

Westhampton, MA Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

April 26, 2023

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm

In attendance: Jacob Antosz, Stephen Holt, Marilyn Witherell, Tad Weiss, Scott Stanton (taking notes), Barbara Pelissier.

Also in attendance: Doug Finn, Scott Johndrow, Maureen Dempsey, and Joe Boudreau via zoom

Motion to accept adjusted meeting minutes by Scott, seconded by Barbara. **Approved 6-0-0.**

The Select Board met on Monday to discuss the matters of the Tree Warden. No changes on the situation of the Tax Collector and Treasurer positions or salaries.

Request for transfers of funds from EMS and Operations for the Safety Complex Building for unforeseen electric bills. Motion to accept made by Scott and seconded by Stephen. **Approved 6-0-0.**

Request for transfer of funds from Select Board Expense to Town Offices Expenses. Select Board did not use their usual funds for training and therefore have excess available while still leaving enough for the remainder of the year's expenses ~\$800. **Approved 6-0-0.**

Discussion about the line item Treasurer's salary with the Select Board. They have explored options including services from external contractors which offered a total of \$42k per year for Treasurer services other than Payroll and HR and are using this as the highwater mark and therefore the budget number recommendation. Motion to accept both salaries as requested by SB. **Approved 6-0-0.**

Discussion on Counsel Fees, Scott brought up the idea of lowering that number, Doug showed that we have only used ~\$8k this year with no foreseeable expenses and therefore recommends we go even lower to \$15,000. Motioned to lower the Counsel Fees line to \$15,000 by Stephen and seconded by Scott. **Approved 6-0-0.**

Doug requested lowering the IT Support appropriation because he has found he can replace two computers comfortably for \$1,600. Motioned to accept reduced number by Scott, seconded by Barbara. **Approved 6-0-0.**

No further discussion about the Police Chief and Dept salaries, Marilyn has done some research and is comfortable with the request. **Approved 6-0-0.**

Discussion about the Safety Complex building, Scott brought up that there had been the possibility of lowering the internet and electricity bills. Stephen spoke with Chief Antosz about the internet bill and he said that it could be cut in half as long as there are no changes in service or additional devices installed. The new rate that the Select Board secured for the town is more just to make us comfortable with the requested amount while the internet bill is higher than needed as long as there is no change in service nor devices/appliances. **Approved at the lower rate 6-0-0.**

Discussion about the building commissioner/inspectors' salary. Basically the names just need to be reversed because the inspectors are more than just building, electrical and plumbing are also included in that number while the \$6,000 in the Inspector Compensation line is actually used as a stipend for the commissioner. Doug will send an email to Joe to request that we swap those account descriptions on July 1st for the new fiscal year as it is difficult to be changed mid-year, per Joe. **Approved at the requested numbers 6-0-0.**

Discussion about the Tree Warden. The Select Board met with the Warden Tuesday evening and they came up with a plan to put the job out to bid at 100 hours which is ~\$40k. This is under the assumption that we will have to do this at least next year, if not longer. The salary and expenses associated with the position are recommended to be increased by the Select Board. Motioned by Marilyn, seconded by Stephen, **Approved 6-0-0.**

Discussion about the Highway department salaries. Marilyn researched state-wide salaries of highway department workers and found a range closer to \$25,000-\$49,000. We double checked that research and found the positions lacked certifications required by the town positions which do increase the salaries. Motioned by Scott, seconded by Stephen, **Approved 5-1-0.**

Discussion about Highway fuel. Scott wanted to understand the strange fluctuations in previous years. Explanation was that that budget item was reconfigured in FY21 and split up between different departments. Motioned by Stephen, seconded by Barbara, **Approved 6-0-0.**

Bill Jablonski offered to lower the Transfer Station Expense by \$4,000 because he found other funds to pay for hauling recyclables. Motioned by Barbara, seconded by Marilyn, **approved 6-0-0.**

Discussion about the Landfill Maintenance. No one remembers holding that and therefore no discussion, motioned by Barbara, seconded by Marilyn, **approved 6-0-0.**

Discussion about the Foothills Health District. Scott wondered why this number changes between census years and as it turns out the town does its own local census each year and this is what the private company uses for its quote. This is a non-negotiable price anyway. Motioned by Scott, seconded by Barbara, **approved 6-0-0.**

Final number came in at \$19,337.87 for the snow removal overages. We won't revote on that since our original vote covered this contingency.

The voted on number for the highway department truck was incorrect, we had voted on a number that was ~\$30k lower than needed. There was also some discussion about reappropriating the funds from the other unused funds accounts but we were told by the Town Accountant this cannot be done. The explanation being that funds appropriated by the town for use in a loan cannot be repurposed into anything other than another loan. Instead we will have to take all \$360,300 out of stabilization. Motioned by Stephen, seconded by Scott, **Approved 6-0-0.**

A Jeep Willys in the possession of the Historic Commission has been evaluated at ~\$12k by an auction company and this is just a transfer from the town to the Historical Commission to get them the funds sooner while the funds are tied up in the auction. The funds that come from the

auction will be left in Free Cash at the close. Motioned by Scott, seconded by Stephen, **Approved 6-0-0.**

Article for Shade Tree Fund reduced to \$40k. Marilyn motioned to approve but take the money out of Stabilization instead of Free Cash, seconded by Scott, **Approved 5-1-0.**

Article to transfer \$300,000 from Free Cash to Stabilization **approved 5-1-0.**

Article to use \$137,464 to offset taxes to get to the 2.5% increase in levy allowed by law, increased from \$100,000. Motioned by Scott, approved by Stephen, **approved 5-1-0.**

Motion to adjourn by Marilyn at 9:45pm, seconded by Barbara, **Approved 6-0-0.**