

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE, BOARD OF HEALTH AND SELECTBOARD
MEETING MINUTES
REMOTE VIA ZOOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2021

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Meeting was opened at 6:01 PM by virtual attendance in the in Upstairs Meeting Room

- **Finance Committee members participating remotely:** Jen Audley, Jennifer Waryas, Fred Bowman, Greg Garrison, Chris Menegoni, Francia Wisnewski, and John Hanold (arrived at 7 PM)
- **Selectboard members participating remotely:** Rich Kuklewicz, Chris Boutwell, and Michael Nelson (arrived 6:30 PM).
- **Board of Health Members Participating remotely:** Al Cummings, Chris Boutwell, and Michael Nelson (arrived 6:30 PM).
- **Others participating remotely:** Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen, and Director of Health Daniel Wasiuk.
- The Chair announced that the meeting is being streamed and recorded by the MCTV and asked if anyone else was recording the meeting. No one else was recording the meeting. Remote participation for both members and the public was provided by Zoom. The link to the recording is <https://vimeo.com/506182326>.

Updates from Town Administrator

At the MMA (MA Municipal Association) annual conference on Jan 22, it was announced that in the governor's budget (aka House 1) unrestricted aid would increase 3.5%. This is significantly higher than we had estimated and will increase the Affordable Assessment and the revenue estimate for the General Fund. FY22 budget worksheet has been updated to reflect this.

Chapter 90 – highway/roads aid will be maintained at FY21 level.

Student Opportunities Act will be fully funded per governor (this impacts the school districts).

CARES Act funding - received word from FEMA - support for vaccination related expenses will be at 100% levels. This will not affect local budgets and will be covered at 100% at federal levels.

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FY22 Budget Development

- **Review of calendar** - Jen Audley showed calendar, walked through items, and noted that the school districts have public hearings on their budgets in February. GMRSD's hearing is on the 9th and the FCTS's is on the 10th.
- **Updates on queries to departments**
Greg Garrison is working with Bryan Camden and Seth Rutherford to analyze cash flows and payments over the 20 years of borrowing. This will be presented to the public in an online meeting on Feb 13. Rich Kuklewicz noted that he has asked for a business plan.

At CIC meeting today, the CIC discussed and recommended the Pioneer Aviation purchase and upgrades to fuel system, but want to explore alternative approaches for the T hangers such as a land lease agreement with private investor. The CIC plans to meet on February 3rd and continue discussing the alternatives.

Greg Garrison attended the Selectboard's January 19th meeting where changes to the IT position were discussed. A variety of options are being considered but nothing has been decided yet. One concern Greg Garrison has is that we don't have a long-term plan for information technology and we may want to budget for that in other departments like Planning and Selectboard. Jennifer Waryas asked about the process for developing and hiring for a new position like this which has specialized skills that no one on staff has. Rich Kuklewicz said the Selectboard is responsible in its role as the Personnel Board. They will continue to discuss the issue. The Finance Committee has scheduled discussion of the FY22 IT budget request for February 17th.

Francia Wisnewski asked if the town relies on volunteers to support IT. The Town does not. There are two employees receiving additional stipends as IT coordinators, one for the Police Department, and one for the rest of the town.

- **Schedules I and II**
Jen Audley noted that these cover stipends for elected and appointed roles, all of which also show up in department budgets. The Finance Committee evaluated and adjusted these schedules for FY20 and are not planning to revisit the schedules (other than for the Town Clerk and Collector/Treasurer, which are full-time positions that currently use the same wage scale as the NAGE union) until FY25.
- **Review of budget requests:** Board of Health (511), Town Clerk (161), Finance Committee (131), Colle (228), Sealer of Weights & Measures (244), Veterans Benefits (543), Soldiers Memorials (693)

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Board of Health (Department 511) The budget was discussed, but we anticipate that it may change and deferred voting until March.

- o Jen Audley disclosed that she might be perceived as having a conflict of interest due to her employment with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, which provides public health services to many small towns in Franklin County. She has no financial interest in the matter and believes she can be objective. She has filed the required forms with the State Ethics Commission.
- o Daniel Wasiuk emphasized the need to have a public health nurse, which has ramped up due to the pandemic. Greg Garrison asked if he saw this increase in hours as a short term need and Daniel said yes, but for at least a couple years. He believes the town should continue to have a nurse.
- o CARES act funding will cover the increased nursing costs related to pandemic, but the town's pool of CARES funding is finite and the currently deadline is Dec 31 2022, which leaves ½ of FY22 to cover.

Board of Health Moved: To adjourn at 7:02 PM

Vote: Boutwell – Aye, Nelson – Aye, Cummings - Aye

Town Clerk (Department 161) The budget was reviewed and approved. The narrative and additional information gathered by John Hanold will be available online.

Finance Committee moved: To approve the Town Clerk FY22 Budget as submitted.

Vote: Audley –Aye, Hanold-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Bowman-Aye, Menegoni-Aye, Waryas –Aye, Wisnewski - Aye

Finance Committee (Department 131) The budget was reviewed and approved.

Finance Committee moved: To approve the Finance Committee FY22 Budget as submitted.

Vote: Audley –Aye, Hanold-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Bowman-Aye, Menegoni-Aye, Waryas –Aye, Wisnewski - Aye

Veterans Benefits (Department 543) The budget was reviewed and approved.

- o The FY21 budget for this department was reduced at the October 13, 2020 special town meeting. Mr. Ellis stated that the Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans District provides an annual assessment figure which is what we use in the budget.
- o The Town typically gets a 75% reimbursement from state for this expense, but there is a one year delay so what is included on the revenue side will not match the current budget.

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Finance Committee moved: To approve the Veterans Benefits FY22 Budget as submitted.

Vote: Audley –Aye, Hanold-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Bowman-Aye, Menegoni-Aye, Waryas –Aye, Wisnewski – Aye

Soldiers Memorials (Department 693) The budget was reviewed and approved.

Finance Committee moved: To approve the Soldiers Memorials FY22 Budget as submitted.

Vote: Audley –Aye, Hanold-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Bowman-Aye, Menegoni-Aye, Waryas –Aye, Wisnewski – Aye

Sealer of Weights & Measures (Department 244) The budget was reviewed and approved.

Finance Committee moved: To approve the Sealer of Weights & Measures FY22 Budget as submitted.

Vote: Audley –Aye, Hanold-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Bowman-Aye, Menegoni-Aye, Waryas –Aye, Wisnewski – Aye

- Colle (Department 228) The budget was reviewed and approved.
 - o This is the town-owned office building at Avenue A and 3rd Street, next to the Shea Theater. Revenue goes to a special revenue fund dedicated to the upkeep of the building, which was a condition of funding for renovations, some of which will be paid off 2023.
 - o This building will need repairs to roof soon, but should be able to self-fund these repairs. Rich Kuklewicz asked when the Town could sell building and would like the Town to cease being a landlord of commercial building. Steve Ellis noted that the Town might find alternate purposes for the building. Jen Audley noted that the building is an anchor in downtown streetscape and the Town might benefit from having control over it.

Finance Committee moved: To approve the Colle FY22 Budget as submitted.

Vote: Audley –Aye, Hanold-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Bowman-Aye, Menegoni-Aye, Waryas –Aye, Wisnewski - Aye

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Approve Meeting Minutes

January 13, 2021

Finance Committee moved: To accept the minutes of January 13th, 2021 as submitted without further corrections.

Vote: Audley –Aye, Hanold-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Bowman-Aye, Menegoni-Aye, Waryas –Aye, Wisnewski - Aye

Selectboard moved: To accept the minutes of January 13th, 2021 as submitted without further corrections.

Vote: Chris Boutwell - Aye, Rich Kuklewicz-abstain, Michael Nelson-Aye

December 21, 2020

Finance Committee moved: To accept the minutes of December 21, 2020 without further corrections.

Vote: Audley –Aye, Hanold-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Bowman-Aye, Menegoni-Aye, Waryas –Aye, Wisnewski - Aye

Selectboard moved: To accept the minutes of January 13th, 2021 as submitted without further corrections.

Vote: Chris Boutwell - Aye, Rich Kuklewicz-Aye, Michael Nelson-Aye

February 25, 2021 Special Town Meeting Articles

Steve Ellis and Jen Audley reviewed the list of expected financial article requests that the CIC considered earlier that day. No votes were taken.

1. Emergency Management Director (currently the Turners Falls Fire Chief) increase to FY21 stipend as a result of additional workload required by the COVID-19 pandemic. The requested increase to the original stipend of \$5,765 is \$1,735, bringing the total to \$7,500. The additional cost should be covered by CARES, but the actual stipend amount must be approved by Town Meeting.
 - There was general support for this, but John Hanold has concerns about the “mechanics” and why this proposal is being added so late.
 - Francia Wisnewski asked if this could be part of BOH budget and if other positions should be considered for this sort of ‘bonus’. Steve Ellis said that EMD budget is separate from the BOH, and that the EMD’s situation is unique in that other staff who are putting in significant extra hours have access to flex time as a partial compensation.
2. Airport (<https://montague-ma.gov/p/31/Turners-Falls-Airport>)
 - There are four articles to consider: approval for borrowing to purchase Pioneer Aviation property, upgrade the fuel system, and construct a T-hangar, as well as an increase to the

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FY21 Airport budget to support the additional costs related to overseeing the new property (funding source would be free cash).

- The Airport projects that with the acquisition of Pioneer Aviation, its revenues will exceed its costs and it will achieve its goal of being self-sustaining.
- Jen Audley asked Finance Committee members to share how they were leaning. John Hanold favors all components. Jennifer Waryas also supports the project but looks forward to seeing the business plan. Jen Audley supports purchase and improvements as it seems like the less risky option. Francina Wisnewski supports but is concerned that residents' questions and objections have not been sufficiently addressed.

3. Chestnut Hill Loop Bridge – The request for \$77,148 represents the gap between grant funding available to the project and the cost of all services, including 10% contingency. This amount does not include a \$15K request for a special guardrail finish which is purely aesthetic. The CIC did not vote on this project today because 5 bids received and lowest bidder still has time to withdraw.

WPCF – The WPCF is an enterprise fund that gets most of its revenue from sewer user fees. The enterprise has retained earnings sufficient to cover the two requests they are bringing to Town Meeting. The current level of retained earnings is due to receipt of significant past due bills that were held up when the paper company went bankrupt.

4. Chlorination conversion project would update the chlorination process to a safer one. The WPCF has wanted to this for a while, but now the EPA has mandated it.
5. The WPCF needs a new de-watering press as the current model was designed specifically to handle sludge with a large amount of by-product from paper mills, which we no longer have. The EPA has recently added this to the list of requirements for the facility. Continuing to use the current press is not only inefficient, but the sludge produced has a much higher water content, which costs more to dispose of. This request is for the first payment of a 4 year lease to own. Subsequent lease payments will be included in the annual operating budget as capital outlay expenses.
6. The Parks and Recreation Director is asking to expand the scope of an article by adding an additional project, which should attract interest from contractors so the project can be completed. No additional funding is required.
7. The IT budget needs to increase the FY21 budget, most likely for an onsite person to be eyes and hands for Horace when he is no longer physically here, but there is no dollar amount yet. Will have an “up to” \$ figure to vote next week.

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Topics not anticipated and Suggestions for Future Agendas

Jen Audley noted that the Franklin Regional Council of Governments' annual wage and salary comparison came out and is available at <https://frcog.org/program-services/municipal-resources/>

Adjournment

Finance Committee Moved: To adjourn at 8:31 PM

Vote: Audley –Aye, Hanold-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Bowman-Aye, Menegoni-Aye, Wisnewski-Aye, Waryas –Aye

Selectboard Moved: To adjourn at 8:31 PM

Vote: Boutwell – Aye, Nelson – Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Waryas

List of Documents and Exhibits:

- FY22 Budget Requests
- FY22 budget process calendar
- Schedule I and II
- expected financial article requests