

Finance Committee Notes
May 7th, 2024
Town Offices, 4:00 p.m.

Ginger called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

Selectboard called their meeting to order at 4:06 p.m.

Finance Committee Members Present: Ginger Robinson, Nate Messer, Pam Brown, Paul Hake

Select Board Members Present: Katherine DiMatteo, Erica Jensen, Glenn Caffery

Conservation Commission: Evan Abramson

Motion: Pam made a motion approve the minutes, as amended, from the previous meeting on April 30th, 2024. Paul seconded to approve the notes as approved. All in favor.

Chair updates:

- Conservation Commission is coming to the meeting to request funds for knotweed mitigation for FY2025. They're looking for \$4,000 for additional funds from their current "Con Com Knotweed Project" account, which had a budget of roughly \$2,000.
- Ginger and Pam gave an update on the visit to the Pioneer Valley School.
 - o Met with the Superintendent and Finance Director
 - Talked about increasing enrollment by increasing the area that they bring students in from (eg Vermont and New Hampshire)
 - Katherine and Pam mentioned they had concrete goals and plans for the next few years.
 - Pam noted that it was quite impressive what they did on their budget, including a woodworking shop and the old gym was turned into a weight room.
 - A strong emphasis on recruitment of teachers.
 - Want to get the community more involved in the school.

Erica Jensen arrived at 4:36.

Katherine talked through the updated 3-Town presentation that she received that gave an update on the 3-Town proposal.

Budget Review:

- The Finance Committee discussed the updated Assistant Assessor salary and everyone agreed to a 3% increase to keep consistent with the other salary increases.
- The Finance Committee finalized the proposed Treasurer Expenses and kept the salary raise consistent with the 3% for every other salary increase.
- The budget for the VADAR software was increased slightly to match the current, pending, annual contract.
- The Finance Committee discussed setting up the stipends for the Registrars, under the Town Clerk budget, as either a separate line or putting it in the Election Expenses line. After some discussion, it was determined to keep the Registrar Stipend as a separate line.
- The Finance Committee reviewed the Planning Board meeting and determined they needed to reach out to the Planning Board to review their expenses. Ginger would follow-up with the Planning Board.
- The budget for the Town Buildings was increased to \$10,000 from the \$8,000 in FY24. On the Town Building utilities, the Finance Committee decided to keep the estimated Utilities at \$40,000 for the year. This is assuming there will be some energy efficiencies being done this year in the town buildings.
- The Town Buildings Custodian Salary will be increased by 3%.
- The Elevator Repair and Maintenance budget was agreed to increase to \$3,500 per Michele's request.
- The Finance Committee agreed to keep the Constable budget of \$300 for FY2025.
- The Finance Committee discussed the overall police budget and Ginger was going to check with Jane about the actual budget for FY2025.

Conservation Commission:

- At 5:45, Evan Abramson began discussing the potential options for chemical remediation for the Knotweed on town roadsides.
 - o Evan discussed using a wetlands-safe herbicide for the majority of the knotweed areas along water ways.
 - o Nate asked about the potential impact to well water. Evan and Glenn discussed ensuring having a clear response to this question will be important to have at the Town Meeting.
 - o Evan mentioned that they would be spraying starting in August assuming it's approved.
- Paul made a motion to approve the new warrant article that stated transferring \$4,000 from the General Stabilization account to the Conservation Commission Knotweed Project account. Pam seconded. Everyone on Finance Committee was in favor.

Budget Review Continued:

- **Fire Department:** The Selectboard will discuss the salaries for the Fire Department.
 - o The Finance Committee approved the expenses for the Fire Department.

- The Finance Committee agreed to increase the Ambulance budget to \$13,000 given the number of calls that have been received so far this year.
 - o Each call costs \$375 and there have been 27 calls.
- Emergency Management:
 - o Director Stipend will be increased to \$1,600
 - o Finance Committee agreed to combine the “Expenses” and “Community Educational Events” into one “Expenses” account.
- Animal and Trees
 - o The Selectboard confirmed that the Tree Warden rate for the Highway Superintendent is time-and-a-half of the base salary of the Highway Department. The Finance Committee agreed to the \$15,000 budget for Tree Warden for FY2025
- Highway
 - o The Finance Committee agreed to the proposed expenses and salaries for the Highway Department
- Board of Health
 - o After a lively discussion, the Finance Committee agreed to increasing the stipend for the Board of Health for training instead of breaking out the training as a separate line item.
- Veteran Services and Council on Aging budgets were agreed to as proposed.

Nate made a motion to adjourn at 7:30. Paul seconded. All in favor.

APPROVED