

TOWN OF WINCHENDON



WINCHENDON TOWN CLERK
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Finance Committee

Telephone (978)-297-5419

Regular Meeting/Public Hearing

Finance Committee Minutes

October 24, 2023 6:15PM

Town Hall 2nd Floor Auditorium

Members Present: Chair Thomas J. Kane Jr., Vice-Chair Dr. Maureen Ward, Charles C. Corts, Doug Delay, Anthony Dickson, Adrian Guerrero, James Reid

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- October 24, 2023 Meeting Agenda
 - Draft Warrant for the Special Town Meeting
 - YTD Reports
-

6:15PM: Chair Thomas J. Kane Jr. called the Finance Committee meeting to order.

Five Year Budget Trends Discussion:

Dr. Maureen Ward asked DPW Director Brian Croteau to be at the meeting to help clarify the information on the reports. DPW Admin has increased over the last 4 years 59.6% for a total of \$88,572. When categorized together it does not tell the entire story, it needed to be separated by its respective titles- DPW Director, Clerk, Assistant Director. There are factors that cause the budget to go over, such as having to fill positions from staff on maternity leave or retiring. A drastic increase occurred in '21-'22 due to being DPW's turn to renegotiate a contract and get a wage adjustment. The \$85,000 increase from '23-'24 is due to adding an engineer to the department. Hiring an engineer in house would ensure follow through from start to finish and save on costs related to outsourcing every project. Over the 4 year period, the highway department removed one position and distributed the salary to the other employees in order to compete with surrounding communities and ensure the employees stayed.

The street lights increase was due to the town taking over the street lights from National Grid in 2019-2020. The DPW does not have a licensed electrician on staff, nor is the staff trained or covered by insurance to repair the street lights. Since the town owns the street lights, they have to outsource the repairs. It is costly to outsource the repair per visit, which results in having to make the difficult financial decision sometimes to wait until there are 15-20 streetlights out.

Dr. M. Ward questioned the reasoning behind the overall \$18,000 increase under Tech Exp. The state school assessments are down due to fewer kids going to charter schools and school choice. As the number of kids decreases, so does the revenue. State school assessment dropped from \$1,373,000 to \$963,000.

The Registered voter line went up 106% due to early voting now required by the state.

Dr. M. Ward mentioned wanting to review the Police and Fire Department line items.

T. Kane mentioned they do not have the figure for certified free cash yet, which should be considered when voting on the articles. He recommended passing over the articles that require free cash.

6:57PM: Dr. M. Ward motioned to adjourn the regular meeting, 2nd by C. Corts.
Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

RECESS

7:00PM: Public Hearing of the Warrant Articles for the Special Town Meeting to be held off Monday, November 13, 2023 in the Murdock High School Auditorium.

Chair Thomas J. Kane Jr. called the Finance Committee meeting to order, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Dr. Maureen Ward asked Bill McKinney if free cash was not certified by November 13th, would they still hold the town meeting or postpone? B. McKinney replied they are working hard to get it certified in time.

Vote on recommendations for the Warrant Articles:

ARTICLE 1: To see if the Town will vote to hear and act on the reports of the Finance Committee, and any other Board or Committee, or act in relation thereto. (Usual and customary article)

The Finance Committee has not put together a report yet.

ARTICLE 2: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$193,469.01 for the payment of bills of a prior fiscal year as follows:

Fiscal Year	Name	Invoice Amount
FY2023	Point Software	\$3,913.00
FY2023	Safeguard Business System	\$799.34
FY2023	Law Office of Iris Leahy	\$560.00
FY2023	M.I.I.A	\$187,876.73
FY2023	Verizon	\$319.94
Total		\$193,469.01

or act in relation thereto.

*M.I.I.A- Massachusetts Interlock Insurance Association

ARTICLE 3: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from Free Cash the amount of \$118,555.00 to the OPEB Trust Account that was established to mitigate the Town's liability for Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB), or act in relation thereto.

T. Kane stated a policy was approved 3 years ago that requires funding OPEB. The Town has not been able to get it worked into the operating budget yet, but have been including it in Articles in the meantime.

Michael Barbaro of 375 Brown St. requested to speak on Articles 3-5. He asked that the OPEB money be passed over to the Spring Town Meeting. He stated the fiscal budget the town was operating on was "out of whack", there was no indication of the amount of available certified free cash, and the amount of free cash in the warrant articles totaled \$822,053. It is not sound fiscal policy that's been followed in prior years. The Town has been able to carry forward free cash in the event it's needed later on in the year. By spending all the free cash now, it leaves no reserves other than stabilization.

ARTICLE 4: To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of General Laws Chapter 40, Section 13D relative to establishing a reserve fund for future contractual separation payments upon the termination of a town employee or officer's employment, and further to see if the Town will vote to transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$50,000 to such a Reserve Account established to mitigate the Town's liability for Contractual Separation Pay-outs, or act in relation thereto.

ARTICLE 5: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from Free Cash a sum of money to the Stabilization Fund, or act in relation thereto.

ARTICLE 6: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from Free Cash the additional sum of \$60,000.00 to be added to the Fire Department Houseman account to pay for phase one of a Wage Scale Adjustment, or act in relation thereto.

Fire Chief Thomas Smith stated this Article is to address the staffing issue happening state wide. There are about 3/4 less paramedics this year compared to prior years. The Town is having to compete with surround communities and private ambulance services that pay a lot more than they are able to. Winchendon is currently #14 in reference to pay, with this increase it would bring them to #11. He is worried without this increase, they will not be able to keep nor incentivize paramedics to want to work in Winchendon, which greatly impacts the services for the community.

T. Smith explained the difference between BLS (Basic Life Support) and ALS (Advanced Life Support) calls. There are a list of about 10 calls that only require BLS- 1 paramedic, but there around about 6-7 calls that require ALS- 2 paramedics. When calls require assistance from a surrounding community, they split the revenue 50/50. By having a second trained paramedic in house, they are not only saving the 50% of the revenue they would have to split, it is also allowing them to administer ALS support and not just transport patients as a BLS level.

ARTICLE 7: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from Free Cash the additional sum of \$126,245.00 to

the Fire Department Spare Houseman account to pay for the additional staffing needed to cover multiple emergency calls, or act in relation thereto.

The Spare Houseman account is a per diem account. This Article would fund a 4th person when the deputy is not working. In one quarter alone, out of 44 calls they had to turn away 20 of them due to not having the staff for the 2nd ambulance call. The figure in the Article (\$126,245) reflects if all the available per diem shifts got staffed, which is very unlikely, so the amount would not increase.

ARTICLE 8: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow the sum of \$442,551.00 for the purposes of purchasing an ambulance and equipping an ambulance (with an estimated 18-month delivery time) to replace the current 2016 Freightliner ambulance, and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, be authorized to borrow under and pursuant to Chapter 44 of the General Laws, or any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the Town therefor, or act in relation thereto.

T. Smith stated the delivery time for an ambulance has now increased to 2 years. Their current ambulance is in the shop once a week requiring repairs. It is crucial to get this approved in order to start the process of getting a new ambulance, especially with how frequent their current ambulance requires repairs.

M. Barbaro spoke as Chair of the Capital Planning Committee, stating the ambulance is not due to be replaced for another year, and they have always waited until it's paid off before purchasing another, which would also be next year. He requested it be postponed until the spring Town Meeting when they have a Capital Plan.

Thomas Liao of 421 Teel Rd. expressed his concern with delaying the ordering of the ambulance, especially since the current ambulance has been breaking down frequently. He agreed the town should order it now since it takes 2 years to be delivered and the payments wouldn't occur until 2026.

ARTICLE 9: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from Free Cash the additional sum of \$35,000.00 to the DPW & Fire Department vehicle repair account , or act in relation thereto.

Brian Croteau, DPW Director, stated \$15,000 would go to the Fire Department and \$20,000 to the DPW.

ARTICLE 10: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$158,754.00 from Free Cash back to supplement previously appropriated ARPA funds, for the purpose of funding the purchase of the Fire Department apparatus fire equipment known as Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus ("S.C.B.A."), and all related expenses and costs, or act in relation thereto.

B. McKinney explained they were originally supposed to have a 3 year lease for the S.C.B.A equipment. Approval at the town meeting was required for that request, and the equipment had already been delivered, so the board agreed to use the ARPA funds to buy the equipment outright and save money on

interest. They were able to pay the vendor right away and save about \$27,000 in interest charges. This request was to replenish the ARPA account to use the funds for its intended purpose.

ARTICLE 11: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$140,000, which was previously approved pursuant to a vote under Article 18 of the May 15, 2023 Annual Town Meeting for purpose of funding the Recreation Department- Winchendon Community Park Barn Exterior Project, for the new purpose of funding the Blair Square project, or act in relation thereto.

Robinson Broadhurst had extra money left over and graciously funded the renovation which has been completed. Since the money was already voted on and approved for that specific repair, the town needs to have another vote to use the funds for a different purpose. The Town is holding off on renovating the interior of the Park Barn until they have a better idea of what it will be used for. In turn, they are requesting to use it for funding the Blair Square Project.

ARTICLE 12: Lincoln Avenue – Town to the Redevelopment Authority

To see if the Town will vote to transfer from the board or commission having the care, custody and control of certain property located at Lincoln Avenue, shown as Assessors Map 2-0-77 and described in a deed recorded with the Worcester South District Registry of Deeds in Book 50638 Page 37, to the Board of Selectmen for general municipal purposes and the purpose of conveyance, and authorize the Board of Selectmen to convey said property to the Winchendon Redevelopment Authority, for such consideration, which may be nominal consideration, and upon such other terms and conditions as the Board of Selectmen deems appropriate, and to take such additional action as may be needed to effectuate the purposes of this vote, including but not limited to execution of instruments and documents to convey said property, or act in relation thereto.

The Town requested to transfer 275 Lincoln Avenue to the Winchendon Redevelopment Authority. The goal is to get the property back on the tax roll and not stay a vacant lot.

ARTICLE 13: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to convey the Town-owned property located at Oak Street, and shown as Assessors Map 5B2-0-117, being a portion of the Poland and Streeter Schools property, for nominal consideration, to Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center, Inc. or its nominee, being the remaining portion of the property described in a deed recorded with the Worcester South District Registry of Deeds in Book 742, Page 492, and authorized for conveyance by Article 13 of the October 28, 2019 Special Town Meeting, upon such terms and conditions as the Board of Selectmen deems appropriate, and to take such additional action as may be needed to effectuate the purposes of this vote, including but not limited to execution of instruments and documents to convey said property, or act in relation thereto.

Bill McKinney stated the Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center will be renovating the buildings and converting it into Veteran housing. There is supposed to be two lots conveyed. At the 2019 Special Town Meeting they only conveyed one lot. This Article would transfer the remaining lot from the Town to the Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center.

ARTICLE 14: Property Exchange for Bicycle Path

To see if the Town will vote to transfer the care, custody, and control of a Town-owned parcel of land containing 100 square feet, more or less, being a portion of the property located at Spruce Street identified as Assessor's Map 5B3-0-173 and acquired by the Town by a deed recorded with the Worcester South District Registry of Deeds in Book 154, page 98, said property shown on a sketch plan on file with the Town Clerk, from the Board of Selectmen or other board or officer having custody thereof for the purpose for which said parcel is currently held to the Board of Selectmen for general municipal purposes and for the purpose of conveyance, and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to convey said parcel on such terms and conditions and for such consideration as the Board of Selectmen deems in the best interest of the Town, including, without limitation, in exchange for a parcel of land containing 749 square feet, more or less, being a portion of the property located at Central Street, identified as Assessors Map 5A3-0-353, said property shown on a sketch plan on file with the Town Clerk, for general municipal purposes; and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to enter into all agreements and execute any and all instruments on behalf of the Town as may be necessary or appropriate to effectuate the foregoing, or act in relation thereto.

Brian Croteau stated the Town received a bike path grant from the state for just under \$500,000 to extend the bike path from the current path to Jackson Ave. There is a small triangular piece of land on Spruce St. owned by the Town next to Mr. Ladeau's land. He was generous enough to donate a portion of his property behind the old Walgreens to be able to extend the bike path. In order to make it happen, they are going to transfer that small triangular piece to Mr. Ladeau, and he will in turn donate his parcel back to the Town. The ultimate goal is to get the bike path to go from Gardner to Rindge and even Keene in the future.

ARTICLE 15: To see if the Town will vote to accept the list of public way the roadways known as, and listed on file in the office of the Town Clerk, and available on the Town's website at <http://www.townofwinchendon.com/> and authorize the Board of Selectmen to acquire, by gift, purchase, and/or eminent domain, the fee to and/or easements in said for all purposes for which public ways are used in the Town of Winchendon and drainage, access, utility and/or other easements related thereto, or act in relation thereto.

Brian Croteau stated the list contains 16 roads. Dr. Maureen Ward added the amount of road totaled 13,350 ft. or 2.53 miles. Thomas Kane read the list of the roads: Commercial Drive, Hillside Drive, Jefferson Avenue, Shady Glenn Terrace, Summer Drive, Sunny Cove Road, Wendell Drive, Bluebird Road, Loon Road, Phyllis Road, Chase Road, Converse Drive, Prentice Circle, King Philip Way, Hapgood Road, Maple Place B.

Dr. M Ward pointed out on the new document Chase Lane should be corrected to Chase Road. B. Croteau stated he would fix it and also separate the roads by subdivision and non-subdivision.

ARTICLE 16: To see if the Town will vote pursuant to G.L. c.43B, §10(a) to amend the Town Charter as recommended by the Charter Bylaw Review Committee in a document entitled, "2021 Proposed Charter Revisions", on file in the office of the Town Clerk and available on the Town's website at <http://www.townofwinchendon.com/>, with text to be inserted underlined and text to be deleted shown in the margins; revisions include but are not limited to: ministerial and clerical amendments such as grammar, capitalization, gender neutrality, internal consistency, and references to and updates based upon state law and other matters; or act in relation thereto.

This article passed at ATM of May 2021 and was returned approved by the Attorney General's office. It was required to be placed on the next Town Elections Ballot and was not; therefore at the guidance of Town Counsel, the article is being resubmitted at Town Meeting the Fall 2023.

ARTICLE 17: To see if the Town shall accept the renumbering and revision of the Zoning Bylaw of the Town from its original numbering, as amended through May 15, 2023, to the numbering or codification, arrangement, sequence and captions and the comprehensive revisions to the text of the Zoning Bylaw as set forth in the Final Draft of the Code of the Town of Winchendon, dated September 28, 2023; said codification of the Zoning Bylaw having been done under the direction of the Planning Board, and being a compilation and comprehensive revision of the present Zoning Bylaw, including amendments thereto. The Zoning Bylaw shall be codified as Chapter 300 of the "Code of the Town of Winchendon, Massachusetts.", or act in relation thereto.

Guy Corbosiero, Chair of the Planning Board, stated the Board met earlier and voted on the Article. The members voted aye unanimously but requested changing the definition of a "Bed and Breakfast" on page 7. The current language reads "A building in which up to five rooms may provide overnight guest accommodations for compensation. Lodging includes breakfast and may include other meals available to register lodgers only. The owner or manager must reside on the premises." The board was not able to agree on the language but approved otherwise.

ARTICLE 18: To see if the Town shall accept the renumbering and revision of the various bylaws of the Town from their original numbering or their numbering in the former General Bylaw compilation, as amended through May 15, 2023, to the numbering or codification, arrangement, sequence and captions and the comprehensive revisions to the text of the General Bylaws as set forth in the Final Draft of the Code of the Town of Winchendon, dated September 28, 2023; said codification having been done under the direction of the Board of Selectmen and Town Attorney, and said Code being a compilation and comprehensive revision of the present bylaws of the Town. All bylaws of a general and permanent nature, as amended, heretofore in force and not included in the Code shall be repealed, except that such repeal shall not affect any suit or proceeding pending as the result of an existing law, and such repeal shall not apply to or affect any bylaw, order or article heretofore adopted accepting or adopting the provisions of any statute of the Commonwealth. These bylaws shall be referred to as the "Code of the Town of Winchendon, Massachusetts."

Linda Daigle stated this was part of a project that started in 2018 funded by a Robinson and Broadhurst grant. The idea was to bring together all of the codes and regulations for the Town all in one document electronically on the Town's website. There will be 5 documents available: the General Code, the Charter, the Zoning Bylaws, the Board of Selectmen Rules and Regulations, and the Planning Board Rules and Regulations.

ARTICLE 19: To see if the Town will vote, pursuant to M.G.L. c 43B, Section 10(a) to amend Town Charter to rename the Board of Selectmen as the "Select Board", and, for such purposes, to replace the words "Board of Selectmen" or "Selectmen" with "Select Board", and replace the word "Selectmen" with "Select Board Member"; and further, to authorize the Town Clerk to make non-substantive ministerial revisions to ensure that gender issues in the Town Charter are revised to properly reflect such a change in title; and further, that said "Select Board" and "Select Board Member" shall have all powers and authority granted to the Board of Selectmen under any state law or special act; or take any other action relative thereto.

Rick Ward, member of the Selectmen, stated this was the only gender specific board in place. It was originally that way beginning in the 1700's due to only men being able to join. That is not the case anymore and the name of the board should reflect that progression. In the last 5 years of being on the BOS, he has worked with primarily women. Out of the 270 communities in Massachusetts, over 100 have already changed to Select Board.

ARTICLE 20: To see if the Town will vote to amend the Town's General Bylaws to rename the Board of Selectmen as the "Select Board", and, for such purposes, to replace the words "Board of Selectmen" or "Selectmen" with "Select Board", and replace the word "Selectmen" with "Select Board Member"; and further, to authorize the Town Clerk to make non-substantive ministerial revisions to ensure that gender issues in the General Bylaws are revised to properly reflect such a change in title; and further, that said "Select Board" and "Select Board Member" shall have all powers and authority granted to the Board of Selectmen under any state law or special act; or take any other action relative thereto.

ARTICLE 21: To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of G.L. c.44, S54(b) to allow Town trust funds to be invested in accordance with G.L. c.203C, the so-called "prudent Investment Rule", or take any other action relative thereto.

ARTICLE 22: TEMPORARY SOLAR MORATORIUM NON-BINDING REFERENDUM

To see if the Town will seek to amend the Town's Zoning Bylaw by adding a new section 6.11.19: Temporary Moratorium on the Construction of Solar Energy Collection Systems.

9:00PM: Dr. M. Ward motioned to close the hearing, 2nd by D. Delay.

Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

The Finance Committee members agreed to vote on the Articles that did not require Free Cash.

ARTICLE 1: Dr. M. Ward motioned to recommend Article 1, 2nd by C. Corts.

Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

ARTICLE 8: Dr. M. Ward motioned to recommend Article 8, 2nd by C. Corts.

Corts (Y) Delay (N) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (N) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (N) 4-3

ARTICLE 11: Dr. M. Ward motioned to recommend Article 11, 2nd by D. Delay.
Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

ARTICLE 12: Dr. M. Ward motioned to recommend Article 12, 2nd by C. Corts.
Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

ARTICLE 13: Dr. M. Ward motioned to recommend Article 13, 2nd by C. Corts.
Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

ARTICLE 14: Dr. M. Ward motioned to recommend Article 14, 2nd by C. Corts.
Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

ARTICLE 15: Dr. M. Ward motioned to recommend Article 15, 2nd by C. Corts.
Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

ARTICLE 16: Dr. M. Ward motioned to recommend Article 16, 2nd by C. Corts.
Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

ARTICLE 17: Dr. M. Ward motioned to recommend Article 17, 2nd by C. Corts.
Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

ARTICLE 18: Dr. M. Ward motioned to recommend Article 18, 2nd by C. Corts.
Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

ARTICLE 19: Dr. M. Ward motioned to recommend Article 19, 2nd by C. Corts.
Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

ARTICLE 20: Dr. M. Ward motioned to recommend Article 20, 2nd by C. Corts.
Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

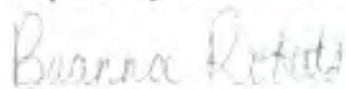
ARTICLE 21: Dr. M. Ward motioned to recommend Article 21, 2nd by C. Corts.
Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

Member Comments: None.

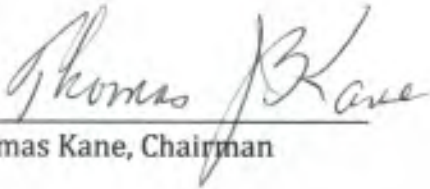
Public Input: None.

9:15PM- Dr. M. Ward motioned to adjourn, 2nd by C. Corts.
Corts (Y) Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Reid (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 7-0

Respectfully submitted:



Brianna Roberts, Finance Committee Recording Secretary



Thomas Kane, Chairman

Dr. Maureen Ward, Vice-Chair

Charles C. Corts

Douglas Delay

Anthony Dickson

Adrian Guerrero

James Reid