

02/08/2023 Paxton Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Members Attending: Richard Fenton (Chair), Mark Love (Vice Chair), Anthony Domineck (Clerk), Steve Rebesco, Jeremy Richard, Jennifer Lennon

Members Not Attending: Kim Guerin, Tim Linton, Seth Peters

Additional Attendees: Carol Riches (Select Board Clerk), Heather Munroe (Town Administrator), Cindy Love (Council on Aging Director/Outreach Coordinator), Pam Chenevert (Library Director), Kristin Steinmetz (Children's Librarian)

- In person meeting called to order at 7:15 PM EST
 - 1610 (Library): Review of Library presentation by Pam Chenevert including programs offered, number of residents utilizing the library, books in circulation, etc.
 - Review of library funding sources including Town of Paxton budget, state aid, donations and limited use trust funds.
 - Pam: Last year we used state aid and trust fund money for boiler/oil tank replacement. No tax dollars used.
 - Rebesco: Are there any trust fund dollars still available?
 - Pam: Yes. Do not have exact numbers, will get back to Finance Committee with the new numbers.
 - Rebesco: This year will be difficult. If you had to come back with a reduction, where would you focus?
 - Pam: Would have to focus on maintenance budget. 19.5% of funds must be used for materials or will lose state aid.
 - Kristin: Discussion of youth and multi-generational programs and workshops
 - Fenton: Where do teens learn of volunteering?
 - Pam: Word of mouth and newsletter
 - Library Budget Review
 - Fenton: Is website renewal a new line item?
 - Pam: We can likely take that off. Will be working with cable commission to replace.
 - Fenton: \$600 for software, is this handled by MIS?
 - Pam: Most current library work computers do not have Word. Need to have Word.
 - Fenton: Do kids use computers after school?
 - Pam: Usually adults. Kids seem to have their own devices.
 - 1541 (Council on Aging)
 - Cindy Love: FY23 the COA Director salary was funded partially from the General Fund and partially from EOEI formula grant. For FY24, funded entirely by the town.
 - Fenton: Any idea how much the formula grant is going to be this year?
 - Cindy Love: No numbers yet but expect to be the same as last year. Office assistant will be paid out of the formula grant which brought up admin salary. Van driver reimbursement decreased, no longer getting paid when not driving. COVID has decreased van hours.

- Fenton: Utilization of van went down due to COVID. Is it picking up?
- Cindy Love: Utilization may go up but should cost less
- Fenton: \$8,106 for assistant coming from formula grant. What does \$4k balance go to?
- Cindy Love: The funds are used for multiple purposes. Speakers, events, etc. Can be used for almost any purpose as needed.
- Rebesco: When does the final number for formula grant come in?
- Munroe: Don't know the exact date. This is an entitlement grant based on number of seniors in town. Was level funded last year.
- Rebesco: Why did handicap accessible van dollars go to \$0?
- Cindy Love: We do not have a handicap accessible van, used dollars to borrow from outside of Paxton. Use has declined the past few years.
- Fenton: What is meeting expenses, \$5700?
- Cindy Love: This is for meetings I attend or staff members attend. Mileage comes out of this. Cellphone comes out of this.
- Cindy Love: Working with post office to find ways to reduce our postage costs
- Division of local service tax rate data discussion
 - Love: Went to DLS website retrieve Paxton tax data going back to 2014. Paxton taxes increased from \$5202 in 2014 to \$7253 in 2022, 40% increase. Paxton rank most recently (2022) 110 of 351 communities in MA.
 - Richard: Rank is a % of value or the tax bill itself?
 - Love: I believe it is level of tax. Paxton is consistently higher than state average. Compared Paxton to 50 surrounding communities for 2022 (no 2023 data yet) and we rank 7th highest among the 50. Then removed Shrewsbury and Grafton and we ranked 5th out of 48. I do not think we should suggest that our taxes are not high in Paxton, we need to be mindful of not adding to the tax burden. If there are capital exclusions in warrants that come back to this committee that lead to a tax increase, we need to be careful when considering them.
 - Richard: This is good information, really hits home when looking at taxes as a % of income.
 - Fenton: If you go back 20 years, it's approximately the same in terms of rank. Everyone's tax rate is going up approximately the same.
- Budget Votes
 - 1541 (Council on Aging) Budget: Total = \$70,419. Motion to Approve Richard, 2nd Lennon. (1 abstention – Mr. Love). Unanimously approved.
 - 1610 (Library) Budget Total = \$209,618. Motion to Approve Rebesco, 2nd Lennon. Unanimously approved.
 - Rebesco: These are approved at this time but can be revisited, correct?
 - Fenton: That is correct.
- Love: Question related to budget cover page. Far left there is a balance of \$150,069 but on the bottom right it includes the schools at level funding. If they came in at 2.5% increase the \$150k surplus becomes a deficit.
 - Fenton: School districts not included yet; this is very fluid.
- Motion to Adjourn Lennon, 2nd Richard. Unanimously approved.

- Meeting adjourned at 811pm.

Respectfully Submitted

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Tony Domineck
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Tony Domineck, Clerk

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