

**Note: These proposed minutes should be considered preliminary until they are approved by the board at a future meeting.**

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**FINANCE COMMITTEE  
MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2023  
REGULAR MEETING: TOWN HALL  
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**

Members Present: Chair Dan Campbell (DC), Sue Kaczinski (SK), Tony Matteo (TM), David McCarthy (DM), Bernie Porada (BP), Gail Weiss (GW)

Members Absent: none

Others in Attendance: Town Administrator Andrea Llamas

***I. CALL TO ORDER***

Chair DC called the meeting to order at 6pm.

***II. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES***

DC announced the minutes are not yet ready.

***III. DEPARTMENT OPERATING BUDGETS***

A discussion ensued on scheduling the department budget presentations, and prioritizing those that have increases in their staff and budgets.

*TM arrived at 6:03pm.*

***IV. COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT (COLA)***

*DC recused himself from the meeting at 6:06pm because, as a town employee, he is directly affected by the COLA decision. Vice Chair BP took over running the meeting.*

A discussion ensued on the COLA. Highlights included:

- The COLA established for 2024 by the Social Security Administration is 3.2%.
- While this is a guideline, the town is not required to adhere to it when granting COLAs for town staff.
- The COLA for town staff in 2023 was 6%.
- There is only one union under which any town employees are organized, and that is for the Police Department. They have a contract.
- Implications of the COLA on the town budget.
- Implications of the COLA on keeping Northfield competitive as an employer, as compared to other area towns and their salaries.

**MOTION BY TM THAT WE SET THE COLA AT 3% FOR THIS YEAR. GW SECONDED.  
ROLL CALL VOTE:**

**GW YEA**  
**SK YEA**  
**BP YEA**  
**TM YEA**  
**DM YEA**

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

*DC returned to the meeting at 6:14pm.*

*BP stopped running the meeting.*

*DC resumed running the meeting at 6:15pm.*

#### ***V. CAPITAL BUDGETS / ARTICLES***

A discussion ensued on the Fire Department's request for a brush truck.

BP said he would like more details from the Fire Department, including figures and estimates, and the difference in cost between purchasing a new versus a used truck, and he would like this information before proceeding.

Town Administrator Andrea Llamas noted the Fire Department is using some trust money for the purchase.

BP requested there be more established procedures for all departments requesting capital purchases, and those procedures should include requiring information and documentation on prices and estimates.

Ms. Llamas noted a few articles include large funding requests. She asked the Finance Committee members if they wanted the people making the requests to appear before the Finance Committee. The consensus was yes, with no dissent.

#### ***VI. DEPARTMENT BUDGET MEETINGS***

Ms. Llamas said these will be scheduled soon.

#### ***VII. FISCAL 2024 TAX RATE***

Ms. Llamas announced the tax rate has been set, as well as the classification hearing. This information is on the DLS website. The tax rate for 2024 is \$13.58, which is exactly the same as 2023. New growth in town was reasonable, and more may come.

#### ***VIII. SPECIAL TOWN MEETING***

Ms. Llamas reviewed the articles. They included:

- The Assessors have a request for an overlay transfer to cover the legal fees and other costs of the appellate process.
- There is an article to cover up-front costs for joining the Franklin Regional Council of Governments's (FRCOG) inspection program. The town seeks to use their program for gas, electrical, and plumbing permits.
- A request has been made for funds to pay for speed-monitoring devices to be placed around town.
- The Sewer Commissioners seek the cost of engineering from the Sewer Enterprise Fund so they

can apply for a grant.

- The Sewer Commissioners want to expand their roster from three members to five.

A discussion ensued.

#### ***IX. ITEMS NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATED IN 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THIS MEETING***

Ms. Llamas reported funding is needed to pay for necessary repairs to the oven in the Senior Center, as it had a gas leak and needed general servicing. The request is to transfer it from the Reserve Fund. The quote for this work is \$1,451.58; there is \$55,000 in the Reserve Fund. Ms. Llamas said the oven is otherwise in excellent shape, would be expensive to replace, and is worth keeping.

**MOTION BY BP TO APPROPRIATE \$1,451.58 FOR THE REPAIR OF THE GAS STOVE IN THE SENIOR CENTER. DM SECONDED.**

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

**DC YEA**

**GW YEA**

**SK YEA**

**BP YEA**

**TM YEA**

**DM YEA**

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### ***X. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED BY THE COMMITTEE***

There was none.

#### ***XI. BRIEFINGS ON MEETINGS ATTENDED BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS***

BP announced he attended the EMS Facility meeting. Some members of the committee, including the Northfield EMS Chief, and members of the Selectboard, conducted a site visit to a potential property for a future EMS facility. It is located on the corner of Routes 142 and 10. It was a tour of an existing building and its surrounding property. There were no deliberations or decisions.

TM announced he attended, for the first time, the classification meetings for a variety of town employees to establish their grades.

#### ***XII. NEXT MEETING***

The next meeting is Monday, January 8, 2024, at 6pm.

#### ***XIII. ADJOURN***

**MOTION BY BP TO ADJOURN. TM SECONDED.**

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

**DC YEA**

**GW YEA**  
**SK YEA**  
**BP YEA**  
**TM YEA**  
**DM YEA**

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:58pm.

**Documents presented at this meeting:**

- FY 2025 Proposed Budgets for the following departments, boards, commissions, and committees: Accountant, Administrator, Animal Control, Assessors, Clerk/Elections/Registrar, Agricultural, Animal Inspector, Board of Health, Conservation, Council on Aging, Moderator, Sewer, and Open Space
- FY25 Total Town Budget Request Worksheet
- Town Accountant Change Form
- FY Sewer Positions Request

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Respectfully submitted by Wendy M. Levy from minutes taken by Wendy M. Levy.

This represents my understanding of the above dated meeting. If you have any changes, please submit them at the next meeting.

*approved 4/29/2024*  
*Daniel R Campbell*