



Finance Committee
June 1, 2021 2:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting
Minutes

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, this meeting of the Finance Committee is being conducted via remote participation.

Members participating remotely: De Angelis, Griesemer, Pam, Schoen, Steinberg, non-voting members Hegner, Kubiak, and Sheffler

Members absent: *None*

Others participating remotely: Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Finance Director Sean Mangano, Comptroller Sonia Aldrich, Town Clerk Athena O'Keeffe, and Minute Taker Scott Belden.

1. Call to Order

Steinberg declared the presence of a quorum, called the meeting at 2:04 PM, confirmed all participants could hear and be heard, and announced audio and visual recording.

2. FY22 Budget Review: Finance Committee recommendation and report to the Council

a. Discussion

Griesemer extended an apology to members of Community Responders for Equity, Safety, and Service (CRESS) for leaving them in attendees at a previous meeting.

Steinberg gave an overview of the line items and what members would be voting on today.

Pam asked if the number for regional lockup assessment was from use or an allocation. Mangano and Aldrich confirmed it was an allocation.

Schoen mentioned it would be useful to include funds from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) supporting the schools in the school budget. Mangano replied that the Town was waiting on a projection for what the schools will get from ARPA.

Members discussed the following:

- Sources of funding for CRESS
- Number of CRESS positions
- Responsibilities of CRESS responders
- Operating hours for CRESS
- Changes to the Police Department Budget

Schoen expressed concern for the level of debt the Town is currently accruing in future years Mangano

replied that the DPW and Fire Station would be paying back their respective debts upon completion of their new projects, and that the borrowing figures are currently just projections as the design process is still underway.

Pam noted that CRESS responders might need specific training for the job, beyond just background qualifications. Members discussed the specifics of hiring, training, and executing this new program. Steinberg opened the meeting up for public comment before going into motions.

3. Public Comment

Shalini Bahl-Milne, Town resident, asked why the Town was not considering contracting out to fulfill CRESS' needs especially if the Town wanted to start immediately. She also referenced Olympia, Washington, as a comparison for specific budgets. Bockelman replied that the Town was open to a contracting model, but that there may not be agencies available who would take the Town on as a contract. Bockelman also noted that not knowing the magnitude of these calls is an obstacle to starting the pilot program.

Toni Cunningham, Town Resident, offered her support for De Angelis and her position on clearly defining where the funds where CRESS will come from, and supported Schoen in holding off filling vacant Police positions. She expressed that she felt the Town should put more effort into restoring art and technology programs in the Town's elementary schools.

Birdy Newman, Town Resident, appreciated the opening for public comment, and the support for a 24/7 CRESS program. Newman noted that 8.5% of police calls are violent calls, and that she did not believe moving police funds to CRESS would be detrimental to the Town's safety.

Lauren Last Name Was not on Zoom nor given when she ID'd herself), Town Resident, suggested triaging CRESS calls to other programs already established in Amherst first to "stretch out the money" before the Town could have the opportunity to fully fund the CRESS program moving forward.

Kubiak provided comment on looking for a contracted company to provide services to CRESS.

Pam noted the importance of funding for arts programs in the Town, and how important they are to the happiness of students enrolled in the Town's school system.

b. Vote

MOTION: Griesemer motioned, Pam seconded, to recommend to the Town Council that they approve the FY2022 Operating budget and with an explicit understanding with the Town Manager that the Town manager will find within the approved budget the funds necessary to fund two additional community responder positions and report back to the Town Council, and Residents of Amherst, how he plans to accomplish this no later than January 31, 2022.

Members discussed the wording of this motion and decided to split the original motion into two separate motions. Griesemer withdrew her original motion, Pam seconded, and split it into two motions, one for the approval of the FY2022 Operating Budget and one focusing on the source of CRESS funds.

MOTION: Griesemer motioned, Pam seconded, to recommend to the Town Council that they approve the FY2022 Operating Budget. Non-voting members expressed support of the motion.

VOTED: 3-1-1 (Griesemer, Steinberg and Pam voted Yes; De Angelis voted No; Schoen abstained) to recommend to the Town Council that they approve the FY2022 Operating Budget.

MOTION: Griesemer motioned, Pam seconded, to recommend to the Town Council that they direct the

Town Manager to seek funds to fill eight community responder positions and the other elements of the program as proposed on May 27, 2021 and report back to the Town Council, and Residents of Amherst, how he plans to accomplish this no later than January 31, 2022. Non-voting members expressed support of the motion.

VOTED: 3-1-1 (Griesemer, Steinberg, and Pam voted Yes; De Angelis voted No; Schoen abstained) to recommend to the Town Council that they direct the Town Manager to seek funds to fill eight community responder positions and the other elements of the program as proposed on May 27, 2021 and report back to the Town Council, and Residents of Amherst, how he plans to accomplish this no later than January 31, 2022.

De Angelis noted that she did not feel the budget did enough to support the CRESS program, and that she felt funds for CRESS should be coming from the Police Department budget. Schoen abstained because she wanted the sources of the additional funds put more clearly.

Mangano gave a brief overview of the Capital Improvement Program Funding and Appropriation and Transfer Order FY22-05A.

MOTION: Schoen motioned, Griesemer seconded, that the Finance Committee recommend to the Town Council approval of Appropriation and Transfer Order FY22-05A. Non-voting members expressed support of the motion.

VOTED: Unanimous Vote 5-0-0 that the Finance Committee to recommend to the Town Council approval of Appropriation and Transfer Order FY22-05A.

Members then moved discussion to Appropriation and Borrowing Authorization Order FY22-06. Schoen noted that the best estimates for operating budget increases is 2%, and that she would be voting against this motion because she did not believe it would be helpful for FY23. Members discussed their concerns for specific aspects of borrowing funds for major projects. Pam expressed concern of accepting new revenue sources that might disrupt the town for the sake of meeting promised funds. Schoen repeated her concern the out-year impact of the capital allocation for DPW and Fire on operating budgets.

MOTION: Griesemer motioned, second by Steinberg to recommend to the Town Council the Approval of Appropriation and Borrowing Authorization Order FY22-06. Non-voting members expressed support of the motion.

VOTED: 3-1-1 (Griesemer, De Angelis, Steinberg voted Yes, Schoen voted No, Pam abstained) to recommend to the Town Council the Approval of Appropriation and Borrowing Authorization Order FY 22-06.

4. Topics not anticipated by the Chair 48 hours before the meeting

Steinberg noted that the issue of Reparations was not on the agenda, and that it was unlikely the Committee could make a motion or discuss it. O’Keeffe confirmed that they would have to put it on the agenda if they were going to discuss it.

Mangano requested to put optional tax exemption on the next agenda.

Steinberg noted that based upon the last discussion, the Finance Committee was considering the creation of a new Reparations Stabilization fund by the Town Council in June 2021. Additionally they would seek approval to move funds from FY22 into the stabilization fund in Fall 2021, upon approval by the Council. Griesemer suggested that the Committee report on the progress and suggest a motion by June 21st. Bockelman noted that the Town could provide additional helpful information for the next Finance Committee meeting on this topic.

Members discussed the next availability for the next meeting.

5. Adjourn

Steinberg adjourned the meeting at 4:45PM.

Draft Respectfully Submitted,

Scott Belden, Minute Taker

Record of agenda packet materials and documents presented

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Appropriation and Transfer Order FY22-05A

Appropriation and Borrowing Authorization Order FY 22-06

Reviewed and approved Schoen: 11/24/2021