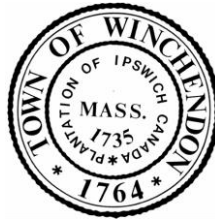


TOWN OF WINCHENDON



Finance Committee

Telephone (978)-297-5419

Tri-Board Meeting
Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, and Capital Planning Committee
May 28th, 2020 6:30PM
Remote Meeting Via Zoom

Board of Selectmen Members Present:

Audrey LaBrie, Chairwoman
Barbara Anderson, Vice-Chairwoman
Mike Barbaro
Amy Salter
Richard Ward

Keith R. Hickey, Town Manager
Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant
Taylor Tower, Recording Secretary
Joanne Goguen, Town Accountant
Jane Lapointe, Master Plan Committee

Finance Committee Members Present:

Thomas Kane, Chairman
Maureen Ward, Vice-Chairwoman
Charles Corts
Douglas Delay
Phil Levine

Absent:

David Alexander
Keith Kent

School Committee Members Present:

Larry Murphy, Vice-Chairman

Carolyn Hendricks, Executive Assistant

Roann Demanche
Felicia Nurmsen
Pam Smith

Anne Mahan, Interim Business Manager
Joan Landers, Superintendent

Absent:

Greg Vine, Chairman

6:30PM: Chairman Thomas Kane called the Finance Committee meeting to order.

Chairwomen Audrey LaBrie called the Board of Selectmen meeting to order.

Roann Demanche called the School Committee meeting to order. Mr. Kane read Governor Baker's order on conducting remote meetings followed by the rules and regulations for the meeting, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Kane stated the focus of the meeting was to discuss strategies on closing out 2020 to prepare and be in good condition for 2021. A temporary strategy for the budget needs to be in place due to the annual town meeting being postponed. Reductions are being anticipated, but due to the lack of information right now, there are a lot of unknowns.

Mr. Hickey has been working with the Superintendent and the School Department to discuss a new funding source to meet the new needs for fiscal '21. A hiring and spending freeze was implemented on April 8th. There has not been much turnover or savings in the wage lines but there have been savings in the appropriation lines across the budget. Mr. Hickey created a memo for the boards to list the areas of savings in the fiscal '20 budget. A large amount comes from school transportation. The bus contract was put out to bid and a new company will be in contract for next year. The town is not allowed to pay for a service not being used, so back in March when school was cancelled, the last few months of the current bus company contract was not paid. Mr. Hickey was unsure if the state will change those laws to be able to pay them. The current balance for in town transportation is \$76,000.

A few capital requests Mr. Hickey recommended deferring were; 2 police cruisers, septic system at public works department, leasing a dump truck, school dishwashers & hot water heater for Toy Town Elementary, which all add up to \$244,000.

\$687,000 still remains in Free Cash. \$1,300,000 in monies that could be applied to whatever budget deficit may occur. Mr. Hickey spoke with Senator Gobi and they have presented an amendment to the deficit legislation, asking the senate to allow the town to have access to the deficit legislation reserve, which has a balance of \$323,000. Senator Gobi was supportive of it and she expects it to be amended in the next few weeks. The stabilization balance is \$1,840,000.

Dr. Ward asked Mr. Hickey for the name of the new school transportation bus company. Superintendent Landers commented that it was North Reading Transportation.

Mr. Kane asked about the resources available to mitigate cuts in the budget next year. He heard the impact on the state level is likely to take place in the next 4-5 weeks. He asked for Mr. Hickey's opinion on a strategy to maintain some free cash and stabilization while recognizing some cuts need to be made to the proposed 2021 budget. Mr. Hickey replied that there have not been any official discussions yet.

Mr. Hickey mentioned that the town would be receiving \$962,000 to reimburse for any COVID-19 related expenses. That money can not be used to supplement the budget or purchase items in next year's budget that has been planned and budgeted for. It can be used for machines purchased this year to disinfect the air in the school/town facilities, along with overtime, and technology upgrades for distance learning. Mr. Hickey and Ms. Landers will be creating a list of needs that meet the criteria for the COVID-19 related reimbursement.

Mike Barbaro commented as it gets closer to reopening the school, his concern was if/when the pandemic has a 2nd round, does the town have the ability in the CARES act to purchase Chromebooks and hotspots

for families that do not have access to internet. Mr. Hickey replied yes, it does allow for those purchases. Ms. Landers added that the school district is eligible for a grant for \$292,000 under the CARES Act. Dr. Ward asked if that money would be used to purchase the plexiglass dividers. Mr. Hickey replied yes, 33 have already been purchased and distributed. He hopes the Town Hall and Library will reopen next week.

The annual Town Meeting has been indefinitely postponed due to the virus and Mr. Hickey doesn't expect it to be scheduled until maybe September. Legislation has recently been approved that allows for a community that does not have a town meeting before June 30th to bring forward a month by month budget. The town accountant Joann Goguen has been working on it based on the fiscal 20 budget. The proposed budget needs to be sent to the Department of Revenue and approved before any spending is allowed.

Larry Murphy asked how this affects workers and their contracts if the town finds out they have to make cuts later, considering teachers typically have a due date on July 15th to know whether or not they will be working that school year. Mr. Hickey replied that the town does not have any due dates for their contracts. Out of the 5 unions, 3 have decided not to forego their raises, 1 has decided to not accept the raise, and 1 explained they would not accept it if the teachers did not accept it. The town manager and department heads have decided to forego their raises for fiscal 2021. Ms. Landers stated there would be a meeting the following day to discuss those details. Dr. Ward asked if Mr. Hickey knew at what degree in the state funding cuts would result in personnel cuts. Mr. Hickey did not have an exact answer. Mr. Kane added that in the past when similar budget situations have presented themselves, teachers would receive notices in the mail stating their contracts may not be renewed in the following school year which leaves the school open to make decisions later than their due date.

Ms. Landers spoke with Naragansett before the meeting to discuss any possible savings. They spoke about sharing SPED transportation and allowing our students to be transported in their vans they just purchased. They also spoke about collaborating on a social worker. Certain budget cuts were made prior to COVID-19 and those employees have been notified.

Doug Delay had a question regarding the 1/12th budget. He asked if the individuals months budget would include capital expenditures. Mr. Hickey replied that the 1/12th budgets are being created to reflect just about normal month spending.

Mr. Kane asked if it was fair to say that once the 1/12th budget months are completed and when the Fiscal '21 budget is created, would it include those prior months and what was spent. Mr. Hickey and Ms. Goguen replied yes.

Member Comments:

Dr. Ward thanked Mr. Hickey for his presentation. Mr. Hickey replied that the majority of the information was provided by Ms. Goguen and to thank her for her work. Dr. Ward thanked Ms. Goguen.

Adjournment:

Dr. Ward motioned to adjourn the finance committee, 2nd by Mr. Corts. The board unanimously voted aye.

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

Mr. Barbaro motioned to adjourn the Board of Selectmen, 2nd by Mr. Ward.
The board unanimously voted aye.

Anderson (Y) Barbaro (Y) Salter (Y) Ward (Y) LaBrie (Y) 5-0

Ms. Nurmsen motioned to adjourn the School committee, 2nd by Ms. Demanche.
The board unanimously voted aye.

Demanche (Y) Murphy (Y) Nurmsen (Y) Smith (Y) 4-0

The meeting adjourned at 7:22PM

Respectfully submitted:



Brianna Roberts, Finance Committee Recording Secretary

Tom Kane, Chairman

Maureen Ward, Vice-Chair

David Alexander

Charles C. Corts

Douglas Delay

Keith Kent

Philip Levine