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WINCHENDON TOWN CLERK
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TOWN OF WINCHENDON
JOINT MEETING BOARD OF SELECTMEN AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
REGULAR BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING AGENDA
MONDAY, April 14, 2025 6:30pm
Town Hall, 2nd Floor Auditorium, 109 Front St., Winchendon, Mass.

Board of Selectmen Present:

Rick Ward, Chair, Andrew Beauvais, Vice Chair, Audrey LaBrie, Melissa Blanchard, and Erika Eitland

Also Present: Bill McKinney, Town Manager and Debra Dennis, Executive Assistant

Finance Committee Members Present: Tom Kane, Chair, Dr. Maureen Ward, Vice Chair, Charles Corts, Adam Gardner, and Mike Giovannucci

Absent: Diane Coulter and Doug Delay

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Proposed Rate and Fee Raises-Water, Sewer, Cemetery
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Finance Committee Chair Tom Kane called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:30pm. Board of Selectmen Chair Rick Ward called the Board of Selectmen meeting to order at 6:30pm. All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Ward asked if anyone would be audio or video recording this meeting tonight to which there was no response heard.

1. JOINT MEETING WITH FINANCE COMMITTEE

Draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant presented by Town Manager

1.1 Draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant.-Bill McKinney went over the final draft warrant. Finance Committee member Dr. Maureen Ward asked about free cash. Bill McKinney said before town meeting. Bill McKinney said the override needs to pass two separate votes-on the ballot and the town meeting.

1.2 Member Comments Selectwoman Eitland said if the ballot question about the override fails on May 5th then there won't be an override article at town meeting. Bill McKinney said yes that's correct. Selectwoman Eitland said the Board needs to have language that breaks it down and explains it.

a. Public Input

Monique Connor said she believes you don't need to have Article 29. It needs to be done in the fall.

Christine Haslem-Giovannucci-some of the language is kind of hard to understand it needs to be in laymen's terms. Selectwoman Eitland said maybe a blurb for

some of the article or all. Chair Ward said that's a good point. Have a town meeting glossary.

Karen Kast-McBride-MSBA article given an amount of \$200,000. Looking at ways to take this off of the town if we get other funding. Finance Committee Vice Chair Dr. Maureen Ward said she appreciates looking for other funding sources.

David Watkins-override 1.9 and 2.9 is a lot of money. People are struggling. We are going overboard with the amounts. I think the town needs to work within their budget. We are overspending, we need to cut back. Citizens are not going to be able to afford it. If the town is overpriced no one is coming here. We can't do an override. We need to cut where we can cut.

Dr. Ward said we can't cut the schools. We have net school spending. David Watkins said we have a lot of students that are home schooled, school choice, transportation costs. We need to keep the kids here.

Barbara Zisk-with override discussion noticed on the agenda executive session. With the forthcoming change I would hope you would hold off giving any pay raises to non-union personnel until after the May 5th election.

Paula Whitaker-drastic measures being cut. Have you looked at part time or volunteers for the Library, Senior Center, and Recreation? We have a lot of people who can't pay this increase. Get someone to write grants in town. Chair Ward said the Town Manager has looked at part time. The library needs to stay open for a certain amount of hours per the state. The 1.9 is the minimum to get by to keep everything open. It's going to be up to the voters.

Monique Conner-Everybody talking about the override. Most of the people want to know what are the Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen, Town Manager and departments doing. What is the future plans? Selectwoman LaBrie said we have Economic Task Force on the agenda. Winchendon runs on volunteers.

Rick Lucier-what is the contingency plan? Punish the children getting rid of the library, punish the seniors getting rid of the Senior Center, and punish the poor by not funding the CAC. There has to be other ways. DPW reduction in plowing during storms which is putting public safety at risk. We have a town engineer put on a per diem basis. You are pushing people out. You need warehousing and manufacturing.

Selectwoman LaBrie said if we level fund ask police, fire, and teacher's wage freeze for a year they go one town over.

Karen Kast-McBride-net school spending is not just for our Winchendon public schools, it goes to pay for school choice. It pays for every students who wants to go to any public school in Massachusetts. Schools have cut there is nothing left to cut. This town needs to decide what kind of town they want to live in.

Dr. Maureen Ward moved to adjourn the Finance Committee at 7:42. Charles Corts seconded. Vote: All aye.

5-MINUTE RECESS

Selectwoman LaBrie moved to take a 5 minute recess at 7:42pm. Selectwoman Eitland seconded. Vote: All aye.

The Board reconvened at 7:47pm.

2. SELECTMEN'S COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Selectwoman Eitland talked about grants, services provided, cutting our ability to write grants. Communicate what our departments are doing well and where we are going.

Selectwoman LaBrie said a "Candidates' Night" will be hosted by the Beals Memorial Library on Wednesday, April 23, starting at 6:00 p.m. at the library. Moderator will be Winchendon Courier Editor Inanna Arthen. She said the last day to register to vote at the May 5th Town Election is Friday, April 25, at the Town Clerk's Office. Last day to register to vote at the May 19th Annual Town Meeting is May 9th.

Chair Ward commented about Michael Fetchner and his Eagle Scout Project. He thanked Henry Finch for picking up trash on Tannery Hill. He also thanked Keith Kent for picking up trash.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Frank Allen talked about flooding on his property and the comm 97 hill behind his property. He said the hill has a huge run off trenches. The silt fence has been washed out. He said he has been complaining for about this for a year. The other side of the hill has multiple locations of debri that was never addressed by Maybardy. Multi silt fences washed out. Pond has flooded over the silt fence flowing towards the river. Why are we refusing to send the person we pay to go out there?

Theresa Langdon said on April 22, 2024 you heard testimony of Keith Kent address batteries left by Maybardy. According to Keith Kent vital information has been withheld from the residents. What have you done, it's been a year? We deserve to know. What town officials are getting raises? You can't ask us to increase and give raises.

Jennifer Allen said Pat Wood the Town Engineer did a report in December 2024. Discuss DEP report elevated dioxide levels. Concerned for people with well water in the area, and the affect to our environment. Override health insurance went up 21%. Our water rate is ridiculous as well. We came here for the tax rate.

Barbara Zisk-Multiple residents have brought their concerns. Why is this not being addressed? Where is the engineer in all of this? Why isn't he not addressing this in a meeting? This is not putting the concerns of the residents as a priority. There is a high

rate of Multiple Sclerosis in this town. Someone/We need to meet with the Town Manager to address that. We have an issue, we deserve answers.

David Watkins asked if core samples were done and if not why not? Town isn't stepping up. Where is the town engineer tonight? We need a discussion with the Board. There hasn't been any follow through. We need core testing done and make sure it is safe for the residents. Would like to schedule another meeting with the engineer to discuss this.

Jason Barrows said he went to school here 11th and 12th grade very disappointed. I have never seen more mismanagement and discontent.

Bill McKinney said we address complaints and feedback.

4. **PUBLIC HEARINGS:** There are no public hearings scheduled this evening.

5. **APPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS:**

5.1 Resignation-Debra Bradley-Parks & Recreation Commission-Debra Bradley has submitted a letter of resignation from the Parks & Recreation Commission.

Selectwoman LaBrie moved the Board accept the resignation of Debra Bradley from the Parks & Recreation Commission and thanked her for her service. Selectwoman Eitland seconded. Vote: All aye.

5.2 Appointment George Haramundanis-Historic Commission Alternate

Selectwoman LaBrie moved the Board appoint George Haramundanis to the Historic Commission as an Alternate with the term expiration of May 2026. Selectman Beauvais seconded. Vote: All aye.

Chair Ward read the board/committee/commission vacancies.

Selectwoman LaBrie moved to move old business next. Selectman Beauvais seconded. Vote: all aye.

6. **PERMIT/LICENSE APPLICATIONS:** There are no permits/license applications before the Board tonight.

7. **BOARDS/COMMITTEES/COMMISSIONS:** There are no boards/committees/commissions coming before the Board tonight.

8. **NEW BUSINESS**

8.1 Discussion and Vote on Water- Billing rates and fee rates, Sewer- Billing rates and fee rates, Transfer Station, and Cemetery- Lots & Burial rates-Brian Croteau came forward. He said to have FY26 budget work we need to have increases. Proposed water fee is \$9 sewer 12.50 per cubic feet. Transfer station large bags to \$5.00 and small to \$3.00. Stickers 85 proposed. Demolition material increase. Chair Ward said enterprise funds need to be self-sustained. Many years we ignored raising rates on

water. Selectwoman LaBrie said in the past we voted on these increases. I want to have all the supporting documentation. Five years to get self-sufficient. Expense to rebuild water main-put out everyone in town benefits from having water system in town.

Selectwoman Blanchard said every year increase that is going to cover. How are we getting metered for this town? Mr. Croteau said the meter is currently brand new coming on line at the end of the month. We should be paying and reporting off the meter at town line in Winchendon. Selectman Beauvais asked what the average usage is for the average home. Brian Croteau said we can get current data and come before the Board. The Board wanted Cemetery-Lots & Burial rates to be brought back at the next meeting for discussion.

Selectwoman LaBrie moved the Board approve the rate and fee increases presented tonight for the Transfer Station and Landfill immediately others July 1st. Selectwoman Eitland seconded. Vote: All aye.

Brian Croteau DPW rates. Hydrant flow test increase. Brian Croteau said it hasn't been used in 10 years. It would come from a developer not a home owner. Chair Ward asked about the Water tie in domestic. Brian Croteau said it's for new construction which would be from a developer. Chair Ward asked what is the tap fee. Brian Croteau said it's only for new homes that require a tap. Added fire sprinkler tie in fee. Selectwoman LaBrie asked what is broken seal tampering? Brian Croteau said it is basically water theft. She wanted the fee doubled. **Selectwoman LaBrie moved the Board approve the fee schedule for the water department and sewer with one change increase of broken seal tampering. Selectwoman Blanchard seconded. Vote: All aye.**

8.2 Annual Town Manager Evaluation Summary-Chair Ward said we looked at Dec 1, 2023-Dec 1, 2024. The evaluation form used has ten categories. The score for Bill McKinney is 4.1 which is above average. Chair Ward gave a 4.4, Selectwoman LaBrie gave a 4.2, Selectwoman Eitland gave a 4.2, Selectwoman Blanchard gave a 4.6, and Selectman Beauvais gave a 2.9. Chair Ward said a Strength is financial background and a Weakness is give full attention to Town Manager position.

8.3 Formation of Economic Development Task Force-Chair Ward suggested a member or two of the Board get together discuss with Inanna Ethan. Suggest an advisory committee. Selectman Beauvais said we need to start planning-great next step solving part of the financial problem. Selectman Beauvais and Selectwoman Eitland on the committee. Selectwoman LaBrie asked if this would be a formal committee. Chair Ward said it would be an advisory form. He said a committee that is going to be appointed has to be in the charter. Selectman Beauvais appointed and reports to the board.

9. OLD BUSINESS:

9.1 Update on Landfill (River Street) Capping Project-Brian Croteau has informed me French will be present to update the Board on the Landfill Capping Project-Chair Ward said he received information that it has been a year since we heard from Frenches. Jarrod Everton-French 80 thousand tons to bring in which is about 5.5%. We should be done soil import in four to six months. Capping projecting 12 to 18 months. Chair Ward said a year ago Keith Kent discussed batteries, what was decided by company and state? Mr.

Everton said one battery not batteries submitted to DEP. Selectwoman Eitland said you are capping something that isn't lined. What mitigation initiatives are you taking? Mr. Everton said the cap goes on over the soil-eliminates the Comm 97 to go into the ground. 100 year warranty on the cap. We have a bond that we put up for the life of the landfill, we have monitoring. Selectwoman Eitland said we need to make the documents available. She would like to have the engineer and Board of Health come to discuss this. Mr. Everton said the DEP reviews what is submitted. The Town Engineer has been out there every month we have received invoices for the reports. Mass DEP and the Town Engineer has been out there every month. Selectwoman LaBrie asked about the silt fence? Mr. Everton said we are going to be replacing it. Selectwoman LaBrie said you need to go out there and get it done right away. Mr. Everton said someone will look at it tomorrow. Brian Croteau said we will have the town engineer out there tomorrow. Noticed 2025 hasn't been uploaded yet. He will inspect tomorrow.

Selectwoman LaBrie commented it was dusty today. Why weren't the trucks being washed? Mr. Everton said he will look into it. Selectman Beauvais asked why can't the capping start now. Can a berm be put on the Allen's property? Mr. Everton said he isn't sure. Selectman Beauvais said we need to pursue and look into. Chair Ward commented about meeting with the Board of Health.

10. **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT:** The Town Manager Bill McKinney presented the following:

- Staffing changes-Treasurer will be Katie Medina after the books are closed. Hiring for a Town Accountant. Veteran Agent is leaving. Reached out to Gardner Veterans District taking advantage of that. Staff of that is three people. Cost us a little bit less.
- Change Treasurer/Collector reporting system to Munis using a state offered grant we got for over \$83,000
- Information Sessions will continue. Seven more scheduled. Final one Wednesday April 30th at Town Hall.

11. **TOWN MANAGER FINANCIAL UPDATE:** Town Manager Bill McKinney went over the financial updates.

Selectwoman LaBrie some of the people look at wage freezes. Selectman Beauvais said he emailed the Town Manager regarding financial transparency link. Link on their site see what is being spent down to the penny. This is a step in the right direction.

12. **MINUTES:**

11.1 Draft Joint-Board Meeting March 11, 2025

Selectman Beauvais moved the Board approve the Joint Board meeting minutes of March 11, 2025 as presented. Selectwoman Eitland seconded. Vote: All aye.

11.2 Draft Regular Meeting March 24, 2025-This was tabled.

11.3 Draft Special Meeting March 27, 2025-This was tabled.

13. COMMUNICATIONS: Next meeting April 28th finalize the warrant articles and April 29th joint meeting with Finance Committee.

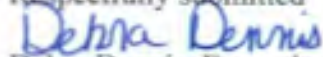
14. AGENDA ITEMS: There were no agenda items discussed.

15. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Selectwoman LaBrie moved the Board go into executive session #2 To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personnel-Public Works and Facilities Director Contract. The meeting will reconvene in Open Session for the sole purpose of adjournment. Selectman Beauvais seconded. Roll Call Vote: Blanchard aye, LaBrie aye, Eitland aye, Beauvais aye, and Ward aye.

16. ADJOURNMENT-The Board went into executive session at 10:00pm.

Respectfully submitted



Debra Dennis, Executive Assistant