

Approved: 11/14/25  
WINCHENDON TOWN CLERK  
RCUD JAN 21 2025 AM11:25  
5-6

# TOWN OF WINCHENDON



Finance Committee

Telephone (978)-297-5419

## Regular Meeting

Finance Committee Minutes

December 10, 2024 5:00 PM

Winchendon ~~Police~~ Department, Central Street  
~~Fire~~

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**Members Present:** Chair Thomas J. Kane Jr., Vice-Chair Dr. Maureen Ward, Chuck Corts, Diane Coulter, Doug Delay, Anthony Dickson, Mike Giovannucci

5:00 PM Chair Thomas Kane Jr. called the Finance Committee meeting to order.

### Meeting with WFD/ Chief Smith:

#### 1. Brief overview of the department's goals.

WFD aims to strengthen its capabilities by investing in modern technology, improving our department's infrastructure, and personnel development. By prioritizing recruitment and retention of highly skilled firefighters it is our department's intention to develop a large pool of Per Diem firefighters to complement our very talented full-time FF/paramedics.

Winchendon Fire is working on a billing rate community comparison. Our current rates are below where they should be. Once information is gathered it will be present to the appropriate boards along with our recommendations.

Working with our town accountant the WFD will be updating our collections process on uncollected ambulance billing. The current collections policy was created in 2019 and should be updated and reviewed periodically.

#### 2. Scope of department responsibilities.

The Winchendon Fire Department's responsibilities encompass a wide range of services: fire suppression, emergency medical services (EMS), and rescue operations. The department responds to structural fires, vehicle accidents, hazardous material incidents, and other emergencies requiring immediate intervention. Additionally, they provide mutual aid support to neighboring communities when necessary, enhancing regional emergency response capabilities.

The department is also involved in fire prevention and public education. This includes conducting fire safety inspections, issuing permits, enforcing fire codes, and offering educational programs to schools, businesses, and residents. The department plays a critical role in disaster preparedness, assisting with emergency planning and community resilience initiatives.

### Calls over last three years:

## FIRE EMS

2022 ..... 575 1843 = 2,418  
2023 ..... 643 1697 = 2,340  
2024 ..... 589 1753 = 2,342 (as of 12/08/2024)

### 3. Staffing.

**Number of employees; Full Time – 10 Full-time Paramedic / Firefighters**

**Full-time Fire Chief**

**Volunteers – 24 (13 active)**

**Fully staffed?** Currently the Winchendon Fire Department does not have any full-time positions open. With this being said, the department is greatly lacking in per diem positions. Constant recruiting of FF/EMTs and FF/Medics is an ongoing battle.

**Understaffed?** The Winchendon Fire Department is definitely understaffed. In order to get a second ambulance out the door we need to have a fourth staff on shift around the clock. Since we have gone back to three staff 24/7/365 on July 1 st . our department has had 123 ambulance calls sent to mutual aid - losing revenue (estimated \$198,000).

### 4. Immediate concerns and needs. Longer Term needs

**Capital Needs; cost/benefit justification**

Ambulance 2	2021	Good	2028
Ambulance 1	2016	Poor	2024 (Ambulance estimated arrival )
Engine 1	2019	Average	2039
Engine 2	2002	Very Poor	2024 Unsure if repairs are possible
Engine 3	2022	Excellent	2042
Tower 1	2014	Good	2034
Forestry 1	2024	Excellent	2034
Forestry 2	1969	Poor	2024 (Military Excess Property)
Forestry 3	1996	Poor	2024 (Military Excess Property)
Car 1	2019	Average	2029
Car 2	2014	Average	2026

\*\* It is important to understand that the estimated lead time for a new apparatus of any kind is currently 36 months. These long lead times will cause a problem for many communities with the Capital Planning process.

Fire Station Expansion Project – This will be discussed at another meeting.

SCBA units are in good shape and should be fine for the next 10 years.

Cardiac monitors were just purchased in July and should be fine for approximately 10 years with minimal repairs.

Structural Turnout Gear – Many sets of gear are approaching the end of their life cycle (10 years) and very few members have a second set of structural turnout gear which is recommended by NFPA in an effort to reduce cancer in firefighters by allowing them to wash one set while still being able to respond to an emergency in the second set.

## **5. Negative Impact, that is, what types of issues or events set them back.**

Yearly our department has to constrict spending in an effort to save money to cover salaries. Any time there is an injury, childbirth, sick call, or a dry season there is a need for overtime. Salary costs also go up as employees are employed for longer periods of time. All of this compounded with the increase in salaries across the industry creating an incredible strain on the budget.

A close second is the need for a fourth person 24/7 to assist in staffing emergency calls.

Third: trying to fill per diem shifts is still incredibly difficult. While we are very fortunate that all of our full-time members are paramedics this requirement could eventually hamper our staffing further down the road as paramedics in the industry are reduced.

## **6. Grant Funding efforts and opportunities.**

The Winchendon Fire Department applies for a number of fire-based grants yearly. Over the years WFD has been very successful in receiving grants to add staffing, pay a portion of apparatus costs and replace turnout gear.

It is also important to mention the extensive funding that has been received from the Robinson Broadhurst Foundation. The department received \$92,793 for the new brush truck that will be going into service in the next few weeks. The community, as a whole received \$150,000 for new cardiac monitors for the ambulances, as well as 40 cardiac defibrillators that are scattered throughout the community in many town buildings and vehicles.

Since 2012 the Winchendon Fire Department has been successful in receiving \$1,819,037.09 (\$151,586.41 annually) spread out over 45 various grants. These grants have been a mixture of state, federal and foundation grants.

Since 2017 WFD has applied for additional yearly Medicare funding through a voluntary Ambulance CPE program resulting in an additional \$347,817.23. This year's anticipated amount of \$87,507.75 should roll into town coffers in late June.

Currently the Winchendon Fire Department has applied for a grant to install a diesel exhaust system in the apparatus bays of the station. Not only would this \$52,800 grant improve the health and safety of the members but also would reduce the amount of the station addition by this amount.

## **7. Examples of collaboration among departments.**

The Winchendon Fire Department frequently collaborates with other town departments to enhance public safety and community well-being:

Winchendon Police Department during emergency incidents, such as motor vehicle accidents, to ensure coordinated traffic control, scene security, and victim assistance.

Department of Public Works (DPW) to address infrastructure-related concerns: maintain clear access to fire hydrants during winter storms; address road conditions that could impact emergency response times.

Building and Health Departments to enforce fire codes and safety regulations during inspections, ensuring that local buildings meet safety standards

Council on Aging to address the safety and well-being of the senior population.

Recess: Motion by M. Ward to recess at 6:05 and reconvene at Town Hall at 6:30. Seconded by Diane Coulter.

**6:05 PM- Dr. M. Ward motioned to Recess and reconvene at Town Hall at 6:30PM, 2nd by Diane Coulter Corts (Y) Coulter (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Giovannucci (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0**

Respectfully submitted by Maureen Ward, Vice Chair

# TOWN OF WINCHENDON

WINCHENDON TOWN CLERK  
RGUD JAN 21 2025 PM1:07



## Finance Committee

Telephone (978)-297-5419

### Regular Meeting/Public Hearing

Finance Committee Minutes

December 10, 2024 6:30 PM

Town Hall 2nd Floor Auditorium

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**Members Present:** Chair Thomas J. Kane Jr., Vice-Chair Dr. Maureen Ward, Chuck Corts, Diane Coulter, Doug Delay, Anthony Dickson, Mike Giovannucci

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#### List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- December 10, 2024 Public Meeting Agenda
- November 12, 2024 Minutes
- YTD Reports

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**6:30PM:** Chair Thomas Kane Jr. reconvened the Finance Committee meeting to order followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### Minutes: November 12, 2024 Minutes

Dr. M. Ward motioned to approve the November 12, 2024 Minutes meeting minutes, 2nd by C. Corts  
**Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Giovannucci (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 6-0**

**YTD Report Review:** T. Kane stated there were some items that were starting to catch up in terms of actuality, particularly with the revenues. There was an effort to update the taxes; personal property taxes, real estate, meals, and cannabis. The report on the enterprise funds included the cable TV, although it hasn't entered the budget yet.

Dr. M. Ward pointed out under processing expenses they have already used 75%. Under workers compensation is 88% and unemployment insurance is at 79%. Workers Compensation is billed annually but the unemployment insurance is not. The school department's bottom line was looking good, but there were some anomalies mentioned. There were a number of encumbrances, T. Kane stated most likely due to encumbrances from the FY24 budget that's been carried over. Those will stay until the books are closed, and they have still not closed out the FY24 end of the year reports.

Diane Coulter rejoined the meeting.

T. Kane met with Fire Chief Smith to ask about the overtime numbers, he pointed out it was a moving target and about 70% of the budget has been spent, but the bottom line was on target. T. Kane forgot to ask about the part time clerk position, as it was budgeted but nothing spent.

Doug Delay brought up the fact that they were about 40% of the way through the fiscal year, but have only collected/posted 20% of revenues. Dr. M. Ward suggested speaking with Bill McKinney in regards to meeting regularly again to receive updates on the progress.

**Update on Deficiencies identified in the FY23 Audit Report:** T. Kane stated they were seeing that bank records, vendor accounts, new vendor accounts, and account to the treasurer have been reconciled up until July, FY24, but not up until the current month which is one of the goals. In terms of reconciliation and receivables, it was still not updated to the current month. Personal property and real estate have been reconciled up through the end of '24. B. McKinney was working on motor vehicles currently, which was only reconciled through FY'22. The bann management was complete, it was converted to a bond in August of 24. The insurance appropriation was complete and insurance payments were up to date. Interest revenues were complete. All major bank account rates have been increased. The ARPA spreadsheet was on target to be done by the end of December. The grants spreadsheet has not been started yet. Don O'Neil was working with the state on getting grant funding for IT security. Receivables Collections demands have gone out for up through June '24 with reminders sent out in November '24. The tailings will be done prior to closing the books. The OPEB liability is in progress. Compensated absences are completed. Tom Smith has been working with FEMA in regards to receiving those funds. Stagnant balances in regards to the ambulances will be eventually written off, but right now is not a main priority.

**Fiscal Forecast, Tri-Board Meeting:** Fiscal policies call for the Town Manager to give a fiscal forecast, which takes the last 4-5 years of the actuals in the budget and projects through the next 5 years an estimate as to how the budget might grow in the future. In the past the 3 boards; Finance Committee, School Committee, and Board of Selectmen meet to digest the report that the Town Manager generates. They typically meet in January, and like to schedule at least 3 tri-board meetings throughout the year.

**Other Committees with Finance Representation Updates:** In regards to the Fire Station Project, previous member James was on the Committee and stated they hadn't met in over a year. Upon meeting with Fire Chief Smith tonight, he stated they have monthly, sometimes twice a month zoom calls, so they were unsure if maybe the Chief was just meeting with the Articheck alone or not. The Finance Committee will follow up with him for an update. Mike Giovannucci was interested in becoming a member if they were still a public committee.

Dr. M. Ward motioned to nominate Mike Giovannucci as a Finance Committee representative on the Fire Department Committee, 2nd by D. Delay.

**Corts (Y) Coulter (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Giovannucci (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0**

No further updates regarding the Audit Committee.

**Public Input:** None.

**Member Comments:** None.

**Adjourn: 7:04PM-** Dr. M. Ward motioned to adjourn the Finance Committee, 2nd by C. Corts  
**Corts (Y) Coulter (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Giovannucci (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0**

Respectfully submitted:

*Brianna Lindahl*

Brianna Lindahl, Finance Committee Recording Secretary

*Thomas J. Kane*

Thomas Kane Jr., Chair

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Dr. Maureen Ward, Vice-Chair

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Charles C. Corts

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Diane Coulter

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Douglas Delay

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Anthony Dickson

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Mike Giovannucci