

**Sudbury Finance Committee
Virtual Meeting Minutes
February 26, 2024
7:00PM**

ATTENDANCE

Members of the Finance Committee present: Co-Chair Michael Joachim, Co-Chair Eric Poch, Andrew Bettinelli, Henry Sorett, Mike Ferrari, Susan Berry, Ryan Lynch and Maura Carty

ABSENT

Colin Wang

ITEM 1: Welcome and Member Roll Call

Co-Chair Joachim called the meeting to order at approximately 7:02PM, declared a quorum present, and roll-called members present. He read the Municipal Remote Meeting Disclaimer.

Opening Remarks by Co-Chairs

This meeting is devoted to the Town fiscal year budget hearing, the final of the three cost centers.

ITEM 2: Public Comment

There was no public comment.

ITEM 3: Town Manager's Proposed FY25 Budget Hearing

The following were in attendance: Town Manager Andy Sheehan, Assistant Town Manager and Human Resource Director Maryanne Bilodeau, and Finance Director Dennis Keohane.

Mr. Sheehan reviewed his PowerPoint presentation on the Town Manager's Proposed FY25 Budget including the following highlights:

- Review of home rule charter.
- Budget calendar.
- Revenues and available funds.
 - Discussion of Chapter 70 funds within state aid.
 - Discussion of free cash.
- Expenditures.
- Big picture.
 - 70% of budget devoted to SPS and LS; 30% to Town.
- Vocational education
- Level service budget.
 - No increase in headcount.
 - No new initiatives.
- Debt service.
- Employee benefits (Town and SPS).
- OPEB trust contribution by School/Town.
- Full-time head count Town departments.
- Unfulfilled requests.
- Looking ahead.

Discussion ensued including the following highlights:

- New growth in FY24 was \$1.75M and of that \$900K related to unexpected personal property growth and Cold Brook Crossing; new growth in FY25 budgeted at \$1M lower than FY24.

- Increase in legal services due to labor contract negotiation and anticipated additional legal representation
- Increase in administrative assistant services due to anticipated retirement and additional hours to upgrade position.
- Increase in building inspector salary of 5.3% in FY24 and 7.5% in FY25 and assistant building inspector increase due to step increases; assistant building inspector position unfilled in FY23 leads to significant disparity between FY23 actual and FY25 proposed; assistant building inspector and deputy inspector positions needed.
 - Department is sufficiently staffed and decreases are not expected.
- Increase in Recreation Director salary due to step increase.
- All enterprise funds are trending lower but retained earnings will supplement.
- Mr. Keohane will check discrepancy between SPS headcount in the FY25 Preliminary Town Budget and in the SPS multi-year data comparison.
- Significant increase from FY23 actual to FY25 budget in accounting staff due to retirement and six-month vacancy in position; and in IT due to upgrade of web developer position from part-time to full-time.
- Vacancies in police and fire positions led to increase in overtime salary line item to cover vacant positions; budget for regular salary in FY25 anticipates full staffing and less need for overtime.
- Notwithstanding the option of an override or debt exclusion, Town is limited to raising sources of additional revenue other than increases in local receipts that would require Town Meeting approval; state aid may offer some relief but cannot be depended upon due to fluctuations and variances in the 6-7% range of total revenue.
- Including entire budget in the warrant not cost-effective; printed information is available from the Town Manager's office upon request.
- Additional position in Conservation Department needed to address land management acreage under its jurisdiction and control.
- Assistant Planner position vacant in FY23 and now filled in FY25.
- Increase in All Other Expense line in public safety from \$811K in FY23 to \$1M reviewed and includes other expenses like fuel, utilities, etc.
- Proceeds from sale of cemetery lots are deposited in the Professional Care Fund which supports maintenance and salary of employees.
- Chapter 70 funds are deposited in the treasury and counted as a revenue source and distributed to fund expenditures.

Concerns expressed by various members of FinCom

- Need to track unfilled and unfunded positions over the years.
- Need to track structural deficit in the operating budgeting process to understand priorities as well as capital items.
- Unfilled requests over the years in the area of public safety identified as priority positions
- Concern that responsibilities of unfilled positions are taken on by management and thereby deflecting from leadership responsibilities.
- Monetize unfilled positions in the personnel budget as a way of better tracking/prioritizing.

Observations:

- Debt service in FY26 and FY27 expected to decline slightly from FY25.
- Final payment for LS debt service is FY26.
- Facilities condition assessment of all buildings expected in FY26.

Co-Chair Joachim thanked members of the Town Manager's team for their presentation of the Town budget.

ITEM 4: FY25 Budget Discussion

Discuss Town budget hearing

Following are the topics of discussion:

- FinCom's policy on issuing a minority report to be discussed at the next meeting.

- Update on financial details of deal with Camp Sewataro as presented to the Select Board at its November 28th meeting; FinCom members to review for further discussion and recommendation.
- Sustainability Coordinator's award of \$95K in grants this year will not necessarily be recurring revenue to justify continuation of the position and is expected to fluctuate year to year; position funded from solar revolving fund and will be reviewed for appropriate level of funding.
- Monetizing of open positions will clarify the priority of filling, i.e. if \$500K is being spent in overtime charges for regular salaried position in the amount of \$700K, the need becomes more urgent.
- Actuals needed for police and fire overtime for FY24 for assessment.
- Outsourcing police cellblock monitoring to Framingham for cost savings not considered within purview of the FinCom.

Discussion of Voting on Warrant Articles

Co-Chair Joachim reviewed the list of articles for the FinCom's consideration. Following discussion, it was agreed that the following articles will be voted on at the next meeting: Articles 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12 and 13 and capital items as time allows. Chair Joachim will obtain more information on Articles 14 and 15.

Select Board Liaison Roberts joined the meeting and addressed Articles 16 and 33. It was decided that a presentation would be requested for further information on the maintenance fees for the MBTA buildings; and that the Committee would review the presentation to the SB at its January 31st meeting with regard to the firearms safety business use for further discussion at the next meeting, and in particular Mr. Sorett's concern about the Town's exposure to damages from litigation. A public information session on the Firearms Safety Business Use article will be offered by the Select Board in the next month.

Co-Chair Joachim began the discussion on the issue of providing more information to the taxpayers by adding 100 pages of the budget to the warrant. Ms. Berry reviewed the single page draft summary of the budget to be inserted in the FinCom report. Further discussion will follow at the next meeting.

Discuss long-term capital planning

Further discussion moved to the next meeting.

ITEM 5: General business

- **Transfers and other business**

There were none.

- **Liaison reports**

Written update on Fairbanks Community Center provided by Ms. Carty.

LS School Committee meeting – issue of solar array to be discussed.

- **Calendar**

March 4 – Vote on warrant articles

In-person/hybrid meeting

March 11 and 18 – scheduled as needed

- **Approval of Minutes of January 29, 2024**

Upon motion duly made by Co-Chair Poch and seconded by Ms. Carty, it was unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of January 29, 2024 as amended. Mr. Ferrari-Y, Ms. Berry-Y,

Mr. Lynch-Y, Co-Chair Joachim-Y, Mr. Bettinelli-Y, Mr. Sorett-Y, Co-Chair Poch-Y, and Ms. Carty-Y. Motion carries 8-0, unanimous.

ITEM 7: Public comment

Janie Dretler, Chair of the Select Board, appeared before the Committee. She clarified that the Select Board had received a financial statement on Sewataro as of September 30, 2023 and a presentation was made to the Select Board on November 28th. The property manager came to the Select Board on January 23, 2024 to respond to questions. The Select Board voted to request an audit of the financials as of September 30, 2024. The financials are listed on the project page for Sewataro.

The Board has not taken a position on the firearms safety use bylaw. The Board voted 3-2 to place it on the warrant. She invited members to tune into the meeting tomorrow evening on the topic.

Ms. Carty reiterated her statement that members view the Select Board meeting where attorneys gave their legal expertise and advice on the firearms bylaw.

ITEM 8: Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Ms. Carty and seconded by Mr. Lynch, it was unanimously voted to adjourn. Mr. Ferrari-Y, Ms. Berry-Y, Mr. Lynch-Y, Mr. Sorett-Y, Mr. Bettinelli-Y, Co-Chair Joachim-Y, Co-Chair Poch-Y and Ms. Carty-Y. Motion carries 8-0, unanimous. The meeting adjourned at 9:57PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Martin Barraford
Recording Secretary