



Town Of Webster

Massachusetts

Est. 1832

Finance Committee

350 Main Street
Webster, MA 01570

Mat Fitton, Chairman
Sarah Sansom, Vice-Chairman
Joshua Sterczala
Courtney Friedland, Recording Secretary

Michael Finamore
Scott Dziedzic
Joseph Ralph
Wilfrid Cournoyer

FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, March 14, 2023

Webster Town Hall, 350 Main Street, Webster, MA
via conference call in accordance with Governor Baker's
emergency "Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the
Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20
6:00 p.m.

The Finance Committee meeting was called to order by Chairman Mat Fitton at 6:02 p.m. via Vonage Conference Call.

Present: Sarah Sansom (via conference call), Joshua Sterczala (via conference call), Joseph Ralph (via conference call), Matt Fitton (via conference call), Wilfrid Cournoyer (via conference call), Town Accountant, Timothy Bell (via conference call), Town Administrator, Richard LaFond (via conference call), and Finance Committee Secretary Courtney Friedland (via conference call).

Governor Baker issued an Executive Order modifying certain requirements of the Open Meeting Law, to enable public bodies to carry out their responsibilities while adhering to public health recommendations regarding social distancing. The Executive Order relieves public bodies from the requirement in the Open Meeting Law that meetings be conducted in a public place that is open and physically accessible to the public, provided that the public body makes provision to ensure public access to the deliberations of the public body through adequate, alternative means.

Public Hearing: Fiscal Year 2024 Proposed Operating Budget

Motion by Joshua Sterczala, seconded by Sarah Sansom, to open the Public Hearing for the fiscal year 2024 proposed operating budget pursuant to Section 6-5 (a) of the Town of Webster Charter. Call Vote: Joshua Sterczala – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Joseph Ralph – yes, Sarah Sansom – yes, and Mat Fitton – yes.

It was noted that the School Department was not in attendance.

New Growth was based off a multi-year average. The Bartlett High School new debt was not impacted in FY2023. It will hit the tax bills in February and May in 2024. This is the second year there has been a significant increase in State Aid. The town is presuming this will remain flat moving forward. Local receipts included the cannabis mitigation funding. This funding was not included in the town/school split as it was always planned by the administration to be used to offset the cost of the firefighters who were coming off the grant. This funding has been out aside to help fund the firefighters who were on the two-year State grant. As of October 2023, this grant will no longer be funded and the cost will need to be absorbed within the town's budget. Free cash will not used to balance the budget. The town/school split remained the same of 30/70.

There have been some salary adjustments based on the Wage and Classification study that was conducted. These funds had been put aside in the FY23 budget. These were one-time adjustments. The Highway Superintendent salary has been adjusted to align with the Water/Sewer Superintendent. He was placed on a grade A, step 10 which was found adequate in the Salary and Compensation Survey. His stipend replaced his snow and ice overtime which he was receiving. This is the same as he had been receiving but in a different format. The Highway Superintendent is still making well below what the Water/Sewer Superintendent is making. The stipend reflects overtime for emergency response. It was mentioned that overtime should not be received for doing part of the job that is already compensated for. The overtime is already being paid. This is just a different mechanism that pays it out on a weekly instead of when these events happen. The town is looking at succession planning and keeping/attracting highly qualified personnel. A market adjustment was also made to the Finance Director position.

The budget is reasonably level service. The Fire Department is transitioning from part-time on-call to four full-time staff. The Police Department is also adding additional lake patrols. This was a recent change and not yet reflected in the line item. Boat excise tax increased last year. New boats were purchased. The town is making progress towards its goals. It takes a lot of time and strategy for the budget to reflect the properties of the town. Adjustments have been made to a full-time Conservation Agent. Personnel in the Fire Department, and lake patrols.

The Finance Committee would like to hear the School Department proposed budget. Although there is no conflict they would like for them to present their presentation. A date and time will be worked out to see when the School Department can attend a Finance Committee meeting. The Finance Committee feels it would benefit from a presentation from them. The tri-board meeting is not needed.

Motion by Joshua Sterczala, seconded by Sarah Sansom, to close the Public Hearing for the fiscal year 2024 proposed operating budget pursuant to Section 6-5 (a) of the Town of Webster Charter. Call Vote: Joshua Sterczala – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Joseph Ralph – yes, Sarah Sansom – yes, and Mat Fitton – yes.

The Finance Committee will meet on April 11, 2023 and April 25, 2023.

Informational Mail

There is no informational mail.

Any Other Items Not Available at the Time of Posting

There are no other items available at the time of posting.

Adjournment

Motion by Sarah Sansom, seconded by Joshua Sterczala, to adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting at 7:14 p.m. Call Vote: Joshua Sterczala – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Joseph Ralph – yes, Sarah Sansom – yes, and Mat Fitton – yes.

Respectfully submitted,
Courtney Friedland