

# TOWN OF WINCHENDON

WINCHENDON TOWN CLERK  
RCUD APR 20 2021 AM8:28



## Finance Committee

Telephone (978)-297-5419

**Regular Meeting/Public Hearing**  
Finance Committee Minutes  
March 9, 2021  
Held Remotely via Zoom

**Present:** Chairman Thomas J. Kane Jr., Maureen Ward, Keith Kent, Douglas Delay, Phillip Levine, David Alexander.

Stephen Delaney, Interim Town Manager  
Thomas Smith, Fire Chief

**Absent:** Charles Corts

---

**List of Documents Presented at Meeting:**

- Minutes of the January 25, 2021 Tri-Board Meeting
- Minutes of the February 9, 2021 Meeting
- YTD Reports
- Request Forms for Transfers from the Reserve Fund

---

**6:30PM:** Chairman Thomas Kane called the Finance Committee meeting to order followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Minutes:** January 25, 2021 – Dr. Ward Motioned to approve, seconded by Mr. Delay. The Board voted aye. **Alexander (Y) Kent (Y) Levine (Y) Delay (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 6-0 Approved**

February 9, 2021 - Dr. Ward motioned to approve, seconded by Mr. Alexander. The Board voted aye. **Alexander (Y) Delay (Y) Levine (Y) Kent (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 6-0 Approved**

**YTD Reports:** Dr. Ward noted sick and vacation payouts are adding up quickly. It is more than likely we will have more than one or two people retiring every year so the Committee needs to continue their initiative to establish a special fund for these payments. Ambulance revenues are down and she would like to know what the Town is doing to address that. Chief Smith noted that COVID had an impact, and last year, many health-related calls resulted in refusal by the patients to go to the hospital. Collection wise, many billing companies were working remotely which might also have an effect. He also noted anticipated revenues from Medicare accounts. It was discussed how to move forward with the lower-than-anticipated

ambulance revenue. Decreased income to some people due to the pandemic, and discomfort going to the hospital also due to the pandemic are some factors that play into the decrease in revenue. A study will be done on the rate at which these ambulances are billed to make sure Winchendon is still similar to surrounding communities.

#### **Request for Transfer from Special Reserve Funds to Payroll Accounts:**

##### From the FinComm Special Reserve Fund to the BLANK Account - \$27,300

This request is needed due to the sick/vacation time payout that was made to the now-retired Treasurer/Collector. **Dr. Ward motioned to approve the transfer of \$27,300 from the FinComm Special Reserve Account to 011451-511010 C/T Department Head, seconded by Mr. Delay.** Mr. Kane asked Mr. Delaney what measures he has seen taken in a proactive manner. Mr. Delaney suggested putting the funds into the special reserve fund, to which Dr. Ward asked if a separate special reserve fund could be established. Mr. Delaney answered yes. This would allow these funds to be maintained for this specific use, and not be used to fund other requests.

##### **Alexander (Y) Delay (Y) Levine (Y) Kent (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 6-0 Approved**

##### From the FinComm Special Reserve Fund to the FD Housemen Account - \$57,050

Mr. Kane asked for clarification as to how the FD payroll accounts came to need these transfers. Chief Smith said that when developing FY'21 budget, it was noted that there was a significant increase. While digging, it was noted that sometime in August, the regular Housemen account was reduced by \$54,353. It was also expected that a firefighter that has been out for two years due to injury would be medically retired by July, so he was removed from the projected payroll. That brought a total of \$36,000 in unexpected expenses. Mr. Kane noted that the budget had to be cut due to the pandemic, and that there was discussion that a firefighter would be retiring in November and that position would not be replaced. Mr. Hickey, former Town Manager who developed the FY'21 budget, joined the meeting to provide guidance and perspective. He confirmed the earlier theory that the budget reflected an anticipated retirement in November, with the position to remain unfilled due to required budget cuts. At Dr. Ward's request, Chief Smith explained to the Committee how he will make sure to keep the Department budget on track moving forward. Dr. Ward asked Chief Smith what he used the COVID Cares money for. He explained the addition of a full-time staff member, PPE equipment, multiple avenues to protect firefighters and their gear, and the quarantine of members that had to quarantine were a few expenses. Chief Smith explained that he is able to make \$76,000 in reductions throughout the year to help offset the deficit, and he detailed the means by which he is able to safely make that happen. Citing that the reserve account is for unforeseen expenses and not budgeting mistakes, **Dr. Ward moved to transfer \$32,432.40 to cover the firefighter that has now medically retired, and \$3,706.56 for the payback for vacation, for a total of \$36,138.96, seconded by Mr. Alexander.** She explained that these expenses are unforeseen and unavoidable, which is the intent of the special reserve. If still needed, a transfer for the additional funds could be done at the end of the year. Mr. Delaney clarified that without a transfer, the payroll accounts could run out of money within thirty to forty days. Mr. Levine asked if there is a precedent for this; to which it was explained that typically, there are only two fires a year. There have already been three big fires this year, and with budget constraints due to the pandemic, it was an unfortunate culmination of events. Chief Smith will improve budgeting moving forward and put in those stopgaps to ensure proper checks and balances. He thanked the Accounting office staff for their diligence and assistance in helping to resolve this shortfall. After further discussion, **Dr. Ward and Mr. Alexander withdrew their motion.** Dr. Ward asked Mr. Delaney to work on a procedure of meeting with Department Heads monthly to monitor their budgets and their spending. **Dr. Ward moved to transfer \$57,050 to account #012201-511026, Fire Department Housemen, seconded by Mr. Alexander.**

**Alexander (Y) Kent (Y) Delay (Y) Levine (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) Approved 6-0**

From the FinComm Special Reserve Fund to the FD Spare Housemen Account - \$30,402

**Dr. Ward moved to transfer \$30,402 to account #012201-511027, Fire Department Spare Housemen, seconded by Mr. Delay.**

**Alexander (Y) Kent (Y) Delay (Y) Levine (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) Approved 6-0**

**Member Comments:** Mr. Kent said it will be interesting to see the results of the ambulance rate study. He also wonders how much revenue is being lost due to people refusing ambulance transport to the hospital. Mr. Kane asked Mr. Delaney what will change with the budget next year to prevent a similar short-fall, since the budget seems to be basically level funded. Mr. Delaney said he has already put considerable thought into this and will be addressing it moving forward.

Dr. Ward noted that at the Board of Selectmen meeting last night, it was established their meetings will resume in person in April. She asked if the Board would like to discuss, and said she would like to include a virtual participation aspect moving forward. Mr. Kent noted that he spoke with Health Agent, Jim Abare, who anticipates many meetings to resume in person on a state-wide level, if numbers continue to decline.

**Public Input:** None was heard.

**Dr. Ward motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Alexander. With a unanimous vote of all aye, the meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted:

Taylor Tower, Finance Committee Recording Secretary

---

Tom Kane, Chairman