

TOWN OF WINCHENDON

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Finance Committee

Telephone (978)-297-5419

Regular Meeting/Public Hearing Finance Committee Minutes November 14, 2023 6:30PM Town Hall 2nd Floor Auditorium

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

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- November 14, 2023 Meeting Agenda
 - YTD Reports
 - Five Year Budget Trends Report
-

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

Minutes: October 10, 2023 & October 24, 2023

Dr. M. Ward motioned to approve the minutes of October 10, 2023, 2nd by D. Delay
Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 5-0

Dr. M Ward motioned to approve the minutes of October 24, 2023, 2nd by A. Guerrero
Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 5-0

YTD Reports: Dr. M Ward pointed out that what's been budgeted for the teachers salaries has not been entered yet, making it difficult to determine where they're at. T. Kane added that there seems to be some questions regarding the SPED school tuitions and private school. There may be figures entered into the wrong columns.

On the Town report; The Cable TV expenditure was at \$21,200 but nothing was budgeted in that line. The Town had voted to create an enterprise fund for the Cable TV program but it has not been set up yet, so expenses are being charged to that account. Revenues for the Enterprise Fund would come from the Cable TV agreement.

D. Delay mentioned being 1/3 of the way through the fiscal year, and the Town Manager Personnel expense line item has used 49.8%. He noted that should be watched. T. Kane stated there were separation benefits paid to both the prior Town Manager and Executive Secretary that are included in those numbers. It was decided by the Interim Town Manager to see how the rest of the year goes and then transfer those expenses to the Separation Benefits Reserve Account. Dr. M Ward questioned the reasoning for waiting, and made a valid point that the reason for having that account is to have an accurate history of those expenses.

The Fire Department Overtime is already at 66% of the budget which is double what it should be.

Under Debt Services; Rentals, Leases, and Principal, it doesn't look like anything has been spent yet and there is nothing showing up for long and short term interest. It was assumed it is not being entered appropriately. State Assessments was showing the same with nothing expended yet. T. Kane believed it was all connected to the issue on the Revenue Report.

The Town is working on implementing a new Finance program. The company is creating a bridge between the new program and MUNIS, the main program the Town has been using. They have not been able to finish that yet, so the Treasurer has not been able to input all the data.

Chair Updates: T. Kane stated their biggest concern is not having the free cash certified yet. The end of the year report for 2020 showed \$414,000 more than the budget, in 2021 it was just about even at \$465 over, in 2022 it was \$833,000 over, and this year the Town is currently short \$132,000.

Dr. M Ward suggested having a discussion with Mr. McKinney in regards to the laws and voting on Articles containing free cash prior to it being certified.

The DPW Highway Department has gone from 18 full time employees to 6, and the Police Department has lost 5 part time employees this year. The State requires 800 hours of training for part time employees and due to most of them having other jobs, they could not keep up with the training requirements. The Senior Center has lost all of their van drivers, they will be gone by the end of December. Surrounding communities are able to pay more, resulting in losing employees and difficulty hiring more.

Other Committees with Finance Representation Updates: D. Delay stated The Town Manager Search Committee was tasked with bringing the three best candidates forward. The Committee collectively spent hundreds of hours in that process and ultimately, the Select Board decided to not take any of the recommendations the Committee had.

The last Capital Planning Committee meeting was in February/March and no word on any meetings in the future.

The Audit Committee restructured and has a full board.

Five Year Budget Trends Discussion: The collated information from each of the reports was broken down into the different departments; Town Hall, Public Safety, Public Works, the other Town departments, and fixed costs. Since the last meeting, T. Kane added at the bottom of each section the totals for that section that year and how much the totals increased over the four year period. On the last page, it showed 9 line items that increased over half a million dollars. The most expensive category was

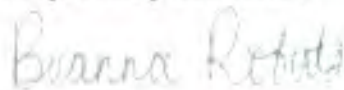
the health insurance. The current budget is \$2,371,000, and over the last four years that line items has increased 33%, about 8% a year. The second largest category was the Worcester County Pension System at \$2,100,000, a 33.9% increase. The Worcester Country Pension System has been very clear in letting the towns know it would increase at a consistent 5-6% every year for the next 20 years. The third highest category was School transportation at \$1,655,000, which has increased 22.8%. Police Department Personnel is about \$1,500,000 and has increased 18.5% over four years. Fire Department Personnel budget is \$1,275,000, an increase of 35% over four years. School Choice has decreased about 30% over four years. DPW Personnel increased \$957,000 at 41%. Monty Tech decreased \$706,000 at 18%.

Member Comments: None.

Public Input: Jane LaPointe, member of the Town Manager Search Committee, commended the Finance Committee for their efforts on trying to stay on top of the Towns Financials. She stated it was a little concerning to know there is still not an accurate tracking of the revenues due to turnover in personnel and the switch in software. She asked if there was a specific department or plan to track the revenues just as the Committee did for the expenses. T. Kane clarified they plan on taking a look at the revenues and their driving factors as well. Cannabis and Solar Revenue are still a work in progress.

7:41PM- Dr. M. Ward motioned to adjourn, 2nd by D. Delay
Delay (Y) Dickson (Y) Guerrero (Y) Ward (Y) Kane (Y) 5-0

Respectfully submitted:



Brianna Roberts, Finance Committee Recording Secretary



Thomas Kane Jr., Chair

Dr. Maureen Ward, Vice-Chair

Charles C. Corts

Douglas Delay

Anthony Dickson

Adrian Guerrero