



Finance Committee

Steven Correia (Chair)
Kelly Lappin (Vice Chair)
Adam Gutbezahl
Carol Martin
Christine Roberts
Pamela Roman
Bill Steinberg

FINANCE COMMITTEE
March 15, 2021
Remote

Attendance: S. Correia, K. Lappin, A. Gutbezahl, C. Martin, C. Roberts, P. Roman, & B. Steinberg (6:36 PM). Also in attendance were the Town Finance Director, B. Keveny, and Jason Adams as the online meeting moderator.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chair S. Correia at 6:16 PM. S. Correia stated all members were participating remotely, and opened the meeting with the following:

In compliance with the revised Open Meeting Law requirements, this meeting will be live streamed via Zoom as well as WayCAM. The Zoom meeting can be entered using the link and password available on the agenda on the town website. The meeting may be viewed live on the WayCam Public/Education Channel (Comcast 8 / Verizon 37). Public Comment will be received either through Zoom or by phone at 508-358-6814 for this meeting. The phone number will be active during the public comment portion of the meeting. Thank you for your patience. We intend to address all calls. To make a public comment via Zoom, perform a virtual “hand raise”. The meeting moderator will contact you via a chat message to acknowledge your request and will inform the chair of your request to comment.

In addition to being live streamed, WayCam will record the meeting and recording will be made available to the public as soon after the meeting as is practicable. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings.

Announcements: None.

Public Comments: Molly Upton (Bayfield Road) thanked the Finance Committee for their work and deliberations in preparing its recommendation for the FY2022 budget. Ms. Upton urged the Finance Committee to limit the budget increase to 3%. Ms. Upton stated she spoke with Ellen Brideau, the former director of assessing for Wayland, and Ms. Brideau agreed that Wayland

was heading towards a downward spiral. Ms. Upton stated further that Wayland is losing \$1 million or more in assessed value due to acquisitions of property by non-profit organizations. Ms. Upton suggested the Finance Committee: (1) stick to an increase of 3%; (2) change the insurance package to GIC; (4) reduce the allocation for salary increases; and (5) consider placing cost of living adjustments on hold for a year.

Alice Boelter (Lakeshore Drive) expressed concern about the School Committee's budget. Ms. Boelter stated the Finance Committee asked the School Committee to reduce its budget by \$300,000; however, the School Committee responded by increasing its budget by \$100,000. Ms. Boelter stated the maintenance track record for the schools is deplorable and stated further that the School Committee needs to better understand priorities.

Finance Directors Report: Mr. Keveny reported that he updated the average tax bill amount that was previously provided to the Finance Committee. The FY2021 carrying-average residential tax bill previously stated \$14,400. Mr. Keveny learned that number was incorrect and that the correct number is \$14,818.

Discussion & Possible Vote on FY2021 Annual Town Meeting Articles:

Article M – Sell or Trade Vehicles and Equipment: P. Roman presented the article. She stated it was a standard article that authorized the Board of Selectmen to sell or otherwise dispose of surplus equipment. C. Martin moved the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article M – Sell or Trade Vehicles and Equipment. C. Roberts seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0-0, with C. Martin, C. Roberts, K. Lappin, A. Gutbezahl, P. Roman, and S. Correia all voting yes.

B. Steinberg joined the meeting at 6:36 PM.

Article W – Senior Citizen Tax Work Off Exemption: C. Roberts presented the article. She mentioned the current structure of the Town's work off program does not comply with state law, which resulted in participants of the plan being taxed. This article would make the Town's program comply with state law. C. Martin moved the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article W – Senior Citizen Tax Work Off Exemption. P. Roman seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0-0, with C. Martin, C. Roberts, K. Lappin, A. Gutbezahl, P. Roman, B. Steinberg, and S. Correia all voting yes.

Article HH – Recognize Law Enforcement Day: C. Roberts presented the article. C. Martin moved the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article HH – Recognize Law Enforcement Day. B. Steinberg seconded the motion. C. Martin modified her initial motion to move the Finance Committee to recommend no position on Article HH – Recognize Law Enforcement Day. B. Steinberg seconded the modified motion. The motion passed 7-0-0, with C. Martin, C. Roberts, A. Gutbezahl, K. Lappin, P. Roman, B. Steinberg, and S. Correia all voting yes.

Continuation of Prior FY2022 Budget Discussion: The Finance Committee resumed its discussion from its March 11, 2021 meeting regarding the FY2022 budget. S. Correia provided a summary of the Finance Committee's March 11, 2021 deliberations and summarized adjustments

made by the School Committee, which resulted in the School Committee requesting an additional \$250,000.

K. Lappin expressed concern about the reductions to the maintenance budget and stated expenses in this area will still exist for the Town whether paid by the Town or the Schools, and that this reduction will likely result in higher costs in the future. B. Steinberg stated the School Committee had a choice of either cutting the maintenance amount or cutting funding for mathematics. K. Lappin suggested the Finance Committee discuss in further detail the recommendations made by Town Administrator Louise Miller regarding potential budget adjustments. The Finance Committee then discussed the assessed value of residential properties and how that value affects the budget analysis.

S. Correia then restated the School Committee's request for an increase of \$250,000, which essentially consisted of the Tier 1 initiatives, as outlined in the School Committee's proposed budget. S. Correia stated the Finance Committee does not make recommendations as to how the schools expend their funds; rather, the Finance Committee provides a total dollar amount. S. Correia acknowledged this was an unprecedented year that required numerous operational changes. Although not happy about the requested increase, S. Correia said he was hesitant to push back on the request. S. Correia told the Finance Committee he supported the requested increase pursuant to a stipulation that the Town and School Departments focus in the next year on efficiencies in how they handle facilities and payroll. C. Roberts recommended looking at healthcare costs as a possible area for savings. S. Correia also recommended the Finance Committee include in its report that, pursuant to Town Code, the School Committee needs to submit its budget proposal in a timelier manner in the future.

C. Martin stated she thought S. Correia's recommendations were great and that these topics had been discussed by the Finance Committee in global terms for many years. C. Martin stated further she was not comfortable with adding any more tax to the budget and asked the Finance Committee to consider looking at other methods to reduce the budget. C. Roberts asked what the effect would be on the budget if the additional \$250,000 was accepted. B. Keveny responded that this increase would result in a year-over increase of 2.99%.

C. Martin noted the Town made substantial cuts this year, and therefore there may be greater needs for the Town next year. B. Steinberg agreed the Town will likely have different needs post-COVID and agreed with S. Correia's comments regarding potential efficiencies with how the Town handles facilities. B. Steinberg said he would like to compare Wayland's spending on schools to peer towns. S. Correia responded that Wayland's peer towns have commercial bases for revenues not present in Wayland. P. Roman said it would be great to receive the budgets earlier in the process and agreed the Finance Committee should spend more time with the school budget to better understand its drivers and requirements. C. Roberts said the Finance Committee has an opportunity to coordinate with the new superintendent, who will need to get up to speed on the budget.

S. Correia stated the proposed budget consisted of an omnibus budget of \$93,307,413, with a general fund budget of \$88,721,639 and school budget of \$45,223,290. The operating budget increase from FY2021 would be 2.99%. C. Martin said she was uncomfortable with this increase. C. Martin suggested the proposed \$75,000 for funding the Transfer Station be reduced.

C. Martin stated that in prior years the Transfer Station was funded through the reserve fund when it needed funding and that the Transfer Station may provide revenue. P. Roman stated it seemed pretty clear the only revenue item from the Transfer Station was waste metal and that was not a significant amount of revenue. P. Roman stated further this \$75,000 would be needed to cover the costs of the Transfer Station.

B. Steinberg moved the Finance Committee approve the amended budget for a total general fund budget of \$88,721,639 and a total omnibus budget of \$93,307,412. A. Gutbezahl seconded the motion.

The Committee then continued discussion of C. Martin's suggestion regarding the Transfer Station. S. Correia stated he preferred not to take any action that may hamper the plans of the Town Administrator and Finance Director regarding a longer-term plan for the Transfer Station. C. Martin withdrew her suggestion.

C. Martin then suggested the Finance Committee review the capital budget and potentially reduce the amount provided for road maintenance. P. Roman stated the Department of Public Works would push back on any reduction. A. Gutbezahl and S. Correia both expressed concerns about this potential reduction. C. Martin withdrew her suggestion.

The Finance Committee voted 7-0-0 to approve the motion, with B. Steinberg, P. Roman, C. Roberts, A. Gutbezahl, K. Lappin, C. Martin, and S. Correia voting yes.

Continued Discussion & Possible Vote on FY2021 Annual Town Meeting Articles:

Article FF – Establish Human Rights Commission: A. Gutbezahl and S. Correia recused themselves from the discussion of this article. P. Roman presented the article and stated its objective was to create a Human Rights Commission consisting of 9 to 15 members. The Commission would: (1) support individuals bringing forth a complaint; (2) partner with Town entities in assessing existing policies and establishing equitable policies and practices; and (3) organize community education opportunities. P. Roman stated an alternative plan is being presented to the Board of Selectmen, and that the two proposals are very similar; however, the key difference being the article reports to Town Meeting whereas the alternative proposal reports to the Board of Selectmen. P. Roman stated further the lead petitioner for the article stated a preference to have a Commission with independence from the Board of Selectmen.

B. Steinberg asked if the reason for the Commission including non-voting members was to allow members of the Commission who are not Town residents. P. Roman confirmed that was correct. B. Steinberg then asked about the rationale for having the Commission report to Town Meeting and asked to whom the Commission would go if a short-term issue occurred between Town Meetings. C. Martin stated this may be a good question to ask the lead petitioner when she attends the Finance Committee meeting to discuss the article.

Discuss Finance Committee Report for the Warrant: S. Correia stated he circulated a very rough draft of the report and asked the Finance Committee members to review the draft and prepare to provide feedback.

Members' Reports, Concerns; Topics Unanticipated 48 Hours Before Meeting: C. Martin asked whether any articles were going to be passed over and not considered at the forthcoming Town Meeting. K. Lappin stated that, according to the Board of Selectmen, Articles H (Non-Union Personnel COLA), N (Accept Gifts of Land), V (Appropriation to pay BAN related to River's Edge), and KK (Ombudsmen Position) will not be considered at Annual Town Meeting.

K. Lappin stated she would have the contents for the capital budget section of the Warrant to Committee members this weekend for their review.

Adjournment: At 8:31 p.m., K. Lappin moved to adjourn. B. Steinberg seconded. The motion passed, 7-0-0, with B. Steinberg, C. Martin, C. Roberts, P. Roman, A. Gutbezahl, K. Lappin, and S. Correia all voting yes.

Documents: available at

<https://www.wayland.ma.us/sites/g/files/vyhlf4016/f/agendas/03152021fincompkt.pdf>

Respectfully Submitted,

Adam Gutbezahl