



Finance Committee of the Town Council

March 29, 2022 9:00 a.m.

Virtual Meeting

Minutes

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

Members participating remotely: Griesemer, Miller, Schoen, Steinberg, Kubiak, Hegner, Holloway

Members absent: Walker

Others participating remotely: Finance Director Mangano, Comptroller Aldrich, Clerk of the Council O'Keefe

1. Call to Order, review agenda

Steinberg declared the presence of a quorum, called the meeting to order at 9:00 am, confirmed members could hear and be heard, and announced audio and video recording.

Members reviewed the agenda.

5. Approval of Minutes

Steinberg suggested the following edits:

- On page 2, changing Schoen's comment "seeking payments in lieu of taxes if allowed by revisions to state law..."
- On page 3, change "from being taxed" rather than "from being re-assessed."

MOTION: Griesemer moved, second by Schoen, to accept the March 1, 2022 minutes, as amended.

VOTED 4-0, with 1 absent (Walker) with support from 2 present non-voting members to accept the March 1, 2022 minutes, as amended.

3.a. Discussion items: Water/Sewer Rate Policy

Mangano spoke about meetings regarding water and sewer rates and gathering data that will aid in the discussion of possible policy changes.

Members discussed metering options for irrigation.

Griesemer stated this conversation would not affect the FY23 rates, and the rate setting for the coming year would be a separate discussion.

Hegner disconnected from the meeting at 9:25 am.

Miller asked about complaints. Mangano spoke about the type of complaints the Town receives, which typically are due to meter issues that result in usage estimates.

Schoen spoke about a specific complaint, the subsequent appeal process, and the result of a bill being reduced from over \$5000 to zero.

Steinberg spoke about the goal of a rate structure that encourages the conservation of water, and the need to address rates for large-scale users.

Hegner rejoined the meeting at 9:36 am.

Kubiak spoke in favor of remote meter-reading and leak detectors.

2. Action items

a. Parking Permit Discussion and Recommendation Vote

Steinberg reported that the committee's recommendation was sent to the Town Services and Outreach (TSO) Committee but that their recommendation to the Town Council was not in line with the committee's recommendation. Steinberg reported that TSO recommended the rate structure as proposed by Town staff and not include a more rapid phase-in that the Finance Committee discussed, and that the Town Manager could institute a more rapid phase-in in the future.

Schoen commented about the previous Select Board's decision to allow overnight parking.

Miller asked about public input.

Members discussed the TSO recommendation and discussed the phasing of the permit fees and making a recommendation directly to the Town Council regarding the timing of the fees and differing fees based on vehicle registration location.

Holloway joined the meeting at 10:07 am.

Hegner was briefly disconnected and rejoined the meeting at 10:11 am.

Members discussed more rapid rate increases and different fees for vehicles registered in different communities.

MOTION: Schoen moved, second by Griesemer, to recommend the Town Council adopt proposal 1 with the proposal 2 fee for residents with non-Amherst registration.

Miller spoke in opposition to the motion due to the steep rate increase for students, and suggested a more equitable increase across all categories according to proposal 1.

Schoen stated that residents with non-Amherst registration have the option to register their vehicle in Amherst and avoid the higher fee, that on-street parking should be available to visitors for retail and dining, and other communities have a local registration requirement for permit applications.

Miller spoke about students as part of the community, and that student residents should be treated as residents.

Schoen spoke about the low excise taxes for vehicles, and that the focus is not that Amherst doesn't want students, but to encourage local registration for residents who live in Amherst for the school year.

Griesemer spoke in support of the motion.

Kubiak spoke in support of the motion, but that carving out certain groups with separate policies can be a slippery slope.

Miller asked about notification for permit holders or a grace period, so the new fee is not a shock when people renew their permits.

Steinberg suggested a prorated fee if users update their registration and commented that car insurance rates might be a factor for users making decisions to register their vehicles in Amherst or not.

VOTED 4-0, with support of 2 non-voting members (Hegner and Kubiak), and 2 members absent (Walker and Holloway), to recommend the Town Council adopt proposal 1 with the proposal 2 fee for residents with non-Amherst registration.

Members discussed what would be included in the committee report and presented to the Town Council.

4. Public Comment

Dorothy Pam spoke in appreciation for the committee's discussion and asked if there will be a differential rate for lawn watering purposes.

3.b. Discussion items; Review Budget Calendar

Mangano presented the proposed budget calendar.

Members discussed the regional school budget process.

Members reviewed the tentative committee schedule for April and May.

6. Announcements and next agenda preview

7. Items not anticipated by the Chair 48 Hours in advance

8. Adjourn

Steinberg declared the meeting adjourned at 11:04 am.

Minutes prepared by Clerk of the Council O'Keeffe

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented:

03-29-2022 Finance Committee Agenda

2022-03-01 DRAFT Finance Committee Minutes

Budget Calendar Draft 3.28.22

Finance Committee - Draft Schedule 3.28.22

Parking Permit Fees - Transition Plan Comparison 3.28.22