

02/01/2023 Paxton Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

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

Members Not Attending: Kim Guerin, Anthony Domineck

Additional Attendees: Carol Riches (Select Board Clerk), Heather Munroe (Town Administrator)

- In person meeting called to order at 7:00 PM EST
 - Review 1/5/23 Meeting Minutes
 - Fenton: Top of 2nd page edit comment re: MOTION TO APPROVE town admin to create 2nd revolving fund for recreation. Must remember to bring this up when the town meeting warrant is opened.
 - Love: Page 2 second solid bullet from the bottom re: discussion of EDC should be discussion of Financial Management team.
 - Love: Page 3 last bullet change “watcher” to “washer”
 - Love: back on page 2 re: Finance Committee bylaw. Quote from Carol re: “Finance Committee chose to put it before select board instead of forwarding to warrant”
 - Riches: Finance Committee chose to review changes instead of moving updated bylaw to the warrant
 - Fenton: Reason it went to select board was we were told this needed to happen before legal review
 - MOTION TO APPROVE as amended Love, 2nd Rebesco. Unanimously approved.
 - Budget Discussion
 - Normally would start with COLA but all that would get COLA are on step increase now
 - Budget 1114 (Moderator): \$0 Budget, no discussion
 - MOTION TO APPROVE Richard, 2nd Linton. Unanimously approved.
 - Discussion of Budget Process and Delays Presenting
 - Fenton: Limit to 10 minutes
 - Munroe: This is my first time doing this in Paxton. Meeting with each department head, this takes time. Asking for a lot of detail and supporting documents so Finance Committee and public have detail as needed. Focusing on streamlining the process, consolidating items where possible. Each department will fill out a wage sheet. Will pass out a compilation of all different departments with summary sheet to Finance Committee members in this meeting as an example of the work being done.
 - Fenton: You are assuming nothing worked before now and nobody knew where numbers came from, individuals were not putting budgets together for their own department. Finance Committee had a set time to receive, review and compile budget. As of Friday 19 budgets not yet received. Also the reorganization of everything made it difficult to compile. I think too much time was spent discussing budgets with department heads instead of getting them

- to Finance Committee in a timely manner. Finance Committee deadline was missed with no notification.
- Rebesco: FY24 estimated revenue what is the certainty of the final number?
- Munroe: State aid is a big factor. Educated guess for now. Governor should have numbers out in February. Other numbers are firm, just need to be voted on at town meeting.
- Fenton: Going back to Select Board Budget (1155) Adobe and Amazon costs, what are these about
 - Munroe: Adobe is software for editing PDF's. Software as a Service, subscription annually.
 - Fenton: Why was Code Red transferred to IT?
 - Munroe: It's a townwide service
 - Rebesco: Question 5200 under 1155 reflects Code Red for this year?
 - Munroe: We believe so, need to locate contract to confirm.
 - Riches: I was told it will not go up
 - Munroe: This is shared with PMLD and Water
 - MOTION TO APPROVE select budget Lennon, 2nd Peters. Unanimously Approved
 - Love: First column, FY22 with date July 25, 22. Is that the June 30th ending number for last fiscal year?
 - Munroe: Yes, those should be actual numbers
 - Love: Why wouldn't we use June 30?
 - Fenton: July 25 was date report was prepared
- Budget 1129 (Town Services Coordinator):
 - Munroe: Training was reduced because they were not using it. Seems like we are going into every little detail on each budget. Do we want to spend time on this?
 - Fenton: This is why we have individuals come in to discuss their budget
 - Munroe: Answers are already in the documents
 - Richard: It's not in front of Finance Committee, need it to be
 - Love: We need to revisit "what is the process". Heather met with department heads in a detailed manner and made and documented budget line item decisions. We need Heather to let us know which ones are ready to go in front of Finance Committee, then we can decide if we want to call department head in. We've always looked at new budgets but not actuals, you've done that. Let's not focus on those still being worked on.
 - Fenton: That's essentially what we are doing
 - Love: What's the page behind it?
 - Munroe: Changed to Land Use Coordinator to be more descriptive
 - MOTION TO APPROVE Love, 2nd Richard. Unanimously Approved

- **Budget 1131 : Finance Committee**
 - MOTION TO APPROVE REbesco, 2nd Lennon. Unanimously approved.
- **Budget 1132: Reserve Fund**
 - Fenton: Currently \$40,000. Strongly suggest keeping at \$40,000
 - MOTION TO APPROVE Love, 2nd Lennon. Unanimously Approved.
- **Budget 1135: Town Accountant**
 - Love: 90% of budget is salary.
 - MOTION TO APPROVE Love, 2nd Rebesco. Unanimously Approved.
- **Budget 1141: Accessors**
 - Rebesco: Would like to have department head attend a meeting
- **Budget 1145: Treasurer/Collector**
 - Fenton: Advertising is down, office supplies up
 - Rebesco: Year over year change from FY23 to FY24 is 17%. Large increase in line 5103, is that a new position?
 - Munroe: Assistant was part time for Treasurer/Collector and Town Clark. Decided to backfill with 2 positions.
 - Richard: Why is postage going to \$0?
 - Munroe: We do central postage now?
 - Love: Position was \$23k, not that it's split its approximately \$11k?
 - Munroe: Yes
 - Fenton: We don't need department head to come in
 - MOTION TO APPROVE Richard, 2nd Peters. Unanimously Approved.
- **Budget 1151: Legal Services**
 - MOTION TO APPROVE Love, 2nd Richard. Unanimously Approved.
- **Budget 1155: Municipal Information Services**
 - Fenton: Code Red transferred from another budget. Otherwise the same except for outsourced support costs.
 - Munroe: Originally budget \$27k for a company, need to comply with procurement rules. Goods exceeding \$10k must solicit minimum 3 options. Includes reverse 911. Suggest holding until all details are complete.
 - Fenton: 4 laptops for townhall, didn't we just buy some?
 - Munroe: Lifespan is 3-5 years. Converted several positions from desktop to laptop including docking stations. Need laptops to be mobile. Eventually want to move all town computers to this budget.
 - Fenton: \$6k from 2023 was spent on computers, do these 4 replace those?
 - Munroe: No. These replace others. Will send in a final budget.
- **Budget 1171: Conservation Commission**
 - Love: Has new agent been hired?
 - Munroe: No, we are currently interviewing. E in salary line refers to level they are hired at.
 - Love: Small money but what's the clerk?


- Munroe: Stipen put aside for doing meeting minutes
- Richard: You're confident that the \$5762 will hold?
- Munroe: Yes. Did a pre-hire review based on budget.
- MOTION TO APPROVE Richard, 2nd Rebesco. Unanimously Approved.
- **Budget 1544: Regional Planning**
 - Fenton: Went up. Don't have the final number yet. Should be 2.5% increase
 - Munroe: 20 hours is allotted for CMRPC (Central Mass Regional Planning Commission) trainings and other information
 - MOTION TO APPROVE Richard, 2nd Rebesco. Unanimously Approved (Seth Peters abstains)
- **Budget 1192: Public Building Maintenance**
 - Fenton: Combination of public safety building and other building. Increased from \$32k to \$74k due to bringing in inspections and other items
 - Munroe: Suggest holding this for a future meeting, numbers are not final
- **Budget 1193: Property Insurance**
 - Munroe: Numbers are not updated
 - Fenton: Why are we having this meeting? Numbers are not final.
 - Munroe: Doing my best. New at this. Focusing on getting these right, first time through the process here.
 - Love: Will these be estimates or actual premium numbers?
 - Munroe: Right now they are estimates but will be as accurate as possible
- **Budget 1196: Town Reports**
 - Unanimously Approved.
- **Budget 1191: Town Clock**
 - MOTION TO APPROVE Rebesco, 2nd Love. Unanimously Approved.
- Fenton: Police Chief will attend in a few weeks to discuss Police budget. Regional dispatch, have not received.
 - Munroe: I need to put it together. Waiting for information from Holden. Still a grant this year but only 50%. First 3 years are free when going to regional, then 50%. Will be around \$82k.
- **Budget 1241: Building Department**
 - Fenton: Was only building inspector now includes plumbing, electric/wiring and gas. All compensation.
 - Munroe: Building inspector positions are competitive. They are hired then given a step for each new certification until they max out. New inspector was hired for 19 hours/week but not seeing that level currently. Have not seen documentation of his certifications yet. \$36,905 is the max, could be lower. Also reduced assistant hours.

- MOTION TO APPROVE Love, 2nd Rebesco. Unanimously Approved.
- Budget 1292: Animal Control
 - Fenton: Now regionalized but cost went up from \$11k to \$16k
 - Munroe: It's a new situation, it's regionalized now. Just got final numbers, will revisit.
- Budget 1424: Street Lights
 - Fenton: Increase comes from higher electric rates
 - MOTION TO APPROVE Rebesco, 2nd Lennon. Unanimously Approved.
- Budget 1443: Waste Collection
 - Munroe: Contract has to go out to bid in about 3 weeks. Want to move billing so we can isolate cost to run waste collection service.
 - Rebesco: If going out to bid then the current number is not accurate, right?
 - Munroe: Placeholder a number and offset with revenue. Final number will adjust both sides.
 - Love: Is goal to go beyond breaking even?
 - Munroe: We want it to stay a service which will break even
- Budget 1510: Board of Health
 - Fenton: Now includes Animal Inspector and Sanitation Engineer. Budget decreased.
 - MOTION TO APPROVE Love, 2nd Rebesco. Unanimously Approved.
- Budget 1541: Council on Aging
 - Munroe: COA director wages were based on non-funded 30 hrs/week. Came from general fund and EOE grant but did not come to 30 hours. Reduced office assistant hours and van hours to compensate.
 - Deferred. COA Director coming in to future meeting
- Budget 1543: Veterans Agent
 - MOTION TO APPROVE Lennon, 2nd Peters. Unanimously Approved.
- Budget 1630: Recreation
 - Fenton: Now this is just salary, benefits removed to revolving fund.
 - MOTION TO APPROVE Rebesco, 2nd Peters. Unanimously Approved.
- Budget 1710: Notes, Bonds, Principle
 - MOTION TO APPROVE Peters, 2nd Lennon. Discussion.
 - Love: Can we get a long term debt service schedule?
 - Fenton: Currently goes to 2029
- Budget 1910: Town Employee Insurance
 - Munroe: Asked Donna to breakout retiree health insurance so we can track over time and use for planning.
 - Love: How did it go down?
 - Munroe: Turnover
 - Munroe: Unemployment is currently 0. Currently reporting some employees that do not need to be reported. This will be adjusted.

- **Budget 1915: Central Purchasing**
 - Munroe: Had Donna do a detailed review of line items. Number is not final.
 - Defer to future meeting.
 - **Discussion of Revised Finance Committee By-Law**
 - Richard: We voted to approve in June. Has gone off and on agenda. We keep saying there is time but we will run out. Need to get moving on this.
 - Love: Monday it was on select board agenda, not on revised agenda. Why?
 - Munroe: Finance Committee should be at the meeting, did not have time for notice. Will be on next meeting 2nd week of Feb. so Finance Committee has enough notice to attend.
 - Fenton: Is select board involvement required?
 - Munroe: It is the select board's warrant, the decide what does or does not go on
 - Richard: This has to go through legal, right? If legal says yes does it go on the warrant? We have the original, we have the changes. Do we really need to go before select board?
 - Munroe: Part of reason for delay was to get copies to the select board so they can be ready with questions
 - Rebesco: They should have had this to review in June. Seven months later we don't know if they have reviewed? Also, I heard Julia had questions and wants to meet with us. Why couldn't Julia come to this meeting?
 - Munroe: We would have to post a meeting, that would be quorum
 - Rebesco: It took 9 months for all of select board to get on the same page?
 - Munroe: This isn't going to be a productive conversation
 - Richard: When will it be? This is taking too long, we are being ignored.
 - Riches: This hasn't come before the select board before now. All select board members believe it does need changing including Finance Committee members being on other committees.
 - Love: Regardless of final product, one motivation was select board suggested that Finance Committee change by-laws. We did that, now it needs to move forward.
 - **Discussion of Recreation Special Revenue Revolving Fund**
 - Love: We started discussing this in May/June 2022. Came to us due to a requirement to increase the amount that was approved at town meeting for expenditure. Determined the cost of after school program is driving this. Discussed a separate revolving fund for this program. Suggest that Finance Committee move from asking to recommending that Town Administrator officially consider the new fund.
 - Riches: You say you don't know if after school program is making money or not, do you know if other programs are?
 - Love: No. This could lead to a different way for accounting for these types of things so it's more transparent.
 - Riches: It's up to recreation commission to decide if they want to run a program that loses money. Some programs are community based and don't make money.
 - Love: Is it a select board decision to set up a revolving fund?

- Riches: it has to go to town meeting
- Love: All of this is good, but we haven't received this information
- Munroe: Kathy is creating a detailed program sheet to provide more transparency. New revolving fund requires town meeting vote and amended by-law. Could also add a project code.
- Economic Development Committee Report (Steve Rebesco)
 - Met on Jan 18, 2023. Elected officers. Minutes from the prior meeting were not available and 4 of 7 members did not attend Zoom meeting. Next meeting is in person. Do not have high hopes at this point, Chair is not very engaged.
 - Munroe: Give people some time to adjust to being a part of the committee.
 - Fenton: What kind of business are being focused on? Home businesses or town-central businesses?
 - Munroe: Focusing on all kinds.
- Capital Improvement Committee Report (Mark Love)
 - Planning committee met last week to discuss plan going forward. Don't expect high volume of requests from departments, many not submitting capital requests this year. Collins study several years ago identified \$20 million in capital needs, not a lot of options for funding.
- WRSD Audit Advisory Board (Mark Love)
 - Have not met since October, schedule for February. Special report was released Jan 18 by a special CPA firm. Full analysis of finance and HR and the results were not good. This is not a result of the prior administration, these are deep systemic issues that have existed for several years. Document is public, surprised school committee reps, Landmark, etc. not involved.
- Motion to Adjourn Rebesco, 2nd Peters. Unanimously Approved.
 - Meeting adjourned at of 9:00pm

Respectfully Submitted

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Tony Domineck, Clerk

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