



TOWN OF BLANDFORD
SELECT BOARD

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

FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
March 29, 2023
9:30 am

The meeting opened at 9:40 am.

1. EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a. *Examination of the Finance Committee meeting minutes of February 23, 2023*

MOTION: J. Lombardo made a motion to approve the Finance Committee meeting minutes of February 23, 2023, as written

D. Brodie Seconded

All in Favor

b. *Examination of the Finance Committee meeting minutes of March 6, 2023*

MOTION: J. Lombardo made a motion to table the Finance Committee meeting minutes of March 6, 2023, as written

D. Brodie Seconded

All in Favor

2. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION / PUBLIC COMMENT

None

3. REPORTS

a. *Town Administrator*

i. FY24 Budget Recommendations

Dunne spoke to the status of the FY24 budget as well as his recommendations to the Committee: many of the major pieces of the budget are already in place. The Gateway Regional School District assessment is essentially level funded at \$1.455 million. Individual department needs have been established as have most of the employee benefit line items such as the Hampden County Retirement Board assessment. On the expenditure side, greater precision will only become possible later in April when a finalized list of vocational education applicants becomes available and in May when fuel prices are potentially locked in through a collective bid process. On the revenue side, estimates of needed reserves for tax abatements, new growth and the latest local receipts have not yet been completed.

With placeholders for these figures the proposed \$4.23 million operating budget looks to accomplish the following goals including keeping the levy increases under 2%,

maintaining a revenue target at a low enough level whereby Payments-In-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILOTs) can roll over to Free Cash and be used to fund capital expenses, implementing the Collins Center recommendations with respect to wages, salaries, and stipends, as well as Year One of the Town's first Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Green asked how it would be ensured that monies derived from solar PILOTs would be used for substantive rather than frivolous expenses. Dunne responded that they would be used to fund the Capital Projects Account, the expenditures from which would be identified in the annual CIP moving forward. Lombardo asked if implementation of the Collins Center recommendations with respect to wages, salaries and stipends could be accomplished within the Town's means. Dunne clarified that the budget he was proposing would involve an increase to the levy of under 2% but that he was hoping for Committee input on whether this is politically acceptable. Additionally, as the recommendations involved compensation grades with a range, the Committee might see fit to recommend increases at a lower level on the range. Brodie asked for a status update on where each of the PILOT agreements stood and the individual solar developments which Dunne provided.

Dunne then spoke to some opportunities or positive tailwinds what would support accomplishment of these goals including the transition to in-house Treasurer-Collector services, an anticipated reduction in fuel costs, the potential to shift a Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) payment for the broadband buildout to the Municipal Light Plant's Retained Earnings rather than the Town's Free Cash, and increases in State Aid proposed by the Governor.

Dunne concluded by outlining some challenges including an increased Hampden County Retirement assessment and group health insurance rates, as well as an increase of more than a third proposed by Hilltown Community Ambulance Association.

The Committee then reviewed the expenditures proposed in Dunne's recommended FY24 budget. Green recommended that rather than revisit each salary, wage and stipend recommendation, Dunne provide a document with each employee's current compensation and the recommended range provided by the Collins Center to which Dunne agreed. Green asked about specific expense accounts including Highway's "New Road Repair," the Board of Health and others. Dunne mentioned that as the Capital Projects Account would be transitioned to a stabilization account, he was recommending slight increases in certain Highway and Fire accounts to ensure these departments still had sufficient flexibility to address routine but expensive equipment repair needs. Discussing health insurance, Dunne outlined the different perspectives on this: the Treasurer always recommends budgeting as if all eligible employees will opt in but of course, to date, with this approach the Town overbudgets by tens of thousands of dollars. The Town has used these funds in the past for Year-End Transfers to other accounts. Lombardo said that she believes there is some state requirement with respect to what the Town budgets for health insurance which Dunne said he will look into.

4. ACTION ITEMS

a. Review and act on Reserve Fund transfer requests:

Dunne provided an overview of the requests for Reserve Fund transfers.

- i. **MOTION:** J. Lombardo made a motion to **reconsider** the request to transfer \$3,580.00 from Reserve Fund #015132.000 to Town Hall Maintenance and Repairs #015192.000 for fire sprinkler repairs for Display Board
D. Brodie Seconded
Motion Passes

MOTION: J. Lombardo made a motion to **disapprove** the request to transfer \$3,580.00 from Reserve Fund #015132.000 to Town Hall Maintenance and Repairs #015192.000 for fire sprinkler repairs for Display Board
D. Brodie Seconded
Motion Passes

- ii. **MOTION:** J. Lombardo made a motion to **reconsider** the request to transfer \$6,325.00 from Reserve Fund #015132.000 to Town Hall Maintenance and Repairs #015192.000 for fire sprinkler repairs – Pump Repack
D. Brodie Seconded
Motion Passes

MOTION: J. Lombardo made a motion to **disapprove** the request to transfer \$6,325.00 from Reserve Fund #015132.000 to Town Hall Maintenance and Repairs #015192.000 for fire sprinkler repairs – Pump Repack
D. Brodie Seconded
Motion Passes

- iii. **MOTION:** J. Lombardo made a motion to **approve** the request to transfer \$5,000.00 from Reserve Fund #015132.000 to Town Hall Utilities for Ever-source electric bills
D. Brodie Seconded
Motion Passes

- iv. **MOTION:** J. Lombardo made a motion to **approve** the request to transfer \$2,000.00 from Reserve Fund #015132.000 to Library Expenses for heating oil bills
D. Brodie Seconded
Motion Passes

- v. **MOTION:** J. Lombardo made a motion to **approve** the request to transfer \$18,000.00 from Reserve Fund #015132.000 to Vocational Education to cover the costs a late-accepting Smith Vocational student
D. Brodie Seconded
Motion Passes

- vi. **MOTION: J. Lombardo made a motion to approve the request to transfer \$5,000.00 from Reserve Fund #015132.000 to Highway Vehicle Fuel for gasoline and diesel**
D. Brodie Seconded
Motion Passes

The meeting concluded at 12:45 PM.

Janet Lombardo, Finance Chair

Absent

Kathie Hudson, Finance Member

Deborah Brodie, Finance Member

Kevin Green, Finance Member