

Town of Bedford Finance Committee

January 26, 2023

Minutes

Finance Committee Members in attendance: Paul Mortenson, Chair, Karen Dunn, Clerk, Ben Thomas, Stephen Steele, Elizabeth McClung, Erica Liu, Abigail Seibert, Ron O’Brien and Tom Rowan

Others in attendance: David Castellarin, (Finance Director); Emily Mitchell, Chair, Select Board, Sarah Stanton, Town Manager, David Manugian, Director, Public Works, Tassir Alani, Director of Facilities

Chair Mortenson calls the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Reads Remote Meeting Guidelines

Calls the Roll of Committee Members in attendance.

I. REGULAR BUSINESS

1. Public Comment

None

2. Review/Approve Minutes

None

3. FY24 Select Board Budget

Ms. Mitchell introduces the Select Board FY24 Budget. Notes that a comprehensive FY24 Budget Presentation document has been prepared and circulated. Notes that the oral presentation will be made by Town Manager Sarah Stanton and by herself.

Ms. Mitchell states that the Select Board FY24 Budget total number exceeds the Finance Committee 3.5% increase Guideline.

Ms. Stanton notes that Budget is \$761,772 over the 3.5% Guideline. Also notes that the certification of Free Cash is not yet completed. In order to meet the FY24 budget needs, the Select Board proposes to use an additional \$2 million of Free Cash. Anticipates a certified Free Cash number of \$14.2 million. By increasing the Free Cash budget from \$5 million to \$7

million, the unused levy capacity will remain at \$8 million and the impact to taxpayers will be minimized.

Ms. Stanton notes that the most significant budgetary challenge has been the impact of inflation which impacts almost every sector of the economy. She discusses examples of the impact of inflation as regards to various Town departments such as Facilities and Public Works.

Ms. Stanton discusses salaries and new position of Human Resources Benefits Coordinator. Position had been sought since 2021.

Ms. Stanton discusses Finance Department numbers. Discusses Assistant Treasurer position. Also discusses Computer services and software maintenance cost items.

Ms. Stanton discusses the legal services item and its makeup.

Ms. Stanton discusses Police Department numbers including salaries and contract. Also discusses various Police Department expense items.

Ms. Stanton discusses the Fire Department numbers including contract salary increases.

Ms. Stanton discusses Code Enforcement including part-time Building Inspector. Looking to Building Inspector retirement.

Ms. Stanton discusses Facilities numbers with outside repairs being the largest increase.

Ms. Stanton discusses Publics Works numbers.

Ms. Stanton discusses Health and Human Services. Also discusses Local Transit, Youth and Family Services and Veterans Services. Also discusses new part time position to be paid for by grant. Also discusses in state travel costs. Also notes that Hazardous Waste contract number went up.

Ms. Stanton discusses the Merit Article increase with non-union employees, part time employees. 3% over FY23 rates.

Ms. Stanton discusses budgets outside the Guideline. Insurance and Benefits have increased. Debt is up almost 3%. Refuse and Recycling is up nearly 6%. Struggling with Republic with respect to contract.

Ms. Stanton discusses Utilities being up 31+%. Also discusses Water Purchase costs increase.

Ms. Stanton agrees to respond to questions.

Member Steele asks about Merit increase.

Ms. Stanton discusses how Merit works and what goes into evaluation. Discusses 3% Cost of Living Adjustment.

Member Steele asks about new Management Office position.

Ms. Stanton discusses reasons for new position. Also discusses Assistant Treasurer position. Discusses within Merit Article.

Member Steele asks about Debt Ceiling.

Ms. Stanton explains what makes it up.

Member Steele asks about electric vehicle charging stations and who pays.

Ms. Stanton discusses the costs.

Member Thomas asks about Computer Services number increase.

Ms. Stanton explains.

Member Thomas asks about Planning Board interest in software package.

Ms. Stanton states it is still under review.

Member Thomas asks about Police overtime increase.

Ms. Stanton explains.

Member Thomas asks about telephone costs.

Ms. Stanton explains.

Member Thomas asks about Trash Service numbers.

Ms. Stanton explains.

Member Thomas asks about Consulting numbers presented.

Mr. Manugian explains.

Member Thomas asks about out of state travel number being low.

Ms. Stanton explains.

Member Thomas asks about Paramedic Contract. Fire Chief Grunes explains.

Member McClung asks about, Legal Service numbers, Town use of voting machines, Water Usage number and Town's use of water, Tree Service numbers, Personnel and who is funding what with respect to that. Also asks about current status of Free Cash number.

Ms. Stanton provides responses with respect to each topic.

Member McClung states that people using the EV charging stations should pay for that.

Mr. Alani explains who pays for what.

Member McClung states that some people take advantage.

~~Member Seibert thanks everyone for good job on presentation.~~

Chair Mortenson concludes presentation.

Member Steele and Thomas comment generally on need for further review of certain items.

Chair Mortenson concludes that is all on this issue for tonight.

4. 2023 ATM Draft Warrant

Chair Mortenson states that this topic is to be continued to the next meeting.

Member McClung notes timing of Select Board voting.

Member Thomas states that we might want to ask Planning Director Fields to return to discuss the 2 Family zoning issue.

5. Leadership Discussion and Vote

Chair Mortenson notes that he will be a candidate for Select Board at the upcoming Town Election.

Members discuss various member's interest in being elected to Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk positions.

Member Dunn moves to elect Member Thomas as Chair.

Further Member discussion concerning this motion.

Member McClung suggests that there be a vote for an interim Chair for now.

Members discuss this concept further.

Member Seibert moves to elect Member Thomas as Chair.

Chair Mortenson notes the earlier motion ~~the that effect~~ is still on the table without a Second yet offered.

Member Steele moves to Second the pending Motion to Elect Member Thomas,

Chair, Mortenson calls for vote.

Roll call of Members in attendance.

Vote: 8 yes

0 No.

1 Abstain

Motion allowed.

II. RECURRING BUSINESS

1. Meetings Attended

None.

2. Finance Committee Adjourns

Chair Thomas accepts his election. Suggests the meeting be concluded.

Member Mortenson moves to adjourn.

Second by Member Steele.

Roll call of Members in attendance.

Vote: 9 Yes

0 No

Motion allowed.

Time: 9:57PM

John B. Connarton
Recording Secretary

DOCUMENT LIST

Finance Committee Hybrid Meeting Agenda January 26, 2023

2023 Annual Town Meeting Warrant