

# TOWN OF WINCHENDON

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## Finance Committee

Telephone (978)-297-5419

**Regular Meeting/Public Hearing**  
Finance Committee Minutes  
November 10, 2020  
Held Remotely via Zoom

**Present:** Chairman Thomas J. Kane Jr., Douglas Delay, Phillip Levine, Charles C. Corts, Maureen Ward

**Absent:** David Alexander, Keith Kent

**List of Documents Presented at Meeting:**

- Minutes of the September 28, 2020 Meeting
- Minutes of the October 13, 2020 Meeting
- YTD Reports

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

**Minutes:** Mr. Kane noted that recording secretary Brianna Roberts has stepped down from her position. Taylor Tower will be the new recording secretary moving forward.

9/28/20

Dr. Ward motioned to approve, seconded by Mr. Corts. The board unanimously voted aye.

**Ward (Y) Corts (Y) Levine (Y) Delay (Y) Kane (Y) 5-0 Approved**

10/13/20

Dr. Ward motioned to approve, seconded by Mr. Corts. The board unanimously voted aye.

**Ward (Y) Corts (Y) Levine (Y) Delay (Y) Kane (Y) 5-0 Approved**

Mr. Hickey was before the board with a request. Because of the COVID situation, the Senior Center has not been open. As such, they have not been able to hold their usual fundraisers and they are lacking funds. He is asking Finance Committee approval of the transfer of \$5,000 from the reserve account to the fuel assistance program.

Dr. Ward motioned to transfer \$5,000 from Reserve Account to the Council on Aging Fuel Assistance, seconded by Mr. Cortis.

**Ward (Y) Cortis (Y) Levine (Y) Delay (Y) Kane (Y) 5-0 Approved**

**YTD Reports:** Mr. Kane noted he met with the Town Accountant, Joanne Goguen, to review some discrepancies and questions that he had. He shared his findings with the committee. He also explained the process of encumbered money for prior year bills and how they are added to the line items. Dr. Ward asked if there is a time-frame for these to be paid and the encumbered money to be expended, as we are now in November. Mr. Kane said the encumbrance will show up all year long. Occasionally there are accounts with money that was allocated five years ago that carries over each year. Dr. Ward asked if these accounts could be re-classed at Town Meeting, to which Mr. Kane answered yes.

Mr. Kane noted that the October Revenue Report is showing an increase in revenue. He said the State's Cherry Sheets have been released, and they are not too different from what was released in January. It will be interesting to see the Town Manager's projection of the drop in local revenue.

Ms. Goguen included a copy of the transfer request that School Department had sent. Mr. Kane reviewed it and looked at the changes that they had identified. Quite a few of them, you could see where money had been allocated but not spent and where money was not allocated but was spent. Dr. Ward discussed her concern reviewing these unfunded line items and wishes to discuss how to avoid getting into trouble financially. Mr. Kane noted that the school is missing their Business Manager and that the Superintendent is doing the best she can. Dr. Ward can emphasize but said that these numbers need to match. Mr. Kane would like to see serious discussion with the School Committee and the Town with the whole structure of financial oversight. Dr. Ward said in three years the School Committee has not discussed YTD reports and she has not heard them discuss the need of a Business Manager. Mr. Kane said there is a tri-board meeting coming up in December and it would be a good idea to put this topic on the agenda for discussion. There needs to be more transparency.

Dr. Ward noted that 80% of the highway materials budget has been expended which is concerning as we have not even gone through winter yet.

Mr. Delay noted the DPW street light expense showed virtually no expense in September. There had been \$31,000 budgeted for the expense with \$2,600 expended thus far. It was discussed that energy-efficient LEDs had been installed which could account for the minimal amount spent thus far. Mr. Kane will ask Ms. Goguen for further insight into this account.

**Capital Planning Items:** Mr. Kane discussed some capital items, such as the Fire Station, the Senior Center and the Library. Dr. Ward asked what the Library request was; Mr. Kane responded the children's room electrical updates. Mr. Kane said most of those multi-million dollar requests will require an override. He asked the committee to think about a strategy. He is not comfortable with these large capital requests without a study to back it up. The Senior Center has a very specific study done already. He would like to see studies and plans for the Fire Station before supporting a large capital expense. He would like to take two or three of these projects and lump them together for an override. Mr. Levine expressed concern with a package deal, saying if some people support one project and not another it could be difficult to please everyone. Mr. Delay said some people might think it's a bigger bite to chew and then vote it down. There was some discussion as to capital needs and how to best plan and strategize to meet these needs. There are some projects coming into Town that could generate revenue that could be committed to addressing Capital Maintenance. Dr. Ward said they want almost a million dollars to draw plans for the

Fire Department and that they were unable to prioritize. The Senior Center has three phases, categorizing them by priority. She would bet that Town Meeting would show a preference to separate the two. If it fails, it will take another year adding more and more expenses. Dr. Ward proposed having these items placed on the Town Election ballot and then being placed on Town Meeting. There was further discussion as to having studies done for each capital item and to potentially establish phases for each project. Dr. Ward would like to see more diligence in looking at the idea of re-roofing all three schools when the population is declining and two of the schools could possibly be combined. The population in Town is dwindling and will likely continue to dwindle. Mr. Kane would like to take a stab at some language that would speak to capital planning while fitting into Finance Committee policy. Dr. Ward suggested a new bylaw that these warrant articles should go through the Capital Planning Committee. This might instill more voter confidence knowing it came from the Capital Planning Committee

**Member Comments:** Dr. Ward said there will be a short ceremony tomorrow, November 11th at 11:00 a.m. at the American Legion.

**Public Input:** None was heard.

**Dr. Ward motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted:

Taylor Tower, Finance Committee Recording Secretary

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Tom Kane, Chairman

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Maureen Ward, Vice-Chair

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David Alexander

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Charles C. Corts

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Douglas Delay

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Keith Kent

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Phillip Levine