

**Sudbury Finance Committee  
Virtual Meeting Minutes  
October 26, 2020**

**ATTENDANCE**

Members of the Finance Committee present for the Virtual Meeting were: Co-Chair, Eric Poch, Co-Chair Scott Smigler, Susan Berry, Ronald Brumback, Howard Feng, Michael Joachim, Jean Nam, and Sonny Parente

**ABSENT:** Saji Johnson

**ALSO PRESENT**

Dennis Keohane, Finance Director/Treasurer-Collector, Henry Hayes, Town Manager

**CONVENE:**

Co-Chair Eric Poch called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Co-Chair Poch roll called members of the Finance Committee present at the October 26, 2020, Virtual Meeting.

**ITEM 1: Open the Meeting**

- a. Welcome and Member Roll Call
- b. Agenda Commentary and Opening Remarks (Co-Chairs)  
Co-Chairman Smigler stated that the Finance Committee meetings are Streamed Live via the Town's Zoom account and he expressed his appreciation to Sudbury TV for all their help with this process. Co-Chairman Smigler stated that the Finance Committee calendar through April is now posted to the Town website. He stated that this meeting will focus on developing a Framework on how the Cost Centers share data and insight with the Finance Committee as well as empowering the Liaisons to work offline with their Cost Centers. He stated that the Finance Committee's theme this year is to decentralize responsibility and do work in between meetings to allow for greater productivity during meetings. Co-Chairman Smigler expressed his appreciation to Dennis Keohane for processing the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) payments and noted that four Finance Committee members have registered for the Finance Committee training webinars.
- c. Report from Town Manager and Finance Director  
Town Manager Henry L. Hayes - Town Meeting cost, Health Department budget request, other relevant updates. The Town Manager shared an update on Town Meeting costs as of October 23, 2020. He stated that the typical cost for Town Meeting is approximately \$10K, but this year's Town Meeting costs totaled \$39,828.37. Mr. Hayes also shared

information on the Public Health Department's staffing of per diem nurses who assist the Public Health Department with contact tracing with regards to the COVID-19 Health Emergency as well as assist with day-to-day operations of the Public Health Department. Mr. Hayes stated that these are temporary employees who do not receive benefits and after December 30 funding for these positions through to the end of the fiscal year is not known. A discussion followed on the rate of hourly pay per week for these positions which are not in the budget. Mr. Hayes shared information on potential expenses coming out of the Fire Department and the Department of Public Works.

Co-Chairman Smigler noted that the conversation on Vocational Schools has started and that the Town Manager may want to share an update with the Finance Committee on this at a future meeting.

Dennis Keohane, Finance Director - Revenue collection, State Guidance, Numbers validated (State Aid, E&D, etc), Fairbank Feasibility Report budget line item, discuss quarterly financial reporting, other relevant updates. Dennis Keohane reported that Governor Baker has released a revised budget plan. He stated that the updated cherry sheet estimates are higher than anticipated for the FY21 budget. Mr. Keohane stated that there are no concerns with revenues collected year to date. Mr. Keohane stated that the three-year forecast will be completed within the next two weeks. At Co-Chairman Smigler's request, Mr. Keohane explained what a cherry sheet is. He stated that cherry sheets are the best estimates of the amount of state aid and assessment as well as local aid payments and corresponding charges. Mr. Keohane responded to an earlier request regarding costs related to the Fairbank Feasibility Report. He stated that the Fairbank Feasibility Report was charged to the FY19 Town Manager's Capital Budget and the total expense was \$40,340. Co-Chairman Smigler asked Mr. Keohane what metrics he would include in a quarterly report or update. Mr. Keohane replied that he would put together a report that shows the year over year comparison by quarter. Susan Berry asked when Free Cash would be certified. Mr. Keohane responded that it will be much later in the year. Co-Chairman Smigler asked if it is too early to know what new growth would be. Mr. Keohane responded that it is too early and that the assessors are working on their final valuations now. He added that once it is completed it gets submitted to the state for their approval.

**ITEM 2: Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**ITEM 3: General Business****a. Approve Meeting Minutes****Motion and Vote**

Sonny Parente moved, and Michael Joachim seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the meetings of February 25, 2019, and April 8, 2019, as submitted.

**Roll call vote:**

Scott Smigler, yes; Ronald Brumback, yes; Michael Joachim, yes; Howard Feng, yes; Susan Berry, yes; Jean Nam, yes; Sonny Parente, yes; and Eric Poch, yes.

**The motion carried. The vote was unanimous.**

**Motion and Vote**

Susan Berry moved, and Sonny Parente seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the meetings of August 4, 2020, and September 29, 2020, as amended.

**Roll call vote:**

Scott Smigler, yes; Ronald Brumback, yes; Michael Joachim, yes; Howard Feng, yes; Susan Berry, yes; Jean Nam, yes; Sonny Parente, yes; and Eric Poch, yes.

**The motion carried. The vote was unanimous.**

**b. Budget Transfers and Other Business**

There were no Budget Transfers.

**c. Liaison Reports**

Co-Chairman Poch shared an update on an October 20 Select Board meeting he attended. He stated that there was not much in terms of money articles discussed. He pointed out two areas of note: one was the vote to accept the \$300K grant for the CXS purchase; and the discussion around the release of Executive Session Minutes from the discussion about the inter-municipal agreement for L-S, between Lincoln and Sudbury. He added that these minutes are due to be released but have not made it to the website to date. Co-Chairman Poch also mentioned that there was a discussion on the formation of a working committee for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail: The Design Task Force.

Michael Joachim reported that he and Susan Berry spoke with Silvia Nerssessian, Chairman of the Sudbury Public School Committee. He stated that the meeting was more of a getting up to speed meeting for him. He added that Ms. Nerssessian mentioned that there are no major surprises in the FY21 Sudbury Public Schools Budget and that they do not

anticipate having any major issues with COVID-19 related expenses.

Susan Berry added that the Sudbury School Committee discussed their FY22 Budget Timeline at their October 5<sup>th</sup> meeting. She also added that at their October 19<sup>th</sup> meeting the Sudbury School Committee received a presentation on the Sudbury Public School FY22 Capital Request Recommendations. She stated that the most expensive capital request is for a Noyes Elementary School fire alarm system replacement which is approximately \$220K.

Ms. Berry also reported on the Board of Health meeting she attended. She stated that there are huge demands on the Social Work division of the Public Health Department.

Ronald Brumback reported that L-S has assembled their capital request for FY21. He stated that \$337,5000 was approved for turf field replacement out of the E&D funds by the Select Board in June and \$337,500 is Sudbury's share. A discussion followed on fees collected for the use of the fields. Dennis Keohane explained that a Field Stabilization Fund has been established but it is not related to the L-S turf field replacement. He added that fees that are collected are used for the maintenance of all town fields, staffing, and programming. Mr. Brumback stated that L-S has received Request for Proposals (RFPs) for COVID-19 testing at Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School. He added that they are looking for various sources to fund this and that this expense is not in their budget. Mr. Brumback continued with his report and mentioned the Superintendent/Principal's proposal to end the hybrid learning model before Thanksgiving until after the first of the year where there will be a reassessment on whether to restart the hybrid learning model. Mr. Brumback stated that L-S has not mentioned that they would need additional funds. A general discussion followed on the RFPs for COVID-19 testing.

Co-Chairman Smigler stated that the Finance Committee is hearing a lot about potential new expenses some of which may or may not hit the town. He asked Dennis Keohane what happens if the need for a short term fund exceeds what is available in the Reserve Fund. Mr. Keohane responded that it would depend on the magnitude: if it were something significant then a Special Town Meeting would be called to ask for additional appropriations; otherwise, it would be up to the departments to make it work within their budgets.

Jean Nam provided an update on a Planning Board meeting. She referred to a worksheet that was created by consultants Horsley Witten Group that illustrates an Action Plan for the Town of Sudbury. She stated that Planning Board members have provided written comments and that the consultants have created a Virtual Open House with virtual rooms to learn all about the Planning Board Action Plan Items. She added that once the Virtual Open House is closed, the Planning Board will compile all the comments and submit a report.

Jean Nam also reported on the Community Preservation Committee meeting. She stated that proposals are in and that she has uploaded them to the shared drive and are in the CPC Folder. She added that there is approximately \$7M in CPC Reserved Fund. She stated that the big projects include resurfacing at SMILE Playground, Housing Rental Assistance, Feeley Field, which is a multiyear proposal.

**d. Calendar Review and Future Agenda Items**

Co-Chairman Smigler stated that the Finance Committee calendar is posted on the Town website. He stated that the dates are posted until the end of April and that only one date is likely to change.

**e. Future Agenda Items**

Co-Chairman Smigler asked for suggestions on Future Agenda Items. Jean Nam stated that some members of the CPC are asking for a more rigorous tracking on the follow-up of approved projects. Ms. Nam suggested that the Finance Committee consider how it would track and include all capital and financial projects in its review of Cost Center budgets. A general discussion followed.

Ms. Nam stated that the last official Town plan was that Sudbury would join Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School. She would like to hear from the Town what it would cost to join.

Co-Chairman Smigler stated if members have any suggestions for future agenda topics to email him and Co-Chairman Poch.

**ITEM 4: Committee Organization**

**a. Liaison Roles and Responsibilities**

Co-Chairman Smigler stated that this is an opportunity for new members to understand what the best practices are for reaching out to the respective committees, how best to participate in the meetings, and how to give updates. Co-Chairman Smigler stated that the Town has been notified about who the Finance Committee Liaisons

are. A general discussion followed on suggestions to contact Committee Chairs by email and attend as many meetings as possible, listening for topics that are relative for FinCom, and to develop a relationship with the Chair as a resource to answer relevant questions.

Co-Chairman Smigler stated that the biggest lesson he can share is that the work will not come to you, that you have to go to it. He added that it is important to attend as many meetings as possible. Co-Chairman Smigler stated that he believes that it is a good idea to have two members serve as Liaisons to the Cost Centers. He asked if an additional member would volunteer to serve as Finance Committee Liaison to L-S and to contact him or Co-Chairman Poch regarding this.

- b. [Vote] Goals & Projects for FY21 and formation of the policies subcommittee to propose updates to FinCom operating policies and Sudbury financial policies, and capital subcommittee to propose recommendations related to improved capital budgeting. The discussion began with a review of the three Finance Committee Goals: 1) Meet Statutory Responsibilities; 2) Improve Communications with Town Departments, and 3) Understand Current Capital Management Policies and Practices and Advocate for Improvement if Warranted. Co-Chairman Poch stated that the goals were developed by the Co-Chairs modeled on the Select Board's approach and keeping in mind the Finance Committee's mandate and its operational procedures.

A general discussion followed on suggested modifications to the Finance Committee Planning Document. In Goal 1, Finance Committee members agreed to work collaboratively with the Select Board and other committees as appropriate on the development and updating of strong financial policies. In Goal 2, Finance Committee members agreed that it is important to establish a productive line of communication with the Select Board and Department Heads. In Goal 3, Finance Committee members agreed that this would be an ongoing conversation. The Finance Committee will continue its consideration of 1) advocating for planning tools to anticipate budget pressures, anticipate debt overrides, and offer continuity of service, 2) advocating for facilities needs assessments and for existing inventory of fixed assets by location, age, condition, and cost of maintenance,

and 3) advocating for production of updated 5-year plan and to promote coordination across spending pools. A general discussion followed on the implementation of goals.

c. Discuss Appointment to CIAC

Co-Chairman Smigler led the discussion on this item. He provided background information on the Finance Committee's appointment to the Capital Improvement Advisory Committee (CIAC). Co-Chairman Smigler stated that Susan Ciaffi's, the current appointee, term has expired. She has expressed an interest in being reappointed. Co-Chairman Smigler also stated that the Select Board has two additional persons who have expressed an interest in serving. He presented two options for the Finance Committee's consideration in filling the seat. It was the consensus of the Finance Committee to reappoint Susan Ciaffi. The Finance Committee would vote on this item at their November meeting.

**ITEM 5: Committee Discussion**

a. Insights from Association of Town Finance Committee Webinars - Discussion on this item was postponed.

b. FY22 Budget Preparation

i. Budget Process Responsibilities

Co-Chairman Smigler stated that Budget Process Responsibilities is a new tab that has been added to the Finance Committee FY21 Planning 102620 spreadsheet. He stated that this was after a conversation with the Town Manager and the Finance Director to align due dates, responsibilities, accountability, and consultation.

ii. [Susan leads] Budget form purpose and changes for current FY: Reconciliation Sheet, MultiYear Comparison Sheet

Susan Berry provided insight on this item. She described the purpose and goal of the Reconciliation Worksheet and the Multi-year Data Comparison Worksheet. A general discussion followed on suggested changes to the forms. Susan Berry will update the template and would finalize it for review by the Finance Committee at their next meeting.

iii. Scheduling meetings with cost centers to discuss budget pressures on December 9, and possible dates for budget hearings on February 21. Discuss preparation guidance including questions and requests for Cost Centers

Co-Chairman Smigler stated that due to a conflict with an SPS Committee meeting, Susan Berry and

Michael Joachim requested that the Finance Committee change its meeting in December from December 7 to December 9 to hear about budget pressures from the Cost Centers. He added that the Town will not be available until mid-January. Co-Chairman Smigler stated by January 6 the Finance Committee would have a summary of the budget request from the Cost Centers and by January 15 the Finance Committee would have the full budget book. Co-Chairman Smigler also stated that the Finance Committee would have the 3-year Financial Forecast from the Finance Director by November 3. A general discussion followed on scheduling the Cost Centers for the Budget Hearings.

- iv. Discuss Free Cash Policy - Discussion postponed to a later meeting.

**ITEM 6: Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**ITEM 7: Adjournment****Motion and Vote:**

**Sonny Parente moved, and Ronald Brumback seconded the motion that the October 26, 2020, Finance Committee meeting be adjourned at approximately 10:30 p.m.**

**Roll call vote:**

**Scott Smigler, yes; Ronald Brumback, yes; Michael Joachim, yes; Howard Feng, yes; Susan Berry, yes; Jean Nam, yes; Sonny Parente, yes; and Eric Poch, yes.**

**The motion carried. The vote was unanimous.**

*The next scheduled meeting of the Finance Committee is Monday, November 9, 2020, at 7:00 p.m.*

*Submitted by Cheryl Gosmon*