



---

**Finance Committee and Town Council Meeting**

**5/31/2022, 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, Review Agenda**

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

Members absent: none

Others participating remotely: Town Councilor Pat DeAngelis; Town Councilor Jennifer Taub; Town Councilor Dorothy Pam; Town Manager Paul Bockelman; Finance Director Sean Mangano; Comptroller Sonia Aldrich; Clerk of the Council Athena O'Keeffe; Minute Taker W. Kaizen

Steinberg declared the presence of a quorum, called the meeting to order at 9:02 am, then confirmed all participants can hear and be heard, and announced audio and video recording

Griesemer declared the presence of a quorum of the Town Council, called the meeting to order at 9:05 am, and confirmed Councilors could hear and be heard.

Members discussed topics to be addressed at future Finance Committee meetings

**2. Public Comment**

None

**3. FY23 Budget Review: overall budget review, questions, discussion**

Members discussed the School Committee's request for additional funding for making the art and technology positions full time. The School Committee is asking for approx. \$54,000 to cover these costs; Holloway said that the amount requested is small, and should be found in the school's budget. Griesemer said that the School Committee needs to stick to its budget. Schoen and Hegner agreed with the previous comments. Miller said it's a power struggle at the schools, it's not about the money. Kubiak said that he's supporting the Town Manager's budget. Griesemer discussed the relationship between CRESS and the schools, and the relationship between their budgets. Pam spoke in favor of giving the school the money. Walker, Steinberg and Mangano discussed the relationship between the Superintendent and the School Committee as well as the future sustainability of these positions. Members discussed the previous status of these positions relative to keeping level services. Members

discussed the history of the school budgeting process. Members discussed how this issue will be addressed in the Finance Committee's report.

Members discussed the Public Safety budget with a focus on the Police Department's budget. Mangano and Aldrich reviewed the history of the Police and Fire Department's budgets. Schoen said re. CRESS that in a year from now we'll know more about how PD and Fire will interact with them and the current budget reflects this. Griesemer recounted the history of removing police positions while adding CRESS responder positions as well as fire positions. She said that we won't know the impact of CRESS for another year or two and we'll need an evaluation system to do so. Steinberg reviewed what the public has recently asked regarding issues related to the Police Department. Walker expressed her concerns with budget based on the CSWG's LEAP report. She doesn't want to see more police hires because these positions might need to be moved to CRESS. Kubiak agreed with Griesemer and said he's in favor of keeping the police budget as it is. Miller said that Earl Miller indicated that CRESS doesn't need more money right now, but asked how we'll keep funding it in the future. Bockelman said that he spoke to Earl Miller, who accepted the budget as presented. Walker asked that the public have a better understanding of the plans for supporting CRESS in future budgets and the method through which it will be evaluated. Members and staff further discussed CRESS and its future budget as well as evaluating the program.

Members discussed budget sustainability and planning for future years. Griesemer said she was nervous about inflation, the need to build a new elementary school, the other big capital projects, 16 new positions that will need to be funded in the future, contract negotiations happening right now, and that the unprecedented amount of grant money right now will not be there in future. Schoen wants to see how the grant money is impacting the budget more clearly. She's also concerned about future budgets, especially operating expenses related to staff. Mangano said that there is a five-year forecast in the budget book—there are cautions but no hard stops at the budget's high level, although he agreed that we need to buckle down on the operating budget, Kubiak said inflation is affecting home prices as well as municipal bonds and that he thinks Town administration is understaffed. Members discussed Proposition 2.5 and its impact on the Town's budget, that it's barely enough to sustain level funding let alone implement new programs. Members and staff discussed the price of homes and reassessment, and that assessed home value has to be in a certain range of sale value or it triggers an immediate reassessment. Members and staff discussed the Town's partnership agreements. Hegner noted that "people costs" are the biggest concern with sustainability. Mangano discussed potential future cost savings including the consolidation of the elementary schools and that pension costs should drop off in the not so distant future, which could help fund OPEB costs. Taub said that the new UMass dorms will add costs to Town safety budgets. Members and staff discussed various aspects of the new elementary school project, with particular focus on what might happen to one of the buildings and its property if it's left unused. Members and staff discussed the potential impact on future budgets because of the other proposed building projects in Town.

#### **4. FY23 Budget Review: budget recommendations and report process VOTE:**

**Motion: Schoen moved with Griesemer seconding that the Finance Committee recommend to the Town Council that it accept the FY23 budget as presented**

Discussion: No further discussion

**Voted: unanimously in favor**

**5. Items not anticipated by the Chair 48 Hours in advance**

None

**6. Announcements and next agenda preview**

Next meeting: 6/7/22, 3:00-5:00 pm

**7. Adjourn**

Steinberg declared the meeting adjourned at 11:56 am

Minutes prepared by W. Kaizen

**Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented:**

05-31-2022 Town Council and Finance Committee Agenda