



TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Notice of Meeting Minutes: Finance Committee
2024 January 11
7:00 pm Eastern Time
Via Zoom

Meeting called to order at 7:01 PM by Doug Butler

Present by ZOOM Meeting: Dennis Hogan, Don Ravenelle, Brian Cusack, Dan Sherman, Bill Boodry, Evan Kenney, Stefan Chase, Edward Bean, Doug Butler, Tarae Howell, Ellie Zuccaro, Lorri Wheeler and Joe Bertrand

Absent: Jim Sullivan, Aimee Forsythe

Also, in Attendance: Town Accountant Kevin Gill, Town Assessor Victor Santaniello, Council on Aging Karen Burke, Recreation Department Director Dan McGrath

1. Public Participation: None

2. Minutes Approval

a. Motion to approve minutes for the November 16, 2023, full Finance Committee meeting made by Ed Bean, second by Dan Sherman and so voted.

b. Motion to approve minutes for the April 20, 2023, full Finance Committee meeting made by Dan Sherman and seconded by Tarae Howell and so voted.

3. Town Hall Subcommittee – Evan Kenne spoke about the meeting held and noted a straightforward set of budgets. Several are level funded.

4. Budgets were reviewed with the following noteworthy comments:

A. Recreation Budget

Kevin Gill reviewed key points of the recreation budget. An increase of \$5,200 primarily for staff increases. Fees generally cover most of the costs for this budget.

B. Assessing Department

Kevin Gill reviewed key points of the Assessing Department budget. An increase of \$8,951 primarily for salary increases. He notes the clerical union contract has not been settled yet. The assessor is shared by Lynnfield and Reading, and his salary is split accordingly. Lynnfield requested additional services from him, and their salary portion went up \$12,000. Dan S asked about large increases in professional services and Victor Santaniello explained the change. Ed B. asked about the overlay account, Victor indicated it was funded appropriately and we haven't had an issue in the past. Other discussion surrounded the request from DOR to prepare new appraisals for Utilities in Town. Victor explained it was for assets of National Grid and Eversource and not the MGLD assets.



C. Council on Aging

Kevin Gill reviewed key points of the Council on Aging budget. This budget is increasing more than others, \$29,504. The director received an increase as well as adding 16 hours/week for the Programs and Activities person to go to full time. Dan S. questioned the need and Karen Burke explained that we were going back the staffing we had pre-Covid. Seniors are coming back, and the department is extremely busy again. Evan K. reiterated what he noted from the sub-committee that a COA always produces way more in the way of services than you would expect. Grant funding will continue to cover 19 hours.

D. Accounting Department

Kevin G. reviewed key points of the Accounting Department budget. The overall increase from tax levy is \$11,624 mostly in personal services. Town Accountant had an increase as well as a longevity increase and there was a new step added to the clerical position. It was noted that the clerical union contract negotiations are ongoing. The clerical final numbers will not be known until it is settled. Dan S. asked how the salary are compared to surrounding Towns. Kevin G indicated we would be in the upper end based on experience. Additional discussion was on longevity pay and how that came about. Kevin indicated other Towns do pay a similar longevity increase. Ed B. noted that it should be looked at as a reward and retention increase as it is difficult to fill open Town Accountant positions. Doug B. did not agree with it and had additional comments to that effect.

E. Legal Department

Kevin G. reviewed key points of the Legal Department budget. There is an increase of \$7,633 primarily in personal services with a 3% increase. Dennis Hogan questioned the publications budget line item and how that potentially supports the other Towns that are covered by the Town Attorney. Kevin G. indicated that Tom Mullen reimburses the Town for any portion used by other Towns.

F. Tax Collecting Department

Kevin G. reviewed key points of the Tax Collecting Department budget. There is an increase of \$7,382. Again, it was noted that the clerical union contract has not been settled. Dan S. questioned the slight increase in transfer from the water and sewer departments for preparing their bills. There was additional discussion surrounding the clerical union contract and what impact that will have on the budgets.

G. Town Clerk Department

Kevin G. reviewed key points of the Town Clerk Department budget. There is an increase of \$7,386 generally in personal services. Again, it was noted that the clerical union contract has not been settled. Stefan Chase asked about the printing of the street lists and why we still do that. Kevin G. indicated that the Town Clerk was looking at this and is working on a plan.

H. Election and Registration

Kevin G. reviewed this budget and noted an increase of \$1,600 due to an additional election this coming FY. No discussion on this budget.

I. Election Expense

Kevin G. reviewed this budget and noted an increase of \$13,000 due to an additional election this coming FY. Stefan C. asked if the increase is for the clerks for the added election. Kevin G. noted that it is for the workers, advertising and set up and take down for the voting site.

J. Finance Committee

Kevin G. reviewed this budget and noted it is level funded and this budget is used for the MMA subscription. No discussion on this budget.

K. Planning Board

Kevin G. reviewed this budget and noted a decrease of \$2,200 due to a decrease in books and publications. The budget also includes for clerks to take notes at the meetings. No discussion on this budget.

L. Zoning Board of Appeals

Kevin G. reviewed this budget and noted it is level funded. This board pays for itself with the fees that are collected. Dan S. noted that for 26 weeks this FY they are over budget. Kevin G. indicated that activity to begin to slow down at this point. Dan S. thought we might need a reserve fund transfer later in the FY. Dennis H. noted that the proposed MBTA overlay district may increase activity.

Committee Comments

Bill Boody questioned/reminded that subcommittees should produce meeting minutes and the need to get them prior to the full Fin Com. meetings. Dan noted that all the subcommittee meetings need to be posted in advance.

5. Motion to adjourn at 8:18 P.M by Bill Boody and seconded by Evan Kenney and so voted.