



Finance Committee
November 23, 2021 2:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting
Minutes

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting was conducted via remote means.

1. Call to order

Members participating remotely: Pam, Griesemer, Steinberg, Kubiak, Hegner, Holloway, Schoen, and De Angelis

Members absent: None

Others participating remotely: Finance Director Sean Mangano, Comptroller Sonia Aldrich, and Clerk of the Council Athena O’Keeffe

Steinberg declared the presence of a quorum, called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm, confirmed all participants can hear and be heard, and announced audio and video recording.

Steinberg spoke about the reorganization plans that were referred to the Town Services and Outreach Committee (TSO) for a public forum and recommendation. The TSO public forum is planned for December 9, and Finance Committee will discuss the plans and send feedback to TSO prior to the public forum.

2. Public comment – None

3. Council Budget Guidelines for FY23, review of first draft and proposed modifications

Steinberg spoke about his initial draft of the budget guidelines.

Members thanked Steinberg for an excellent draft.

Members discussed the following changes to the draft:

- Adding notable changes to the guidelines at the beginning of each section
- Using technology to be more efficient
- Efficiency in development of CRESS and DEI departments
- Overworked staff, burnout, and turnovers
- Need for Revenue estimates and operating costs estimates over multiple years
- Inflation or the threat of inflation
- Comparisons with similar communities or neighbors
- Relationship with Budget Coordinating Group, Town Council, and Town Manager
- Reserves and interest rates regarding DPW/Fire buildings
- Organization of the sections

- Decision to build reserves and build capital
- ARPA funds and other grants
- 5-year revenue projections
- Salaries and Markets: Employees being drawn away from the Town for higher compensation elsewhere
- Priorities for funding to inform budget planning
- Expectations for library and schools budgets
- Present debt is extremely low, bond rating, and strength of reserves allow consideration of four major building projects
- Highlight need to examine Fees for services and adjust to augment revenues
- Establish strategic partnership agreements with Amherst College as well as UMass – currently tax exempt but need to support Town services and infrastructure.
- Advocating for greater state aid for Amherst and changes at the State level (income tax, charter formula) that would benefit Amherst
- Recognition of the Chamber and BID

Members discussed orientation information for new Councilors.

4. Performance Shell on the Common, review of maintenance fund, if available

Steinberg stated the Town was in the process of developing an MOU between the BID and the Town for maintenance of the performance shell. If the MOU is not ready yet, the next Finance Committee will take it up.

Mangano spoke about development of an MOU and the Council's approval timeline.

5. Further discussion of ARPA Fund proposal, if needed: no discussion during the meeting

6. Next meetings

Members discussed the need for an additional meeting before December 6. Members instead agreed that Steinberg would revise based on comments during the meeting, with review by Schoen as needed based on the committee discussion.

Members agreed to send edits to the chair for incorporation into a revised draft for presentation at the December 6 Council meeting without formal vote by the committee.

Members agreed to send the section regarding the performance shell to the chair of the Town Services and Outreach Committee as the Finance Committee's input on the performance shell.

Members agreed the next meeting would be on December 7, and briefly reviewed upcoming topics.

7. Matters not anticipated 48 hours in advance - None

Steinberg declared the meeting adjourned at 4:35 pm.

Record of agenda packet materials and documents presented:

11-23-2021 Finance Committee Agenda

FY23 Council Budget Guidelines Draft3

Draft reviewed and approved: 1/6/2022 Schoen on behalf of the committee