



TOWN OF BLANDFORD  
SELECT BOARD

Blandford Town Hall  
1 Russell Stage Road Suite 1  
Blandford, MA 01008

FINANCE COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
January 24, 2023  
1:30 pm

In Attendance: J. Lombardo, Chair Finance; D. Brodie, Member Finance; K. Green, Member Finance; C. Dunne, Town Administrator

**1. EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

*a. Examination of the Finance Committee meeting minutes of December 14, 2022*

**MOTION:** J. Lombardo made a motion to approve the Finance Committee meeting minutes of December 14, 2022, as written.

**D. Brodie Seconded**

**All in Favor**

**2. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION / PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**3. REPORTS**

*a. Town Administrator*

*i. Overview of budget process, FY23 budget trends and hearing schedule*

Christopher Dunne, Town Administrator, spoke to the budget request process for Fiscal Year 2024 which would involve the bodies with simpler budgets putting their requests before the Finance Committee first and others following with a goal of wrapping up the process prior to mid-February. Enterprise Funds as well as financial departments (e.g., Accounting, Treasurer-Collector, etc.) are grouped together on the same days.

Some over-arching trends to be considered when shaping the FY24 budget include the continued transition back to in-house employees on the finance team rather than solely consultants, the development of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) with the Collins Center and consideration of solar development Payment-In-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILOT) agreements and cannabis Community Impact Fees on the revenue side.

#### **4. ACTION ITEMS**

##### **1. ACTION ITEMS**

###### **a. Review Fiscal Year 2024 Departmental Budget Requests**

- i.** Planning Board: Edna Wilander and Paul Martin presented on the proposed Planning Board budget for FY24. They requested few changes except for the implementation of stipends for Board members in line with the schedule laid out by the Collins Center's Compensation and Classification Study (CC Study). Additionally, for expenses, they requested funds to purchase a flatscreen TV to better allow Board members to view maps and other documents regularly reviewed at meetings. Lombardo said she thought the Committee already agreed to grant the Board stipends in FY23. Dunne pointed out that the CC Study actually recommended that all stipends be dispensed with but that if they had to be maintained, they follow the schedule mentioned by Martin. The Board discussed the complexity of its work over the last few years with solar and marijuana developments and the need to contract with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) to provide expertise on these issues.
- ii.** Recreation Committee: Joann Martin presented a request to level-fund the Recreation Committee budget for FY24. She mentioned that in the previous fiscal year, funds designated for the Memorial Day line item had been transferred over to the Recreation budget as they are tasked with planning the parade and picnic. The Committee also received additional funds to carry out an agreement suggested by Select Board Chair Cara Letendre in which Blandford residents would pay a discounted rate to access Russell Pond.
- iii.** Council on Aging: Margit Mikuski spoke to a level-funded FY24 budget for the Council on Aging. She described the Council's programs and spoke to the potential need for a new vehicle for providing ride services which she would work with the Town Administrator to get grants for.
- iv.** Fire Department: Chief David Mottor requested increases in the Fire Department Salary line item which would compensate his successor as well as the Department's expense line item. The Department's FY23 expense budget was set around \$40,000 at Annual Town Meeting and subsequently increased at the fall Special Town Meeting to account for new fuel contracts obtained through a collective bid with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG). With level funding of the amount approved at Special Town Meeting and the proposed increase to make the Chief's salary more competitive, the bottom line for the Fire Department would increase only slightly under his FY24 request.
- v.** Tree Warden: Mark Boomsma presented his request for FY24. He requested a slight increase in his expenses as the seedlings distribution program he administers each spring is so popular that it usually goes over budget. He discussed how in past budgets the Ash Tree Removal Program had been funded partially by his operating budget and partially by a transfer from the Town's Capital Projects Account. Dunne spoke to the concern he had heard from one resident that compensating an outside company for removal of ash trees was on top of proceeds from sales of the lumber that they could garner. Green said that the quality of the lumber from these trees was likely so poor that any additional revenue received by the company would be minimal. Boomsma mentioned he would request a 2.25% increase to his stipend if other departments were receiving such an increase.

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Janet Lombardo, Finance Chair

Absent

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Kathie Hudson, Finance Member

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Deborah Brodie, Finance Member

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Kevin Green, Finance Member