

**Joint Meeting  
Finance Committee  
Selectboard  
April 6, 2021**

Finance Committee Attendees: Paul Antaya, Dan Kennedy, Jim Kirkendall, and Fred Baron; Also present via Zoom was Selectboard members, Joyce Palmer Fortune, Fred Orloski, and Jonathan Edwards; Town Administrator Brian Domina and Administrative Assistant, Amy Schrader.

The meeting was opened at 6:05 pm by the Chairperson Paul Antaya.

**Discuss and vote approve meeting minutes of March 23, 2021.**

The Committee voted to approve the meeting minutes from March 23, 2021. All in favor.  
Roll call vote: Jim – yes, Paul – yes, Fred Baron – yes, and Dan -yes.

**Review and discuss fiscal year 2022 operating budgets**

**Cynthia Herbert (Assistant Assessor)** virtually appeared before the Committee/Board to discuss the Assessors FY22 budget. Cynthia informed the Committee/Board that this is a re-certification year and DOR is requiring that a consultant be hired to assess the Town's utility companies (Berkshire Gas and Eversource). The consultant will cost \$9,900.00 which is an increase from the previous year. The Committee/Board inquired what drives the cost of almost \$10,000? Cynthia (Assistant Assessor) stated most of the consultants charge about \$5,000 per utility. Mayflower evaluation will do both utility company evaluations and fair market value of properties. The Committee inquired about the Town's excess levy capacity and how it compares to surrounding towns. Cynthia stated that the Assessors are responsible for assessing properties and apply a fair market value. One of the contributing factors to the excess levy capacity is new growth. After a brief discussion, no decision was made at this time.

**Cyndi Steiner (Library Director)** virtually appeared before the Committee/Board to discuss the Library's FY22 budget. Cyndi discussed the Library's FY22 budget with specific attention to level funding, new on-line subscription service, building maintenance, on-line programming, patron participation, and the custodian's line item. Cyndi stated that the custodian line item should have remained the same and the difference stated is a typographical error. In FY2021, there has been 4,067 items circulated through the Library and patrons have increased to 636. The Committee inquired what the status is for the Library's lift project? Bob Smith (Library Trustee) stated that they are waiting for Town Meeting to approve funding. Once that happens, they will be able to go out to bid. No decision was made at this time.

**Chief Sevigne (Police Chief)** virtually appeared before the Committee/Board to discuss the Police Department's FY22 budget increase of \$950.00. Chief Sevigne discussed the Police Department's FY22 budget with specific attention to the association dues, ammunition increase, radar collaboration, and maintenance agreement for the County wide records management system. Chief Sevigne discussed the potential implications of the Police Reform Bill requirements with specific attention to trainings, certification, new software purchase, policy changes, accreditation challenges, and potential staffing challenges. The Committee/Board had a brief discussion regarding potential staffing challenges and inquired if there was a way to protect the Town's investment in Officers? Brian stated that he would check with Town counsel regarding the public sector legal rights to retain employment. Chief Sevigne stated that retaining officers after training could be a challenge and suggested that the Town have two full-time Officer positions instead of multiple part-time Officers. Fred Orloski (Selectboard) feels strongly that the Town should research this. Paul Antaya (Finance Committee Chair) stated that the proposed Police Reform bill could cost the town \$3,800 per Officer. The Town currently has 8 officers. Fred Orloski (Selectboard) inquired if the Police Department is currently using all 3 police cruisers? Chief Sevigne stated that the third cruiser is used for Police Details and cost \$10.00 an hour. Chief Sevigne

discussed his capital request with specific attention to interior/exterior painting of the Police Station and Police radio communication improvements. Chief Sevine is recommending that the Town set aside \$15,000 to begin addressing police reform requirements when they come due later this fiscal year.

**Keith Bardwell (Highway and Building Superintendent)** virtually appeared before the Committee/Board to discuss the Highway Department's FY22 budget increase of 1.9%. Keith discussed the Highway Department's FY22 budget increase with specific attention to general highway expenses: street sweeping, catch basin cleaning, winter roads: potential winter maintenance equipment purchase, road machinery, garage maintenance: phone line increase, and the Tree Department which has been level funded. The Committee/Board inquired about the Town's vehicle fuel account status. Brian stated that he increased the Town's fuel account to \$2,000.00. Keith stated that he informed the Selectboard at a previous meeting about the potential of purchasing a snow blower for sidewalk winter maintenance. The Board decided to table this discussion to a later date in the year. Keith informed the Committee/Board that one of the Highway Department's snowplows may need to be replaced soon. The Committee/Board inquired on the status of the excavator purchase? Keith stated that the excavator has been able to assist with tree/brush clearing and will be used for future town projects. Paul Antaya (Finance Committee Chair) requested that a metric system be used to determine cost per road mile and would like Keith to research the appropriate way to obtain that number. Keith discussed the challenges of comparing job responsibilities of surrounding towns Highway Departments. The Committee inquired why sidewalk winter snow removal is not done by the residents? Keith stated that question should be asked to the Board as to why they made that decision. After much discussion, no decision was made at this time.

**Zachary Smith (South County EMS)** virtually appeared before the Committee/Board to discuss South County EMS FY22 budget. Zachary Smith discussed SCEMS FY22 budget with specific attention to salaries and benefits: level funding, personnel/insurance increases, and expenses: billing, Deerfield in-direct costs, and OPEB obligations. Zachary discussed recouping costs with specific attention to billing for services, COVID19 impacts, retained earnings, and operational reserve. Whately share is 16.76% - \$100,144.00, which is an increase of \$3,000 from FY2020. Last calendar (2020), Whately had 197 emergency patient assessment calls. After much discussion, no decision was made at this time.

**Wayne Hutkoski (Water Department Superintendent)** virtually appeared before the Committee/Board to discuss the Water Department's FY22 budget. Wayne discussed the Water Department's FY22 budget with specific attention to the new booster station operating expenses, water merger project, additional water testing requirements, equipment improvements, and potential future water connections (Egypt Road). The Committee/Board had a brief discussion regarding the Pine Plain Estates water quality challenges, water hook-up fees, price per gallon, and previous/current water rates. After a brief discussion, no decision was made at this time.

**Jonathan Edwards (Tri-Town Beach Commissioner)** virtually appeared before the Committee/Board to discuss Tri-Town Beach's FY22 budget. Jonathan discussed the FY22 budget with specific attention to re-opening, potential renovations, weed control challenges, and requested a budget placeholder for maintenance. No decision was made at this time.

**Brian Domina (Town Administrator)** virtually appeared before the Committee/Board to discuss the Town Buildings FY22 budgets. Brian discussed the Town Building FY22 budget with specific attention to the Custodian position hours increase and natural gas price increase. Brian stated that the Custodian's hours increase is primarily due to the COVID19 safety/sanitation protocols. Brian is anticipating that the Town Building's natural gas prices will increase. The Committee inquired if the Town Hall has a set usage fee? Brian stated that it does, and it's posted on the Town's website.

**Brian Domina (Town Administrator)** virtually appeared before the Board to discuss the Town's audit. The Auditor requested that the Town does a 2-3 year look back. The audit for FY21 will begin this May and look back at years 2018 and 2019. No decision was made at this time.

**Lynn Sibley (Treasurer/Collector)** virtually appeared before the Committee/Board to discuss the Town's OPEB account. Last year, the Town decided not to contribute to the OPEB account. The Town has been contributing \$25,000 a year. The fund is not being utilized at this time however the cost has been absorbed through the Town's regular health insurance budget. Lynn discussed OPEB funding with specific attention to previous/future funding, OPEB investing, retirement funding options, potential town employee retirements, OPEB account interest, and usage options. The Committee/Board had a brief conversation regarding potential town employee retirements and inquired when the account will be utilized? Lynn stated that there could be the possibility of 6 retirements over the next 5 years. The Town could continue using the regular health insurance budget until that budget is maxed out. Lynn recommends that the Town resume contributing \$25,000 back into the OPEB fund or a different sum of money. No decision was made at this time.

**Items not anticipated within forty-eight (48) hours of the meeting**

Brian stated that the next Finance Committee is scheduled for April 20, 2021 to review and vote on the Capital project recommendations and Personnel Committee recommendations. Brian inquired if the Board would like to use the same budget tool that Brian and Fred created last year? The Committee unanimously agreed to use the same budget tool. Paul Antaya (Finance Committee Chair) stated that if feasible, it would be preferable to vote on the FY22 budget at their April 20, 2021 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:41 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Brian Domina, Town Administrator

Next meeting – April 20, 2021 (Finance Committee only)

**Document List on File in the Selectboard Office**

Joint Finance Committee and Selectboard Meeting Minutes dated March 23, 2021  
Town of Whately – Total & Enterprise Fund Budgets – FY22