning any other money back to the Town, believing this Article would be a good use of those dollars. Jennings did not believe any more funds were forthcoming. **Sperelakis motioned to recommend Article 38. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Capolupo stated he would write the rationale. The sunset date was set as June 30, 2025.

Article 44: Snow and ice deficit. No action was taken on this Article.

Article 45: Unpaid bills from prior Fiscal Year. Jennings asked to table a decision on the Article, as new information had recently been received regarding bills from National Grid. Jennings said that in previous years West Newbury had been unsuccessful in negotiating reductions in bills submitted to the Town by National Grid that had arrived late or had other problems.

Article 66: Funding Saw Mill Brook administrative costs. **Wile motioned to recommend Article 66 for the sum of \$10,000. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Sperelakis motioned to recommend Article 66. **The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Sperelakis stated he would write the rationale. The sunset date was set as June 30, 2025.

#### **D. Communications**

There were no communications read at this meeting.

#### **E. Schedule of Future Meeting Dates**

No action was taken on this Item.

*Select Board Open Session Meeting March 20, 2024.*

*Minutes approved April 25, 2024.*

*Posted Agenda on March 18, 2024 at the Town's Offices and the Town's Official Website [www.wnewbury.org](http://www.wnewbury.org)*

**Sperelakis motioned to adjourn the Finance Committee Session. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (5 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Wile motioned to adjourn the Select Board Session. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). The Session adjourned at 8:42pm.**