

**Finance Committee Meeting**  
**Via Zoom**  
**Wednesday, December 1, 2021 6:00 pm**

Present: Michelle Vasquez (MV), Dick Trussell (DT), Susan Smiley (SS), Emily Kerrigan (EK), Cheryl Gariepy (CG) Town Finance Director

Motion to come to order at 6:03 by MV, SS 2nd ,4 yes 0 no

1. CG gave a brief update on FY 22 Budget expenditures.
  - a. Everyone is exactly where they would expect to be roughly 33%
  - b. Cemetery higher because of trees cutting
  - c. The library needs additional funds to be approved at a special town meeting but CG informed them to put together a list
  - d. Revenues look good
2. Defer meeting minute approval to next meeting
3. Budget Schedule for Fiscal 23
  - a. Normally give 4-6 weeks to departments to get budgets back to us
  - b. Only about 3 weeks this year for the departments to get back to us
  - c. Budget and capital by 12/24 to be submitted by departments
  - d. Review first January meeting
  - e. SS asked for a schedule of department meetings
  - f. MV explained we will probably do public safety at one meeting then library and rec, and finally council on aging
4. SS mentioned someone was waiting to get in, MV apologized for not seeing the person in the waiting room
5. CG gave a quick update that revenues came in higher than we expected by several hundred thousand for last year.
  - a. She doesn't think we are in hard of shape as we have been in the town
  - b. House sales in Lancaster have been great, which leads to higher values
  - c. SS asked if there was a way to forecast revenues
  - d. CG explained we stick to generality because they are waiting for confirmation from DOR next week
6. DT asked for a free cash update
  - a. Free cash should be close to previous years
  - b. Grants will affect our free cash figure
7. DT asked where Covid road and water money goes. CG states it gets its own account, there are specific criteria as to what that money can be spent on. The Selectboard is discussing this in current meetings. This money doesn't affect budgets it is for capital projects only.
8. DT asked when CPA money will be available to be spent. CG stated not until FY 24 most likely

MV motions to recommend level services to departments with the understanding that we are reviewing the budgets and it can be refined down the road DT 2nd 4 yes 0 no

9. SS asked if everyone will be using the same format for budget proposals. CG confirmed it will be the same excel form as last year
10. DT gave an update on Nashoba Regional School District(NRSD) budget
  - a. 500k for school design due in FY23. CG says NRSD will do a borrowing for it and it will be a part of our assessment
  - b. NRSD is indicating a 3% increase. DT informed them 2-2.25% is more reasonable for us
  - c. NRSD is 60 million short in its OPEB fund. They contribute 50k per year. We do not contribute to it outside of the budget assessment
  - d. They have a hardware budget increase of 50%
  - e. They need an audit review committee member voted on

SS motions to reelect DT to the Nashoba Regional School Committee Audit Review Committee  
MV 2nd 4 yes 0 no

11. DT mentions we should also expect an increase from Minuteman schools as well
12. SS asked what the estimate was for the NRSD mascot revision. DT stated they would not give a figure but he estimates 200k plus which will roll into their final FY 23 budget
13. SS asks to get Orlando Pachecho(OP) in to give a Nashoba school project update before he departs. MV said she would reach out to OP for his information on the school project
14. The regional agreement amendment committee is looking for volunteers.
  - a. We assume the meetings would be monthly, if not more frequent.
  - b. No FinCom members are available to volunteer.
  - c. MV asked Jay Moody and Alix Turner in the meeting if the Selectboard can add appointing a citizen volunteer if our new member is not available
  - d. Alix said she was willing to add it to the agenda
  - e. EK will email Jason Allison and OP to get it on the agenda
15. Russ Williston presented a PowerPoint about the inclusionary zoning study
  - a. Commissioned in spring of 2020
  - b. Barrett was chosen because they were highly recommended
  - c. The total contract was 16k
  - d. Supposed to be invoiced monthly, itemized, and completed within six months(none of which occurred)
  - e. The report was received on 12/14/20, two months later than it should have been received
  - f. The Planning board approved first invoice for 8k
  - g. After further review study was found to have serious issues
    - i. The wrong district was used: Fitchburg/Leominster vs Eastern Worcester
    - ii. Multiple mathematical errors across the report
    - iii. 11 items in total were sent to Barrett to be addressed

- h. 1/25/21: 2nd revision was received
  - i. 2/3/21: 2nd list of issues was sent to Barrett
  - j. 2/7/21: Contractor replied with unsatisfactory response
  - k. 2/27/21: The contractor stated they were done with the work which is when Russ started looking into if Barrett had been paid a second 8k payment.
  - l. One payment was sent on 11/25 and the second on 12/14.
  - m. Russ reached out to Town Administrator to see if they could reach out to Barrett to see if they would complete the study seeing as how they had been paid in full
  - n. PLanning board stated the biggest request was to fix the math in the report, and provided a sheet with the correct values
  - o. 3/8/21: received a single memo with no update to the study. This was the final correspondence and no further progress was made after this
  - p. The inclusionary bylaw was passed at the town meeting and the planning board is now looking for a reimbursement of the 2nd 8k payment that was never authorized
16. MV stated she was concerned the study was published and because the bylaw was passed at town meeting it seems as though the planning board accepted the study by doing so
- a. SS asked if it was required for the finance committee to make a recommendation to the town at special town meeting as to whether or not the funds should be transferred from tax payer money
  - b. MV asked how the invoice got paid twice
    - i. CG stated lack of planning director and staff in the office due to COVID
    - ii. People were not around to authorize payments, many payments were not signed due to the pandemic
    - iii. Accounting department has updated procedures to state no payments are ever paid without a signature going forward
  - c. DT mentioned this needs to be resolved because it was not a planning board mistake
    - i. CG stated it needs to go to town meeting
    - ii. MV said we will not make the decision, most we would do is to make a recommendation but we are able to abstain
    - iii. MV her opinion is to abstain
    - iv. DT said he believes the finance committee has the responsibility to get it correct and should endorse the movement of money

SS makes a motion to defer planning board transfer of funds vote to town meeting without a recommendation. DT did not want to 2nd, MV 2nd, 3 yes 1 no

New business:

- MV wants to be sure that emails are to be directed to chair of board to avoid meeting violations. Send to Michelle and she can forward to board if needed.
- Interview and vote for new FinCom member on 12/6 at 6pm. DT, MV, and SS will attend. EK unavailable.

- Upcoming meeting schedule:
  - 12/8 organizational meeting with new member
  - 12/28 for initial budget review
  - 1/11, 1/18, and 1/25 for department budget reviews
  - 2/15 special town meeting
- SS asked about the value between 40R vs 40B. MV said we can't discuss it because not on agenda. Going to add old business to agenda

SS motion to adjourn at 7:34 pm, MV 2nd, 4 Yes, 0 NO