

**TOWN OF WINCHENDON  
BOS/FC/SB JOINT MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, January 22, 2018  
Town Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room  
109 Front St., Winchendon, MA 01475

**Present:**

Thomas Kane, Chairman  
Christian Orobello, Member  
James Robichaud, Member  
Charles Corts, Member  
Doug Delay, Member

Katie Broome, Recording Secretary

**Absent:**

Dr. Maureen Ward, Member

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**List of Documents Presented At Meeting:**

- Town Of Winchendon Year To Date Budget Reports
- Memo From The Town Manager: Request to Transfer \$93,000
- Montachusett Regional Vocational School District Agreement: 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment Pursuant to Chapter 1025 Acts of 1973
- Special and Annual Town Meeting Schedule

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**6:30PM BOS/FC/SB Joint Meeting**

**Call To Order:**

Chairman Kane called the Finance Committee meeting to order for the joint committee meeting at 6:30PM.

**FY18 Six Month Financial Update:**

Chairwoman Barbara Anderson of the Board of Selectman referred to Town Manager Hickey for the Six Month Financial update. Mr. Hickey handed the microphone to Town Accountant Bill Schlosstein for the update. Bill Schlosstein referred to the Mid Year Report Year To Date Budget Reports, and noted that the revenue is estimated to take in \$28,621,754, and that, as of December 31<sup>st</sup>, the town has taken in \$13,794,031.26, which totals 48.2% of the budget. Mr. Schlosstein referred to a one page summary of these revenues that was given to each of the committee and board members, which further broke down these revenues to clearly show where the funds came from, making note that there will be an extra \$1.6 million dollars to be added onto the revenue for vehicle excise taxes that are billed in February. Mr. Schlosstein made an adjustment for \$373,000 to reflect this extra revenue, to date. Mr. Schlosstein moved on to Medicaid revenue, which, as of mid year, had collect \$25,000, which was attributed to a prior years cost, so Mr. Schlosstein also made a second adjustment for the \$25,000 of Medicaid revenue that would contribute to this year's cost. With these adjustments, the revenue taken in by the town would increase to \$14,193,000, which represents 49.6% of estimated budget, which is where the town wants to be.

Mr. Schlosstein then turned from the revenue funds to the expenditure funds, which has the revised budget at \$29,680,205, and \$13,791,412.69 as spent, year-to-date. For mid-year data, Mr. Schlosstein made a couple more adjustments, which results in 46.5% of the current budget, which is good. Mr. Schlosstein made an adjustment for the deficit payment, which was paid in September with free cash from the year before. There are five line adjustments that were paid in advance, that are attributed to the entire year's budget, that add up to \$2.649 million, which gives a half year adjustment of \$1.33 million.

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Mr. Schlosstein said that the school fund also had similar adjustments for Deferred Special Revenue Fund Adjustments, for Special Education costs, which adjusts to save \$110,459. Finally, for the school funds, there is also an adjustment for payroll adjustments, which adds \$187,000 to mid year expenditures. These adjusted expenditures then total \$13,383,000, which represents 45.1% of the general fund budget, which show that the town is on track for its expenses to date.

Mr. Schlosstein then took the question of Mr. Vine, a member of the School Committee, who asked if, in a perfect world, once June 30<sup>th</sup> comes, will all figures be at 100%? Mr. Schlosstein replied that, yes, if all is budgeted perfectly, they will be. Mr. Schlosstein added that he hopes that the revenue will be over 100%, and that the expenditures will be under 100%, so that the town can accumulate more free cash. Mr. Schlosstein estimates that the revenue of the town may be tighter than last year, but the expenditures may be more favorable. Mr. Vine asked if there may be some money left over at the end of the year as free cash, to which Mr. Schlosstein replied that the town is hoping to.

Chairman Kane of the Finance Committee asked Mr. Schlosstein and Mr. Ikonen if the Medicaid reimbursements will be close to what the town is expecting. The School Board noted that they hope that it will be close. Mr. Robichaud of the Finance Committee asked if the water and sewer receivables were covered in the presentation. Mr. Schlosstein noted that, while he didn't prepare anything in the presentation for water and sewer, they remain tightly budgeted, but nothing to be alarmed by. Mr. Vine of the school board then asked about when the bills of the excise taxes that are due in March will be going out. Mr. Schlosstein responded that the excise bills would go out in February, though he does not have the exact date.

**Transfer Of Funds Request:**

Chairwoman Barbara Anderson moved the discussion from the 6 Month Update to Town Manager Hickey's request to transfer funds from the Finance Committee to the FY18 Snow and Ice Fund. She then passed the discussion to Town Manager Hickey to start. Mr. Hickey referred to his Memo that was passed out to the board and committee members referring to the request to transfer \$93,000 from the Finance Committee Reserve to the Snow and Ice Budget for Fiscal Year 2018, so that there would be a comfortable amount of money in the Snow and Ice reserve for the town to be able to handle what is expected to believe an average year's snowfall. At this point, the Public Works Department has spent almost its entire budget, and the salt shed is nearly full, and a new sander was purchased for \$17,000, as the bottom of the previous sander had rusted out to a point that was beyond repair. Mr. Hickey made note that this money had been put intentionally into the Finance Committee Reserve so that the town didn't over budget for Snow and Ice, in case of a light winter. Chairman Kane further clarified that the money would be going into the Snow and Ice Materials Account, and asked to hear a motion from the Finance Committee. Mr. Orobello of the Finance Committee made a motion to approve the request, and Mr. Robichaud seconded the request. Mr. Orobello inquired further that when the funds go into the Materials account, if the materials in question are consumables, or if the fund is for any materials, to which Mr. Hickey responded that the materials would basically be sand and salt. Mr. Orobello further asked the function of the part of the sander that was replaced, and if it helped extend the life of the truck. Mr. Hickey replied that the body didn't necessarily extend the life of the truck, as much as it was a vital part of spreading sand and salt using a dump truck. Mr.

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Robichaud then asked the town manager if the town were to transfer the \$93,000 to the Snow and Ice budget, would it then commit another \$93,000 to the budget the following year, to which Mr. Hickey replied that it would not.

**KANE(Y) OROBELLO(Y) ROBICHAUD(Y) CORTS(Y) DELAY(Y)**

**Capital Improvement Committee Discussion:**

Chairwoman Barbara Anderson raised the topic of discussing the Capital Improvement Committee, and returned the conversation to Chairman Kane to begin the discussion. Chairman Kane explained that the Finance Committee's representative on the Capital Planning Committee had finished his term the previous year, and the Finance Committee hadn't heard from the Capital Planning Committee about any upcoming meetings or appointing a member of the Finance Committee to take part in the Capital Planning Committee. Chairman Kane went on to inquire about the status of this committee and to see about rejuvenating this committee, including appointing a Finance Committee member to this committee, and bring about a more clear understanding about what this committee is currently doing. Chairwoman Anderson responded that the Board Of Selectman's representative from the Capital Improvement Committee, Selectman Barbaro, could not make it to the joint meeting, so he could not answer for the Board of Selectmen. Chairwoman Anderson then referred to the School Committee, to see if their representative from this committee was present. The School Committee responded that they believe that someone was appointed, but was not sure who that was. Chairwoman Anderson noted that it looked like the duties of the Capital Improvement Committee seemed to have dissipated through the wind, to which Mr. Vine, from the School Committee agreed, and noted that whoever had been the representative from the school committee may not even realize that they are the representative for this committee, as it seems like the Capital Improvement Committee has not met recently.

At this time, Town Manager Hickey noted that the Capital Improvement Committee, in his time in office, seems to meet seasonally, as needed. Mr. Hickey explained that Capital Improvement requests are given to Mr. Hickey in his office, and he would begin developing a Capital Improvement Plan, and would ask the chairman of the Capital Improvement Committee to find a time to have a meeting in which Mr. Hickey would give a presentation of his recommendations for a Capital Improvement Plan, to which the committee would then review, discuss, and provide feedback to Mr. Hickey for him to make modifications to the plan, to return back to the Capital Improvement Committee for their approval. That document would then go before the Board of Selectman for their approval. Mr. Hickey then informed those present that the School Committee member of the Capital Improvement Committee was Ms. LaPointe, who needs to be reappointed if she intends to remain, or the School Committee must appoint another member. Mr. Hickey expects a meeting of the Capital Improvement Committee to take place the week after this joint meeting, to discuss his CIP plan, and their second meeting should be in February.

Chairman Kane inquired if it was fair to say that the Capital Improvement Committee had not met since the last regular town meeting. Mr. Hickey replied that he expects that their last meeting was last February. Mr. Hickey went on to explain that the Capital Improvement Committee can meet as often as they like, but until last year, there wasn't much need for many

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meetings, as the funds for Capital Improvements were not available. Chairman Kane noted, as of the minutes of the Capital Improvement Committee 4 years ago, that this committee was planning on meeting as early as August, so they could begin to look into and develop a good understanding of what capital investments the town needed, and that the committee was looking into developing a 25 year capital investment plan, as well as a 5 year capital investment plan for the Town of Winchendon. Chairman Kane explained that it is concerning that it looks like this committee has not been operating as planned. Town Manager Hickey responded that he had not heard of the committee wanting to meet earlier in the year, and recommended that the Finance Committee appoint their member to the Capital Improvement Committee, and allow that member to make recommendations so, if the committee feels it is necessary to meet earlier in the year, they can make a plan to do so. Chairman Kane also made note that, in the town's bylaws, the Capital Improvement Committee should be inviting both the Finance Committee and the Town Manager to their meetings.

Mr. Vine of the School Committee then asked the Town Manager if the Capital Improvement Committee has been meeting at the behest of the Chairman of that committee, or if it has been Mr. Hickey that has to set up the meeting of that committee. Mr. Vine went on to say that he would expect, as Chairman Kane had said, that a Capital Improvement Committee were to meet monthly and meet with department heads so that they were able to establish a 5 year plan regularly, and have a good idea of what capital expenditures the town needed, instead of taking the whole process in the four months before the Town Meeting. Mr. Vine then noted that not only would this process make more sense, but this plan would also be more transparent to the town of Winchendon. Chairwoman Anderson asked Mr. Hickey to clarify who the chairman of the Capital Improvement committee was, to which Mr. Hickey responded that Selectman Barbaro is.

Chairman Murphy of the School Board brought forward a Capital Improvement plan for the Winchendon Public Schools, and asked if that plan was still in effect. Mr. Hickey responded that each year the 5 year plan is looked at and updated as needed, so while the plan is still in effect, it may need to be altered as needs change, and due to funding availability. Mr. Hickey explained that the current 5 year plan is most certainly still relevant. Mr. Orobello then asked if this means that once the five year plan is approved, it's locked in stone, and if something needs to be adjusted, the Board of Selectmen has to go back to it, or if the plan is a recommendation that has been approved. Mr. Hickey responded that the plan is a recommendation that is approved based on needs of the community.

At this point, Selectman Barbaro temporarily joined the meeting to have input on the topic of the Capital Investment Committee. Mr. Barbaro said that the Capital Investment Committee met last year, made a 5 year plan for the capital investments of the town, that went out to about 10 years. Mr. Barbaro said that the Capital Improvement Committee is behind the scenes, but there is an ambitious plan laid out. Mr. Barbaro went on to say that the plan was then given to its members, and if the members had not distributed those plans to their respective committees, he does not know why, but the committee has been working hard on their end. Mr. Orobello explained to Mr. Barbaro that it was not the intention to say that the committee had not been doing its job, but to bring attention to the fact that the Finance Committee should have representation on this committee, and to know the current status of this committee at this time.

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Mr. Barbaro noted that the Finance Committee would have to appoint another member, as its previous member had resigned and that the majority of the work done on the Capital Improvement Committee was, again, behind the scenes.

Chairman Kane noted that the work the Capital Improvement Committee does should not be behind the scenes, that the committee's work should be done up front, in committee form, so that everyone in town can witness and understand what's being done, and so there is transparency of all work, discussions, and rationale. Mr. Barbaro noted that the committee received the recommendation of the town manager, with all necessary paperwork and explanation attached, and that the meeting is public and everyone is allowed to come. Mr. Vine then added that the reason he had made the comments he had about not pushing all of the process into four months before town meeting because, per the previous town meeting, there was some discussion that may not needed have taken place if the Capital Improvement Committee had been more transparent in their recommendations for exactly how the free cash was used and why. Mr. Barbaro responded that the Capital Improvement Committee does look at each of the recommended uses of the free cash, but had to put certain recommendations off until the October Town Meeting. Town Manager Hickey extrapolated that this is because these items needed to be paid for out of the free cash allowance. The only item that had not been planned on for the budget for 2018 plan, which was approved by the Capital Improvement Committee and Board of Selectmen, was the new phone system for Murdock Middle/High School, which was instead put in due to the difficulty the school had operating with an out of date phone system. Mr. Hickey conceded that there could have been better communicated, but the document was formed in public and posted on the website.

Chairman Kane added on to Mr. Vine's comments saying that the Capital Improvement Committee should be a committee that meets frequently to best understand what capital expenditures are best needed by the town. Mr. Hickey replied that he believes that is what the Capital Improvement Committee already does, and that they meet as often as they think they need to.

At this point in time, Selectman Barbaro excused himself from the Joint Meeting.

**Solar Pilot Revenues:**

Chairwoman Anderson reflected to Chairman Kane to speak about the Solar Pilot Revenues. Chairman Kane informed the joint meeting that there was a suggested that the town look at a dedicated revenue stream for capital items. The Finance Committee had found that in 2013 the town had approved a warrant article that addresses this issue, by stating that half of the revenue in payment in lieu of taxes for the solar project be dedicated to the capital projects, and the Finance Committee would like an update as to if this has been put into place. Mr. Hickey responded that this is the first he had heard of it, and will look into it, but to his knowledge this has not taken place. Mr. Hickey went on to say the town could most certainly do this, but he will look into it and make sure it does happen.

**Continued Discussion on Request to Withhold Payment to Montachusett Vocational Technical School District.**



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Chairwoman Anderson reflected to Town Manager Hickey to continue the discussion on the request to withhold payment to the Montachusett Vocational Technical School District. Mr. Hickey stated that a resident of the town of Winchendon had approached the Board of Selectmen about withholding payment due to the fact that the Montachusett Vocational Technical School had not responded to letters from the town of Winchendon, or neighboring communities that also send their students to Monty Tech. The Board of Selectmen decided to table the request until this joint meeting, so that it may be discussed with the School Committee and the Finance Committee. Mr. Hickey spoke with the superintendent of Monty Tech, and the superintendent stated that the request was sent to the Police subcommittee, which has finalized the 5<sup>th</sup> amendment to the agreement, which addresses all the timing issues that were outdated. The Monty Tech School Committee will be addressing the 5th amendment and updating the agreement at the February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018 meeting. Mr. Hickey addressed the town's legal consultation, who said that the town does not have the legal right to withhold payment.

Chairwoman Anderson asked for questions and input. Chairman Murphy of the School Committee referred to his written response to the issues with the Monty Tech agreement. While he does not know about the legal course of action of withholding funds, he strongly believes that there is a need for the town to look at the entire agreement, and have it updated. If the school district does not change the agreement, it is very possible that the school will no longer be able to afford to stay open. Chairman Murphy's first reason to update this agreement with Monty Tech is due to Fairness in Equity. Monty Tech has more ability to take care of their students that Winchendon is, and while Winchendon is the poorest school in the agreement, the town sends the most students, and is being drained of funds, and losing its resources quickly. The next issue is that Monty Tech picks only the best and brightest of students, but denies many students that would benefit from a technical school education. Furthermore, if the students Monty Tech receive acts out, or are poor students, the students are sent back to Winchendon. Chairman Murphy noted that there has to be a way in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to allow many students to take advantage of their services for a cheaper rate. Chairman Murphy also addressed that Winchendon's schools cannot budget or provide similar services as Monty Tech, because the schools do not have the money, due in large part to the amount of money that the schools have to send to Monty Tech. Finally, Chairman Murphy stated that the schools have lost local control, and have no say over the students that they send.

Chairwoman Anderson noted that she had spoken with Mayor Hawke of Gardner, and they will both be going to the Monty Tech School Committee Meeting. Mr. Orobello added in that while he wasn't sure that this conversation, though important and a good conversation to have, was what was originally intended for the Joint Meeting, being that the meeting was supposed to be talking about if the agreement was being correctly reflected on behalf of the town of Winchendon, not that the agreement needs to be updated or rewritten. Mr. Orobello raised the points that, first and foremost, the students from Winchendon are not being kidnapped, but electing to go to this school, a choice that is made between them and their parents for their personal education. Mr. Orobello noted that, per Mr. Hickey, this amendment does reflect Winchendon, and that the funds in question are not attached to the town or the school, but to the student. Mr. Orobello stated that it is not within the town of Winchendon's purview to withhold

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this payment, as it doesn't belong to the town, but to the student. Winchendon should instead create a strategy for its own schools.

Mr. Vine retorted that the agreement doesn't satisfy his complaints, as the original complainant. He would agree that while maybe withholding funding may not be the course of action, but would like to seek legal consultation on how to review the agreement and see that it is fair to all the member communities. Mr. Vine noted that he would very much like to go to the Monty Tech School Committee meeting on February 7<sup>th</sup>, but if he would not be allowed to speak, he does not see the reason in attending.

Mr. Cyganiewicz retorted to Mr. Vine, stating the meeting will be public, and he is more than welcome to go, introduce himself, and make his comments. He goes on to say that the policies and funding are a matter of state policy, and he has spoken with Representative Zlotnik, and has found that these issues are common issues with schools across Massachusetts and their respective Technical Vocational Schools, and it would be good to first look to change policy on the state level. Mr. Cyganiewicz agreed that the admissions policy should change, and be more creative as to who to allow in. Finally, Mr. Cyganiewicz noted that withholding payment would be a detriment to Winchendon's students who do go to Monty Tech, and not a good look for the town, nor would it be in good faith with the district agreement. Ms. LaBrie of the Board of Selectmen agreed that Winchendon should not withhold payment. She next addressed the "unspoken issues" that was mentioned by Chairman Murphy, and noted the town should pursue these issues, and make them more specific, so they can be addressed to the Monty Tech School Committee, and make sure that what is being asked for is exactly what the town of Winchendon wants and needs.

Superintendent Haddad responded to say that Mr. Cyganiewicz and he had both spoken with Representative Zlotnik and are looking into ways to better market Winchendon's schools, and are looking to be proactive on Winchendon's part, but it is easy for a level 1 school to be a level 1 school when they can pick and choose their students, which is not the case for the Winchendon School System.

Mr. Cyganiewicz responded that he did read Chairman Murphy's letter, and will make sure to forward it to the School Committee at Monty Tech. Mr. Cyganiewicz went on to suggest working together to make a program with Monty Tech, which could be replicated in Winchendon. Chairwoman Anderson retorted that such collaboration does exist in Athol, but only due to the fact that Athol could provide an alternative trade that Monty Tech did not have, as these collaborations can only exist if it's a trade that is not provided by the Monty Tech School System. Chairman Murphy added that Monty Tech could use this collaboration to reach out to educational institutions for individuals with severe disabilities, but does not, even though those individuals would benefit from learning a trade. Chairman Murphy argued that while the process shouldn't be a competition, it is one, and he would much rather see it be a true collaboration, for everyone involved.

Mr. Gould, from the audience, approached the Tri-Board to make his comments. Mr. Gould wanted those at the Joint Meeting to know that it is not the Monty Tech agreement that is the issue, but the state's policies, and that Monty Tech can only do what the state tells them to do.

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The Board of Selectmen moved that nothing will be done at this time, and the bills will be paid as scheduled.

**Adjournment:**

Mr. Orobello made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:13PM. Mr. Robichaud seconded the motion.

**KANE(Y) OROBELLO(Y) ROBICHAUD(Y) CORTS(Y) DELAY(Y)**