

**Finance
Committee
MEETING
MINUTES**

February 25, 2025

Upton Town Hall, Room 203

**Paul Flaherty and Stephen Bern, Virtual - Shawn Craig and Nick Ensko
Joe Laydon, Brett Simas, Laura Hebb, Maureen Dwinnell, Susan
Brouwer, Michael Antonellis, Mary Overholt, Tania Paparazzo, Matthew
Bachtold, Nick Palmieri, Peter McGowan, Diane Tiernan and other virtual
participants**

1 The Finance Committee meeting was opened at 6:35pm by Paul Flaherty.

2

3 **Joint Meeting with Select Board to review financial presentation and discuss FY26 budget
4 process:**

5 Town Manager Joe Laydon opened the conversation by providing a brief overview of the process
6 and what was planned for this meeting – budget reviews for Land Use & Inspection Services,
7 Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Elder & Social Services, Library, Police and Board
8 of Health.

9

10 *Land Use & Inspectional Services, Planning Board and Conservation Commission:*
11 The Director of Land Use Inspectional Services (L UIS), Mike Antonellis, joined by
12 Conservation Administrator, Mary Overholt, provided an overview of the changes within the
13 department. They have transitioned 2 part-time roles into one full time role along with
14 transitioning from a Department Specialist to an Assistant Town Planner (more professional).
15 This role has been hired and these changes will lead to a full functioning office.

16 Finance Committee asked about hiring the Assistant Planner position prior to Town Meeting
17 approval along with the comparison of Finance Director comments related to declining New
18 Growth and Permit Revenues. Mr. Laydon explained that the department was not increasing
19 staff, it was renaming the Department Specialist role with a new college graduate.

20 Finance Committee also asked how the CPC got involved with funding the Assistant Town
21 Planner role. This role will be funded by Planning Board, Conservation Commission and CPC.
22 Building / Permit Fees have recently been adjusted and we may experience an increase.

23 New role taking over for previous Building Inspector and Building Commissioner roles.
24 Conservation Commission is experiencing some increases due to Assistant Planner position
25 along with adding a Summer Intern. This role would be helping to maintain trails, mowing,
26 cleanup trails, manage volunteers, fix bridges and kiosks. Currently maintained by aging
27 volunteer base. This is a trial year to see if it works.

28

29 *Elder & Social Services:*

30 Director of Elder Services Tania Paparazzo provided an overview of the proposed budget
31 increase. The increases are primarily due to increased wages, driver hours along with increased
32 attendance / usage of new facilities. Some funding for Dept Specialist continues to come from
33 formula grant. Increasing from 33 driver hours to 40 per week to operate both vans. Adding a
34 driver and looking to add a small van (large van for trips, smaller van for medical trips).

35 49% increase in attendance and >100% increase in ridership, but continuing to operate on a level
36 budget from what was funded for previous building. Modest increase to cover cost of
37 programming and supplies. 15% increase to accommodate 49% increase in attendance. Looking
38 at increasing fees, but there is a downside to that (reduced attendance due to increased fees).

39 Finance Committee asks Director what funding would be needed to increase programming to
40 appropriate levels vs staying near level funding against previous, smaller facilities. 49% increase

41 should lead to increased programming to accommodate the resident needs and expected
42 continued growth. Managing Staffing will become the next challenge with increased
43 programming and associated work. Transportation increase is biggest current concern.
44

45 *Library:*

46 Library Director Matthew Bachtold presented the budget overview on behalf of the Library
47 Trustees. Following up on the previous discussions, Mr. Bachtold mentions the need for
48 increased custodial services due to increased programming for both the Library and the Senior
49 Center. Mr. Bachtold provides recently approved budget numbers (by the Trustees). The bulk of
50 the increase for the budget is to wages. Circulation has increased moderately, # of visits has
51 increased considerably as well as program attendance. Year over year is still showing an increase
52 against initial year of activity. Expanding programming could be possible without increasing
53 staff. Most of the programs cost staff time plus materials. Mr Bachtold explains outside use of
54 the facility seems to be increasing as well. Community is using the space and coordination is
55 being managed. Finance Committee asks about shared costs - mailbox, shared calendar, etc. and
56 if there could be savings in the future.
57

58 *Police:*

59 New Police Chief Nick Palmieri along with Interim Chief McGowan present the Police &
60 Communications department budget. Chief Palmieri describes that the union is in year 2 of the 3-
61 year deal. A number of officers are receiving increases due to step and educational incentive
62 increases. Committed Officers to the department. From an expense perspective, most are level
63 funded with the exception of increased Taser program and police cruiser replacement. Finance
64 Committee asked about when the department purchases two vehicles versus one per year. Chief
65 Palmieri responds that will be requested next fiscal year. Cruisers are not delayed like some other
66 equipment / trucks have been. The department is planning to stick with the Tahoe.
67

68 *Board of Health:*

69 Diane Tierman presents the budget overviews for Board of Health which includes Board of
70 Health, Animal Control, Waste Removal and Health Services. Increases are driven by salaries
71 and waste removal. Waste removal increase of \$37k is a combination of 3% increase plus other
72 costs increase. Wheelabrator costs also assumed to increase, assumed to be \$10k.
73 Finance Committee asks about some of the new developments and some are required to provide
74 there own trash services. Ms. Tiernan then explains some of the costs for the trash, including the
75 cost of trash bags. Recycling costs were also discussed along with having the residents take care
76 of their own trash (has been voted down in the past). The topic of two line items for a Nurse is
77 asked and it is explained that Blackstone is funding for apportion of our Nurse. It is a part time
78 role that is shared with Blackstone.
79

80 Budget Status and Additional Warrant Articles

81 Mr. Laydon addresses the next step for the TM Budget Recommendation. Mr. Laydon then
82 reviews the memo regarding the additional articles for the ATM warrant. The articles include the
83 Community Center / Playground Capital Improvement Stabilization Fund, Ambulance, Assessor
84 Certification and Expenditure of Default Funds.

85 Finance Committee asks why we would fund the entire Community Center Stabilization balance
86 once versus over the next ten years. Mr Laydon explains he put the total value in so that we
87 could reduce, if necessary, on the warrant.

88 Mr. Laydon provides additional overview of the Ambulance strategy.

89

90 **Scheduling of Next Meetings with Select Board and Departments/Committees:**

91 The next Finance Committee is expected to be held on March 4, 2025, as another joint meeting
92 with the Select Board to discuss the remaining budget process.

93

94 **Motion to adjourn** is made by Paul Flaherty at 7:50pm, seconded by Stephen Bern. Unanimous
95 approval.

96

97 Respectfully submitted,
98 Stephen M. Bern, co-chair of the Finance Committee