



Finance Committee

February 15, 2022, 9:00 AM

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: Steinberg; Griesemer; Schoen; Miller; Walker; non-voting members: Hegner; Kubiak; Holloway

Members absent: none

Others participating remotely: Finance Director Sean Mangano; Comptroller Sonia Aldrich; Clerk of the Council Athena O'Keeffe; Tanya Campbell, Melanson CPAs; Treasurer/Collector Jennifer LaFountain; CPA Chair Sarah Marshall; Minute Taker W. Kaizen

Steinberg declared the presence of a quorum, called the meeting to order at 9:03 am, confirmed all participants can hear and be heard, and announced audio and video recording.

2. FY21 Audit - Presentation and Discussion

Campbell presented information about the town audit by reviewing the document in the packet; She said that the audit is focused on budget lines with balances at or above \$600K; There were no major issues, everything is in good order;

Campbell spoke to unassigned number on the balance sheet, which comes from the stabilization fund and holds about 25% of tax levy; She said this is a large and prudent amount; She also spoke to the unreserved balanced (which goes into the general fund), which is about 18.5% of tax levy, and said this is also a healthy balance as is free cash; Steinberg pointed out that the stabilization fund was increased to manage up-coming capital projects and Campbell agreed this was a good practice; Members briefly discussed the possibility of creating a separate stabilization fund for capital projects and other issues related to capital expenditures.

Campbell spoke to the town's liabilities; She said that our retirement liability has decreased while our OPEB liability has increased; Mangano gave more context on these numbers and said that by law the town has to focus on reducing the retirement liability first; He reviewed that pension liability is based on a percentage of the average salary paid to retired employees while OPEB liability includes health insurance, life insurance, etc. paid to retired employees; Members discussed the background and history of retirement and OPEB;

Campbell said that "other issues" include complying better with procurement regulations; Mangano said new procedures have been put in place to make sure the town is fully compliant with all regulations; Members discussed with Campbell reporting and compliance for ARPA funds as well as federal funds.

Motion: Griesemer moved and Schoen seconded that the finance committee reviewed the audit report with the principle at Melanson and found that it reported a fair reflection of the town's financial management.

Discussion: none

Vote: unanimous, with support from all non-voting members

3. Transportation Fund – Discussion

Mangano discussed proposed changes to parking permits and fees, and the transportation fund as per the document in the packet; LaFountain said that handicapped persons can park anywhere that aren't restricted areas and don't have to pay for parking; Members and Mangano discussed non-resident permits; Members discussed if the fees could be increased more quickly; Members discussed the location of employee permit spots; Members and staff discussed whether sliding scale or payment plans might be an option for these fees; Finance will revisit this subject on March 8 and TSO will spend a whole meeting on it on March 10.

4. FY23 Community Preservation Act Committee Recommendation - Discussion and Vote

Members discussed settling limits on how much to fund proposals and/or restrictions on the funds; Members notes that CPA funds can be held over multiple years and wondered if potential future applications should be taken into account (e.g. repairing the high school track, affordable housing needs); Members proposed that the town's attorney write a memo on options for limiting/restricting CPA funds, including whether or not the town could use these funds to write low-interest loans; Members discussed whether or not it would be possible to use CPA funds as a loan program versus setting restrictions on future sales of real estate.

Members discussed how the state portion of CPA funds have decreased over time because more municipalities have begun to participate in the program; Aldrich said that Town Council can reduce amounts recommended by CPA committee but cannot change or otherwise move them; Marshall said that she thinks that CPA funds could pay for attorney fees for applicants.

Motion: Griesemer moved and Schoen seconded that the Finance Committee recommend that the Town Council fund the CPA projects as recommended by the CPA Committee but hold aside the two related to historical preservation (the Amherst Women's Club and the Conkey-Stevens House) until the Town has obtained additional legal counsel.

Discussion: Aldrich noted that each year the Town must allocate at least 10% of current revenue to each of the CPA categories; if the Council does not approve the historic projects, the Town will fall below the 10% requirement and would need to add a vote to reserve the difference in the historic preservation category.

Marshall and members discussed coming back to the two recommendations held aside, and that the Committee is not rejecting them but waiting for more information; March 24 is the earliest that Town Council will vote on CPA funding.

Vote: unanimous, with the support of non-voting members Kubiak and Holloway; Hegner abstained due to a conflict of interest.

5. Public Comment

Robin Fordham, 15 Taylor Street, Amherst, member of Historical Commission read a statement she sent to committee on behalf of CPA funding for the Conkey-Stevens House.

Jane Wald, Amherst Resident, Chair of Amherst Historical Commission spoke on behalf of CPA funding for the Conkey-Stevens House.

Cathryn Lombardi, President of Amherst Women's Club, spoke on behalf of CPA funding for the Women's Club.

6. Approval of Minutes: January 19, 2022

Pushed to next meeting.

7. Announcements and next agenda preview

Next meeting: March 1 (March 8th cancelled).

8. Items Not Anticipated by the Chair 48 Hours in Advance

None

9. Adjourn

Steinberg declared the meeting adjourned at 11:22 am

Minutes prepared by W. Kaizen.

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented:

02-15-2022 Finance Committee Agenda

2022-01-19 DRAFT Finance Committee Minutes

2022-02-07 DRAFT Finance Committee Minutes - Public Forum on Appropriations

2022-02-08 DRAFT Finance Committee Minutes

8.c. Memo to Town Council - Parking Recommendations - 01-14-2022

8.c. Parking PPT 1.24.22

8.c. Permit System Updates DRAFT - 01-14-2022

Amherst, MA FS21 - Final

Amherst, MA ML21 - Final

Amherst, MA SAR21 - Final

CO FY23 - 07 CPA - Project Allocations

Community Preservation Act Committee Report for Fiscal Year 2023 FINAL

Finance Committee - Draft Schedule 2.10.22

Parking Permit System-2.1.22