

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

**FINANCE COMMITTEE
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2023
REGULAR MEETING: TOWN HALL
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**

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

Members Absent: Sue Kaczinski

Others in Attendance: Town Administrator Andrea Llamas

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair DC called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Finance Committee reviewed the minutes of the June 26, 2023 meeting.

MOTION BY BP TO APPROVE THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR THE MEETING THAT OCCURRED ON MONDAY, JUNE 26. DC SECONDED.

ROLL-CALL VOTE:

DC YEA

BP YEA

TM YEA

DM YEA

GW YEA

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Finance Committee reviewed the minutes of the July 10, 2023 meeting.

MOTION BY BP THAT THE FINANCE COMMITTEE APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM MONDAY, JULY 10, 2023. DC SECONDED.

ROLL-CALL VOTE:

DC YEA

BP YEA

TM YEA

DM YEA

GW YEA

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Finance Committee reviewed the minutes of the October 16, 2023 meeting. DC noted he was not at that meeting.

MOTION BY BP TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING THAT OCCURRED ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2023. TM SECONDED.

ROLL-CALL VOTE:

DC ABSTAIN

BP YEA

TM YEA

DM YEA

GW YEA

MOTION CARRIED 4-1, WITH DC ABSTAINING.

III. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES

Town Administrator Andrea Llamas gave her update as follows.

a. Special Town Meeting Update

Ms. Llamas shared a document which contained issues that have arisen that may require a Special Town Meeting in December or January, date to be determined. Ms. Llamas summarized the issues as follows:

- A request to transfer overlay funds from the Assessors' budget to pay for appellate tax court costs, because not enough money was allocated for it. The bill has yet to arrive, so this can wait until after the winter holidays.
- The Northfield Elementary School's front door is unsafe and in need of repair. The Fire Chief has looked at the door. School officials are drafting a proposal, and the estimated cost is \$15,000-\$20,000, and this is the Town's responsibility. Transfer-funds have already been appropriated, and this will require no new taxpayer funds.
- The town is trying to join the Franklin County Inspection Program. This is not to replace the Northfield Building Inspector; it is to utilize the county's inspectors for wiring, gas, and plumbing. Participating in the program will cost some up-front money: to buy into the program, to purchase software, and for transition costs. This will benefit Northfield because it will allow applicants to file electronically or in-person at the inspection program's offices. And, the county's full-time staff handles all aspects of the process, including notifying town committees, and collecting members' signatures. The program has an advisory board, and Northfield can send a representative to it. This will also benefit Northfield because finding inspectors is difficult. There will be an assessment, with exact figures coming soon, but costs will go down because this is less than what Northfield pays its building inspector. The town will also receive an assessment reimbursement from the county if the town does not file enough permits to match the amount of the assessment.
- Funding is necessary to pay for engineering on repairs for the sewer district. Grants are available, we are applying to them, but technical support for the grant process is necessary. Ms. Llamas reviewed the certifications of a variety of accounts in the town's roster. The estimated amount for the engineering fees is \$20,000.

- A discussion ensued on whether the town should begin to schedule an annual Special Town Meeting in the fall or winter to handle the free cash certification process.

b. Potential Funding Request

Ms. Llamas reported the following departments may have requests:

- The Recreation Center want to increase the hours of its director, which will make her eligible for benefits.
- The Sewer Department may want to add a staff person.
- EMS is adding new positions, and is increasing a part-time position into a full-time position.

A discussion ensued on the possibility of a regional EMS and the financial implications of doing this, including assessments paid into it, and assessments coming in from other towns.

c. Free Cash Certification

Ms. Llamas shared a document on Free Cash Certification. She explained how the document is organized. A discussion ensued on this document.

d. Tax Rate Classification Hearing

Ms. Llamas announced the date of this hearing — December 12 — and what happens there. State officials come to towns' Selectboard meetings to set different tax rate classifications, but most small towns only have one tax rate. This is true for Northfield. The state officials do not set the actual tax rate; they only set the different classifications, if necessary.

e. Operating Budget

Ms. Llamas reviewed the timeline and process for when departments must submit their budgets.

IV. CAPITAL REQUESTS

Ms. Llamas reviewed the FY25 capital requests, with their associated documents, as follows:

- **Fire Department.** They seek a new (used) rescue truck. The estimated cost is \$300,000. BP recommended finding a quote for a new truck, too, to compare. Ms. Llamas announced some estate money is soon coming to the Fire Department, which could defray the cost. More details soon. A discussion ensued on other funding sources for fire equipment. A discussion ensued on used versus new fire trucks.
- **Police Department.** They seek a new, fully-equipped cruiser, which includes a computer. In the future, grants may be available, but this need is current.
- **Sewer Department.** They seek funding for remote-access aerators.
- **Board of Assessors.** They seek an additional \$25,000 beyond the overlay funding discussed earlier in the meeting. They are still in appellate tax court, and they expect this will happen again in subsequent years.
- **Highway Department.** They have three requests, including a truck.
- **Energy Committee.** They seek funding for professional services to help apply for grants.
- **Grant Writer.** Mallory Sullivan would like a grant-match fund for grants that require local

matches. Not all grants allow labor or other non-monetary contributions as the entire match; some only want money as the match. This will be a special article, so the funding will last for two years. A discussion ensued on how much money Ms. Sullivan has brought in through grants; the estimate is approximately \$1 million.

- **Town Administrator.** Ms. Llamas would like \$2,500-\$3,000 to purchase basic tablets for all Selectboard members. This is partly to replace the need for printing — and sometimes reprinting — lengthy documents of 60 or more pages for each Selectboard member. Ms. Llamas is researching technological options and systems for this. The exact cost is to be determined. A discussion ensued on the merits of this proposal.

Ms. Llamas announced she is working with The Collins Center on redoing the Town Report to include details on different town departments' achievements, goals, and news; this will appear with the departments' budgets.

V. ITEMS NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATED IN 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THIS MEETING

There were none.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED BY THE COMMITTEE

There was none.

VII. BRIEFINGS ON MEETINGS ATTENDED BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- **Community Preservation Committee.** TM reported the committee reviewed their handbook at a recent meeting, and they had their annual open house, which was well attended.
- **Selectboard meetings.** DC and BP attended recent meetings. BP attended the October 17 meeting where state officials were there to discuss much-needed rural aid to cities and towns. BP attended the November 7 meeting, which included a briefing from the Sewer Commissioner on infrastructure and management reports.
- **EMS Facility Committee.** DC announced he recently attended this meeting.
- **Pioneer Valley Capitalization.** DC announced he recently attended part of this meeting.
- **School Committee Budget Sub-Committee** on October 27. BP announced he attended this meeting. They discussed assessments, the state allowing the town to pay off its debt, and the continuation of the overseer. BP told this committee the towns must receive a regional agreement; they have been waiting far too long.
- **School District Capital Master Plan Forum** on November 2. BP announced he attended this meeting. They discussed the possibility of building a new elementary school, but other options are part of this proposal. No costs were available at that time.
- **EMS Building Committee** on November 8. BP attended this meeting. The next meeting is November 29.
- **Visit to Williamsburg,** on November 11. BP said this town recently constructed a new police and fire safety building, and he visited the town to find out how they did this.
- **Six-Town Regionalization in Gill,** on November 14. BP announced he attended this meeting.

XI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is Monday, December 18.

XII. ADJOURN

MOTION BY BP TO ADJOURN. TM SECONDED.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

DM YEA

TM YEA

BP YEA

DC YEA

GW YEA

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm.

Documents presented:

- Special Town Meeting document
- Free Cash Certification
- FY24 Capital Project Request Form: Police Department cruiser
- Supporting documents for the Police Department cruiser request
- Police Department updated 10-year capital plan
- FY25 article request: Fire Department
- Fire Department updated 10-year capital plan
- Three FY25 article requests from the Highway Department
- FY25 article request: Sewer Department
- Supporting documents for the Sewer Department's request
- FY25 article request: Board of Assessors
- FY25 article request: Energy Committee
- FY25 article request: grant match
- FY25 article request: Selectboard

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

Ms. Llamas shared and reviewed a document, "FY24 Budget To-Date." Highlights included:

- Copies of this document are available to anyone who wants them.
- So far, the finances look good.
- Ms. Llamas may request a reserve-fund transfer for the Town Hall parking lot paving project. It was more expensive than anticipated because of the increase in the cost of blacktop. The project fund total is currently \$1,000 in the negative, and there is still an invoice on its way. The project is complete and the results are good.

V. ANY FUND TRANSFERS BROUGHT BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

There were none.

VI. CAPITAL REQUEST PROCESS

Ms. Llamas shared and reviewed two documents:

- "Capital Request Form for New Projects"
- "Town Hall Capital Plan: 10-Year"

Highlights included:

- Ms. Llamas will forward these documents to the heads of the following departments — Fire, Police, Highway, and EMS — and ask them to update their capital plans.
- An explanation of the format of the Capital Plan and what departments with capital equipment will need to do.
- The town's grant writer wants to include a capital grant priority form with the capital request form so she can research grants for these needs. This is new this year.
- This week, Ms. Llamas will send out funding request article forms for Annual Town Meeting to departments, boards, and committees. This will help develop the operating budget. The deadline will be November 9.
- At the November 20 Finance Committee meeting, the committee can begin meeting with department heads.

VII. EMS REGIONALIZATION

BP reported he and Dan Campbell recently attended a Selectboard meeting to discuss the possibility of EMS regionalization, and the Selectboard will discuss this again on October 23.

BP said he has a draft report on the proposal. Ms. Llamas said she can share that report with anyone who requests it.

Ms. Llamas shared and reviewed a document, "Town of Northfield Regional Emergency Medical Services Study - Draft Report - September 14, 2023," prepared by The Collins Center. Highlights included:

- There is grant funding available for task-force implementation, but there is a short timeline on that.
- This document details next steps.
- The task force will include representatives from all towns that may be included in the regional EMS plan.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE
MONDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2023
REGULAR MEETING: TOWN HALL
MEETING MINUTES**

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

Members Absent: Dan Campbell

Others in Attendance: Town Administrator Andrea Llamas, Selectboard member Sarah Kerns

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair BP called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

BP announced that because Chair Dan Campbell is absent, he will act as Chair for this meeting.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

BP announced that because he does not have the draft minutes from the July 10, 2023 meeting, the Finance Committee will review and approve these minutes at the next meeting.

III. REVIEW/SET BUDGET CALENDAR

Town Administrator Andrea Llamas shared and reviewed a document, "Finance Budget Calendar - FY2025," marked as a draft and dated October 15, 2023. Highlights included:

- Ms. Llamas established an every-Monday schedule for the Finance Committee to meet, but that does not mean they must meet every Monday.
- The Finance Committee has no tasks that must be completed during the month of October.

The Finance Committee members agreed to hold their next meeting on Monday, November 20, at 6pm.

IV. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE ON THE FOLLOWING: UPDATE ON FY23 CLOSEOUT, FREE CASH CERTIFICATION STATUS, UPDATE ON FY24 BUDGET TO-DATE

a. Update on the FY23 Closeout and Free Cash Certification Status

Ms. Llamas presented the update. Highlights included:

- The closeout is almost complete, and it is connected to the Free Cash Certification; once the closeout is finished, we can submit the Free Cash Certification.
- A few more items have recently been closed out, and the Treasurer and Accountant continue their work on this. Because of their efforts, this is a much more streamlined process than it has been in the past.
- No figures are currently available on Free Cash, but the Treasurer and Accountant will have that soon.
- There is a mysterious \$600 deficit in the COVID account. Because it is relatively small, and it would require a considerable amount of labor to reconcile it, we may simply write it off.

b. Update on the FY24 Budget To-Date

VIII. OTHER ITEMS NOT ANTICIPATED IN 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THIS MEETING

There were none.

IX. ANY CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED BY THE COMMITTEE

There was none.

X. BRIEFINGS ON MEETINGS ATTENDED BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

DM reported he attended the Selectboard meeting BP mentioned during the "EMS Regionalization" item on the agenda.

TM reported the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) met recently. In November they will host a public information meeting on how to apply for CPC funding. The CPC wants people to apply for funding, and there is ample money in the budget. The application is on the town's website.

BP reported he attended a recent School District forum on their Capital Master Plan. The next forum is on November 2 from 5:30-7:30pm at the high school. There is an additional meeting on November 14 in Gill for the regionalization study committee.

BP thanked the 350th Committee for a great roster of events.

XI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is Monday, November 20, at 6pm.

XII. ADJOURN

MOTION BY SK TO ADJOURN. GW SECONDED.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

DM YEA

TM YEA

BP YEA

SK YEA

GW YEA

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40pm.

Documents presented:

- Draft: Finance Budget Calendar - FY2025, dated October 15, 2023
 - FY24 Budget To-Date
 - Capital Request Form for New Projects
 - Town Hall Capital Plan: 10-Year
 - Town of Northfield Regional Emergency Medical Services Study - Draft Report - September 14, 2023
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Respectfully submitted by Wendy M. Levy from minutes taken by Wendy M. Levy.