

**FINANCE COMMITTEE
MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 2023
REGULAR MEETING: REMOTE
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**

Members Present: Dan Campbell (DC), Sue Kaczinski (SK), Tony Mateo (TM), Bernie Porada (BP)

Members Absent: David McCarthy

Others in Attendance: Town Administrator Andrea Llamas, Steve Serendynski, Bee Jacque, Joseph Stacy, BNCTV, Board Recorder Wendy M. Levy

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair DC called the meeting to order at 6pm.

DC announced the recent resignation of long-serving Chair Lois Stearns. Because DC is the Vice-Chair, he will lead the meeting until further notice.

II. REORGANIZATION

DC announced the Finance Committee needs a Chair and a Vice-Chair, and he solicited nominations.

BP NOMINATED DC AS CHAIR. DC ACCEPTED. TM SECONDED. THERE WERE NO OTHER NOMINATIONS FOR CHAIR.

VOTE:

TM YEA

BP YEA

SK YEA

DC ABSTAIN

NOMINATION CARRIED 3-1, WITH ONE ABSTENTION. DC IS NOW THE CHAIR.

DC NOMINATED BP AS VICE-CHAIR. BP ACCEPTED. TM SECONDED. THERE WERE NO OTHER NOMINATIONS FOR VICE-CHAIR.

VOTE:

DC YEA

TM YEA

SK YEA

BP ABSTAIN

NOMINATION CARRIED 3-1, WITH ONE ABSTENTION. BP IS NOW THE VICE-CHAIR.

III. FINANCE COMMITTEE VACANCY

DC recommended putting a notice of the vacancy on the town website.

IV. TOWN DEPARTMENT / COMMITTEE BUDGETS

DC welcomed Town Administrator Andrea Llamas to present on this year's budget process.

Ms. Llamas noted she had sent an email to all Finance Committee members with budget documents, including the following:

- FY24 All Department Budget Received Total Worksheet
- EMS FY24 Budget Worksheet
- Capital Project Request WWTF [Wastewater Treatment Fund]
- Highway Trailer

Ms. Llamas reviewed some of the documents. Highlights included:

- The sewer fund work is ongoing; expect more information soon.
- An update on the school bathroom renovation project: the engineering firm has been hired, design and bid coming soon, project estimate also coming soon.
- The EMS building cost is not reflected in the current budget, but it will come up soon in the budget meetings.
- Ms. Llamas expressed hope that all department heads and others seeking major cost increases have submitted their capital requests. She did remind everyone. What she sent to the Finance Committee is everything she currently has.

DC asked the members of the Finance Committee to carefully review the budget documents Ms. Llamas sent.

DC asked if there were any questions. There were none.

V. MEETINGS WITH DEPARTMENTS / COMMITTEES

DC asked if any Finance Committee members had any reports from their attendance at other department and committee meetings.

BP reported he had attended some EMS Building Committee meetings. The current estimated cost for the building is between \$14.2 million and \$16 million. This figure could change, though. As of November 2, 2022, the Town of Northfield took possession of the property on which the building will sit. There are many upcoming meetings with different entities, such as the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. The EMS Building Committee's next meeting is January 19.

TM reported the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) has not met recently. Proposals to the CPC from the public are due on January 15, so Mr. Mateo expects the CPC to meet the following week to review them.

DC and Ms. Llamas discussed the need for Finance Committee representation and attendance at some upcoming committee meetings:

1. The Pioneer Finance Committee as they deliberate.
2. The School Committee budget hearing: the next meeting is January 17.
3. The Classification Committee, which reviews new employees' wages, and changes in pay-grade and steps for current employees.

A discussion ensued on upcoming budget hearings and meetings.

DC led a discussion on how the Finance Committee would like to proceed with their meeting format. Do they prefer remaining on Zoom, having hybrid meetings, or meeting solely in-person? TM said he prefers in-person. BP and SK said they prefer in-person, but will accept hybrid meetings.

MOTION BY BP TO CONDUCT FUTURE MEETINGS AS HYBRID MEETINGS UNTIL THE GOVERNOR'S ALLOWING OF HYBRID MEETINGS ENDS. HYBRID MEETINGS ARE PRIMARILY IN-PERSON WITH A SECONDARY ZOOM OPTION. SK SECONDED.

VOTE:

DC YEA

BP YEA

TM YEA

SK YEA

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The discussion on Finance Committee representation continued. BP agreed to attend the School Budget Committee meetings. TM agreed to attend the Classification Committee meetings. DC asked if a vote was required for this. TM said that because it will appear in the minutes, a vote is not necessary.

VI. COLA

DC announced that because this item is about determining the cost-of-living adjustment for staff, and he is staff, he will recuse himself from this portion of the meeting. Before he did so, he gave a brief history of the COLA announcement, which included the federal COLA figures for last year (6-percent) and this year (8.7-percent).

DC left the meeting at 6:27pm.

Ms. Llamas explained that the reason the COLA discussion is happening earlier than usual is because the Sewer Commission is trying to set their rates and budget, and they need COLA figures to do that.

TM asked Ms. Llamas to provide the Finance Committee with calculations for a COLA of 6-percent, and a COLA of 8.7-percent, so they can see how each amount would affect the budget. Ms. Llamas agreed to do so and will have that ready for the next meeting.

BP and SK both said an 8.7-percent COLA for Town of Northfield staff was too high, and they would not endorse that. TM said the town often gives staff the COLA determined by the federal government, and that is why he included it.

Ms. Llamas said she will contact department heads to schedule their appearance at upcoming budget meetings.

DC returned to the meeting at 6:32pm.

DC said that when the Finance Committee discusses COLA raises at future meetings, he will again

recuse himself and ask Vice-Chair BP to run the meeting for that portion of the proceedings, including the vote.

Ms. Llamas reviewed the schedule for upcoming budget meetings.

VII. SCHEDULE THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is on January 23 at 6pm, and will be a hybrid meeting: primarily in-person, but with a Zoom option for those who cannot attend in-person.

VIII. ADJOURN

MOTION BY BP TO ADJOURN. TM SECONDED.

VOTE:

DC YEA

TM YEA

SK YEA

BP YEA

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 6:35pm.

Documents presented:

- FY24 All Department Budget Received Total Worksheet
- EMS FY24 Budget Worksheet
- Capital Project Request WWTF [Wastewater Treatment Fund]
- Highway Trailer

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

approved 1/30/2023
Daniel R Campbell