

Memorial Town Hall, 1 Library Street, Georgetown, MA 01833

Meeting Minutes 02/06/2023

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Joint meeting with the Finance Advisory Board and the Board of Selectman

Memorial Town Hall

7:00PM-General Meeting

Verizon Channel 42/Comcast channel 9

Selectmen Present: D. Dawes, Chair, Vice Chair P. Kershaw, G. Fowler, A. Smith and D. Lamonica.

Others Present: Orlando Pacheco, Town Administrator.
M. Shultz, Administrative Assistant participating on Zoom.
Town Accountant, Mary McMenemy, Fire Chief Matt McKay.

Finance Advisory Board Present:
Edward Dobie, Steven Epstein, Alicia Raspa, David Twiss, Michael Kelley and David Harris.

7:00PM CALL TO ORDER

Edward Dobie, Chairman of the Finance Advisory Board opened their meeting at 7PM, all in favor, so moved.

Invocation-Douglas W. Dawes

Pledge of Allegiance-Douglas W. Dawes

OPENING DISCUSSION:

- FY24 Budget Review
- Police / Public Safety Building
- Free Cash Policy

D. Dawes handed the start of the meeting to Finance Chairman to Edward Dobie, for a budget review.

O. Pacheco, Town Administrator mentioned that all the preliminary layout of the budgets are in. We have not finalized the revenue side, not to say there won't be a projected deficit when we are all done, we do expect a shortfall. when done expects the local aid number to change since we are still using last year numbers, some wish lists are included, Park and Recreation's budget from last year has not changed, insurance has been updated including fixed cost, marijuana in as it was last year.

Town Accountant, Mary McMenemy spoke on the FY24 Budget -A spreadsheet was presented on the TV Screen/ a breakdown of where we currently are was given to all. Presentation was sent prior to all board members by e-mails.

TOPICS DISCUSSED:

- *All Department budgets are in*
- *Park & Recreation budget has not been submitted but has not changed from last year*
- *Some wish lists are included*
- *Insurances have been updated –*
- *Essex Regional Retirement has been updated,*
- *Fixed cost is included & updated*
- *Revenue side / Marijuana.*
- *Cherry Sheet has not been received.*
- *Levy limit number*
- *School Department are in at 5.3percent -still in the process of evaluating positions*
- *Base level service number was the number presented from the schools.*
- *School Superintendent more in-depth discussion will happen with the Finance Board.*
- *Base service level budget was the number presented from the schools*
- *General tax revenue.*
- *Estimate for the host agreement -currently there is \$450K per Mary McMenemy, Town Accountant.*
- *Less money coming from host agreements currently*

S. Epstein, Finance Advisory Committee Member commented it was nice to know this early in the game that we are short and mentioned that he was surprised that the School Committee hasn't learned about proposition 2 ½.

S. Epstein, Finance Advisory Committee Member asked about the Highway Department taking over the lawn's maintenance for Parks & Recreation, asked if that is in P. Durkee, Highway Director's budget.

D. Twiss, Finance Committee Member asked if the Town has decided on how to redirect the management of the Town's resources to the Highway Department from Parks and Recreation and does that include the employees.

O. Pacheco, Town Administrator stated that nothing has changed currently and stated that P. Durkee, Highway Supervisor is not transferring anything from Parks and Recreation, that number is not reflected in the Highway Budget as of yet, will phase the position out and redirect the resources to the Highway Department.

G. Flower spoke of equipment and asked about the care of multiple pieces of equipment, and asked how many pieces do we currently have.

S. Epstein, Finance Advisory Committee Member spoke on a lawn mower for the school department and suggested the sharing of equipment including the Highways Department.

D. Twiss asked for clarification on what is being done or not being done at Parks and Recreation.

P. Kershaw asked if the Peter Durkee, Highway Supervisor and his department have the time to maintain the areas -asked about scheduling the work.

O. Pacheco, Town Administrator mentioned that Chapter 90 money which is not reflected in the budget numbers.

S. Epstein, Finance Advisory Committee Member spoke briefly of the shrinking number of students at the High school & Middle Schools -student size at both of these schools

D. Twiss spoke on the marijuana money in the general budget, he expressed concern about those funds remaining in the budget.

E. Dobie, Finance Advisory Committee member stated it was not a big surprise we always come up with a balanced budget might be painful but we get it done, need to come with a plan for the next generation to handle, spoke on his legacy for the next generation to handle

G. Fowler, asked for clarification on the deficit for next year's budget, and asked how we are for this year FY23.

S. Epstein, Finance Advisory Committee Member mentioned the schools' budgets, spoke of what departments bring in, inquired about settled contract -DPW, Clerical, Firefighters, Police Patrolmen and Superior Officers are not settled per O. Pacheco, Town Administrator.

D. Dawes stated that O. Pacheco, Town Administrator is trying to get his departments to get from them long term forecasting budgets which is not what they have been asked for in the past. done in the past.

D. Dawes mentioned big capital items to look at now.

E. Dobie, Finance Advisory Committee Member spoke about long term and how we have to streamline what the Town is giving to the residents -not the same town we knew years ago -different times -looking for services for their taxes –services upgrading –this budget we will get it done.

D. Twiss Finance Advisory Committee Member stated that raising taxes continues to be a problem-we will need to make cuts at some point-Department Heads needs to honest with themselves, forecast based on the last three year and what the needs are –changing of the guard in school and fire and police monumental changes -challenges coming up.

PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING DISCUSSION: *Fire Chief Matt McKay in attendance and spoke on Public Safety Buildings.*

G. Fowler asked Fire Chief Matt McKay how do you see the building in twenty years without the Police Department being moved out and will it still be suitable.

G. Fowler asked O. Pacheco, Town Administrator asked about getting State help with the Public Safety Buildings or do they not have the same programs as the schools.

TOPICS DISCUSSED

- *Dispatch funding.*
- *Calls to State representatives/ Favorable terms.*
- *Building functional for the next four year can that be done.*
- *Working on replacing Engine 4-valuable component to the Fire Station -not coming from tax revenue.*
- *Trucks responding to many calls.*
- *Building upkeep- structurally reinforcing the building may cost more money.*

D. Twiss, Finance Advisory Committee Member spoke on not having a building that construction meets today's construction standards, although no new catastrophic flooding in that building, only a matter of time a monumental problem will happen, need a new building, many problems in the building, use of capital money for use of this building.

D. Dawes spoke on the proper facilities for the public safety building and have to start the process with everyone on Board.

S. Epstein, Finance Advisory Committee Member spoke in possible locations of a public safety building at DPW location in space that is not being used and or at the landfill area not being used.

E. Dobie, Finance Advisory Committee Member spoke on G. Fowler fiscal responsibility, spoke on the Fire Department women's locker rooms which is the size of a closet, we need to be concerned for the quality of life for the people who work there, taking some steps forward.

O. Pacheco, Town Administrator spoke on having \$50k in the education fund starting this year next year and next year it will be up to \$100K we can put a request for architectural design, more money up front now in the early stages, reconfigure the Capital Plan and have that ready for town meeting.

Steve Epstein, Finance Advisory Committee Member inquired about a calculating response time from an architect's firm was asked.

A. Smith inquired would we have to worry about where to house the Departments during a new safety building construction.

Alicia Raspa, Finance Advisory Committee Member suggested creating /forming a committee regarding a new public safety building.

O. Pacheco, Town Administrator suggested a five (5) member Board and a possibly have as a discussion at a Board of Selectman meeting in March.

The Earle 4 Fire Station was mentioned of a possible location or use.

Ed Dobie, Finance Advisory Committee Member recently visited the Highway Department and mentioned shared mechanical services, Town mechanic, automotive repair service included, make a hub for all town vehicles to be serviced.

S. Epstein Finance Advisory Committee Member spoke of fuel sharing in a centralized location.

RFQ will be done by O. Pacheco, Town Administrator and he will share this with the Board of Selectman and the Finance Advisory Committee when completed, spoke about what the Committee should look like and the role of that committee.

O. Pacheco, Town Administrator mentioned that after the May 2nd, Town Meeting we can hit the ground running on the Public Safety Building.

A. Smith asked if the Town should start sooner on the RFQ.

S. Epstein. Finance Committee Member asked about site selections -O. Pacheco, Town Administrator stated it would be in the RFQ.

S. Epstein, Finance Advisory Committee Member mentioned site work will need to be done at the Highway Department.

O. Pacheco, Town Administrator mentioned tracking fuel from a centralized location.

G. Fowler spoke on power outages in Town which the Town does not get many and mentioned this might be the time to bring the Electrical Department and talk about gas generators that could power the whole Town, ways of saving money, mentioned a solar facility, emergency shelters.

O. Pacheco, Town Administrator spoke on gas generators and mentioned that there have been some conversations on a solar facility, spoke on solar panels on space (land fill) not being used with a battery backup, a lot of money for the Electrical Department.

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Free Cash Discussion:

All members of the Finance Advisory Committee stayed for the discussion on Free Cash.

Discussions:

- *Bond ratings*
- *Baseline numbers –Free Cash does not say that.*
- *Down rated AA3 -maintained the rating we had when we refunded the school debut*
- *Base line number can re-work the policy per Orlando ---*
- *Look at Meals tax -what is available*
- *Bridges & culverts, building that need repair,*
- *Increasing the free cash to \$500K was mentioned*
- *Reserve we raise and appropriate*
- *Bottom line free cash policy figure to \$300K*
- *ARPA allowed the Town to purchase items that had been kicked down the road*
- *Cannabis*

D, Dawes stated this policy of free cash was adopted on 2/28/2011.

D. Lamonica asked what was the balance now-over \$2 Million was the answer give,

D. Dawes stated that half the free cash should go into capitalization fund.

G. Fowler asked how much does the school department pay back on this.

D. LaMonica asked about the calculations.

O. Pacheco, Town Administrator stated that the excise came in a little higher, Growth number coming in higher in the budget.

D. Dawes stated that last year's excise cannabis tax was \$481K.

Alicia Raspa, Finance Advisory Committee Member asked if permits are turning back.

G. Fowler spoke on certain amounts of funding finding in its way into Capitalization maybe we can put in certain amounts, could be in for the special town meeting if we need the study for the public safety building this could pay for it.

O. Pacheco, Town Administrator moving money into capitalization would need town

meeting approval.

G. Fowler spoke on the Town will be adding 35% cannabis excise, talked earlier about the host agreement money going away, better place is capitalization, policy reads.

G. Fowler asked about the Ice and Snow budget and where are we on that, we always rely on free cash for snow and ice and -other items as they become needed, 25% in tax stabilization fund.

D. Twiss, Finance Advisory Committee Member spoke on snow and ice and the \$300K amount has to be a hard stopping figure.

G. Fowler asked why we can't we fund OPEP.

D. Twiss, Finance Advisory Committee Member aired caution about changing the \$300K free cash number.

A. Raspa, Finance Advisory Committee Member questioned if they created a special education fund last year.

G. Fowler mentioned about the reserve fund that hadn't been spent, corrected the library has used some of the money.

S. Epstein, Finance Advisory Committee Member asked about the policy concerning a percent of free cash in the reserve fund.

D. Twiss spoke on special education and that the law provides they get all the services that are needed. Put the funding in there so there will be no surprises in a year.

D. Twiss suggested to be clearer on transfer's, bigger issue, questions where the money comes from, being asked what is not being funded.

D. Lamonica asked if the School Department is in Clear Gov and can anyone see their budget, can anyone see their line items.

D. Dawes spoke on Departments having money leftover in their budget which they would use instead of losing it.

G. Fowler spoke on OPEB's unwritten Policy, Capitalization Fund and New Growth OPEP / Cannabis Excise, -questioned if money can be taken from Stabilization funds. Wanted to make a policy back in 2018 in which there would be enough funds in them now to possible pay for a new public safety building, spoke of transfers, timing of increases of teachers' salaries.

O. Pacheco, Town Administrator spoke on numbers doing the talking, business world - personnel relationship, Government is a mess due to personal decisions being made example why are we paying someone to take the trash out when its zero below, tough decisions to be made and he is willing to make some tough decisions.

D. Twiss spoke on senior citizen voting.

G. Fowler suggested that himself and O. Pacheco, Town Administrator could get together and speak to the legislators with the possibility of moving funds from cannabis to OPEP benefits.

D. Dawes mentioned not a lot of development areas left in Town -not many farms Not a lot of development areas in Town per D. Dawes-not many farms left in Town

O. Pacheco, Town Administrator addressed some issues regarding the Conservation Commission, some statements that are being said are inappropriate, not supported by any facts. the factual detail in his seven-page response which is available to anyone that would like to read, his response did not come out in full, not debating people on Facebook, public business should not be done on social media, this topic might be discussed at the next Board of Selectman meeting under the TA's Report.

G. Fowler asked what is the direction and obligations from the Commissioners and suggested a joint meeting with them.

ADJOURNMENT:

G. Fowler motioned the Board to adjourn meeting at oved to adjourn at 8:55 P.M. with P. Kershaw seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken all in favor.

All Board of Selectman Meetings can be viewed on our Town Website at <https://www.georgetownma.gov> Under the Community TV tab on the left side.

*Documents used in the meeting:
Clear Gov. Budget Spreadsheet*