**Finance Committee and Selectboard**

**Meeting Minutes**

**February 20, 2024**

**Town Offices**

**Hybrid Meeting**

The open Hybrid session of the Town of Whately Finance Committee/Selectboard was called to order on February 20, 2024, at 6:00pm by Chairperson Paul Antaya. Present were Committee members Tom Mahar, Jim Kirkendall, Dan Kennedy, Paul Newlin, JD Ross, and Brenda Doherty (Via Zoom). Selectboard members Fred Baron, Julie Waggoner, and Joyce Fortune (Via Zoom) were present. Co-Interim Town Administrator Patricia Vinchesi, Administrative Assistant Jessica Murphy, Highway Superintendent Keith Bardwell, Town Clerk Amy Lavallee, Fire Chief JP Kennedy, SCSC Director Jennifer Remillard, FCTS Superintendent Rick Martin and Tri-Town Beach Commission Representative Kenn Cuddeback.

**1. To review and vote to approve the meeting minutes from February 7, 2024**

Motion made to accept minutes from February 20, 2024. Motion seconded. All in Favor. Roll Call Vote. Paul-yes, Tom-yes, Brenda-yes, Dan-yes, Jim-yes.

**2. To discuss fiscal year 2025 operating budgets**

Jennifer Remillard began discussion on personnel expenses, including salary increases and the potential transition of a part-time position to full-time. The concern is raised about the sustainability of positions funded by grants, in which Jennifer expressed no concern on her end, noting that these specific grants have been around for various years. Jennifer discussed transportation services for seniors, a request for funding for a new vehicle to improve accessibility. Jennifer discussed meal services and food support programs, including deliveries and partnerships with organizations like Snap and the Department of Transitional Assistance. Jennifer noted the increasing senior population as a factor which is influencing budgetary needs and service demands.

Rick began discussing that there has been a 3% increase across the board. Rick discussed that Whately has a total of 18 students enrolled, creating a cost of $17,531 per pupil with the average being $12,252. Rick shared assessment and enrollment, explaining that the assessment for FY25 is lower than the previous year due to the drop in student enrollment. Rick shared that there are currently 2 applicants from Whately, and 5 that will be graduating, noting that the numbers should be at the same or lower next year, based on what we currently have. Rick discussed that current District Enrollment is 571 with a projection around 593 for next year, noting the large graduating class of 130 and incoming class of about 180.

Rick discussed Debt Services, and a project that took place 8 years ago in which the Town paid $6,421 for the 15-year bond.

Keith began discussion regarding a significant increase in line painting costs due to factors like contract terms and increased pigment prices. Keith shared that despite fluctuations in the price of salt, the budget seems to be in good shape, with the possibility of returning funds due to effective management of materials. Keith shared that advertising costs related to tree hearings and legal notices were highlighted as particularly expensive but necessary due to regulatory requirements. Keith discussed more about the town's requirement to purchase hybrid or electric vehicles as part of the Green Communities initiative, explaining that there are delays in procuring vehicles, noting the pickup truck regarding gasoline vs. diesel options. Keith discussed need for specialized equipment to maintain guardrails efficiently and reduce labor requirements, especially concerning issues like poison ivy exposure.

Ken began discussion on revenue streams including permits, day passes, seasonal passes, and potential event fees. Ken explained that there is future exploration of potential programs like water aerobics, senior center activities, and kayak rentals. Ken discussed different proposals for dock installations to improve safety and access for lifeguards and visitors, along with discussions on funding and approval processes.

Brant began discussion about labor expenses mainly consisting of clerk work for attending meetings, preparing minutes, and other associated tasks. The speaker estimates these expenses based on approximately 8 hours of clerk work per meeting, at a rate of $20 per hour. Brant discussed expenses for legal advertisements when holding public hearings on zoning amendments, in which he budgeted for two such hearings, estimating $600 per hearing for legal advertising. Brant explained that there is additional expenses include postage for mailing notifications to affected parties, a training budget for new members, and collaborative planning training for new board members offered by a local organization in Massachusetts.

JP began discussion regarding a relatively small increase overall increase of 2%. JP explained that he has done some housekeeping on the budget just from looking at past budgets to try and align our line items more with realistic expenditures in the past, explaining that he has dropped postage costs and decreased funds for electricity, communications, pagers and radios. JP noted that he should be receiving pagers in the near future from a Grant that was previously applied to.

JP explained that he’s taken off line items for pre-employment physicals, noting that there are already funds budgeted for the Town.

and as soon as we get his physical done. I think, he said. He's also interested in in doing the call. Wall Academy. So that's really pretty remarkable. It's not a lot of volunteer call volunteer departments that are getting people water. And I stress you, I just clean that up a little bit, too. We're probably gonna do about $500 worth of maintenance keep our stuff in line on that. Some things haven't really changed very much.

so far this year we've done about 25 fire calls

roughly 58 by our cost, this fiscal year we're on track to be a little bit ahead of what we've been in the last couple of years.

my budget currently, this doesn't reflect exactly what I have out there. I've got a couple things that are going through the warrant right now about $6,000 worth of items.

We pay, continue to pursue whatever grants I can find pretty aggressively. We got an $8,000 grant from the State. That's gonna cover most of 2 sets of turnout here.

It's gonna help supplement our budget a little bit. And I did put in for Federal Grant. It's called assistance firefighters, grant one more time. It'll be the, I think, the fourth time I'm putting it for this grant. So every time we're doing it I'm trying to.

You hope tune it up a little bit, but it's a it's a highly competitive brand. We have, to say the least. How much is that? So that's to cover our our Stbas, and that's a fy, 25 capital items. And I think it's probably gonna get pushed back a little bit. 200,000 on capital. The latest quote that I have from our vendors. It's actually a little bit lower than we had on capital. It's a round 185,000

for Scbas to replace all the equipment that we have right now. The Federal portion if we get awarded, would be 174,000, and our local portion would be 8,000 and change

which I'm pretty sure that we could absorb in the Fire Department budget or at least absorb most of it.

they're proportionate enough to be awarded

**3. Items not anticipated**

**4. Adjourn**

Motion to adjourn at 7:55 pm. Motion Seconded. All in Favor. Roll Call Vote. Paul-yes, Tom-yes, Brenda-yes, Dan-yes, Jim-yes.

**Document List**

Meeting Minutes from February 20, 2024

Fiscal Year 2025 Comprehensive Budget

Initial Budget Book Inserts, FY25.