

**Town of Newbury
Finance Committee Meeting
Tuesday, 2 April 2024, 7:00 PM
Town Offices, 2nd Floor Meeting Room
Meeting Minutes – Approved April 16, 2024**

Members present: **Erica Jacobsen (chair), Joe Ali, Frank Visconte, Eugene Case, Richard Keys, Patrick Heffernan, Vanessa Rossi**

Also in attendance: **Tracy Blais, Town Administrator**

Erica Jacobsen called the meeting to order at 7:02pm, and a quorum was established by roll call vote. The Chair also asked for and received approval of the previous meeting's minutes. The Chair then recognized the following town employees and Select Board members present and gave approval to speak as needed during the discussions:

- Alicia Greco, Select Board Chair
- Marshall Jespersen, Capital Planning
- Martha Taylor and Kristin Grubbs, Planning Board
- Lisa Mead, Town Counsel

Public Comment initiated by the Chair, with additional explanation that additional time for public comment would be permitted prior to the Finance Committee discussing the draft Annual Town Meeting articles. As no members of the public were present, no public comments were made. The Chair noted and shared multiple emails received by the Finance Committee since the previous meeting.

Town Administrator Blais updated the Finance Committee on the town's budget and discussed the process for addressing Annual Town Meeting articles and the Finance Committee's votes. The Chair noted that the Government Finance Officers Association presented Newbury the "Distinguished Budget Presentation Award" for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023.

The Chair initiated an article-by-article review of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant, selecting only those articles relevant to the Finance Committee's remit. The Chair reviewed the process and purpose of the Finance Committee's votes. The discussion and votes to recommend or not recommend went as follows:

- Article 3: Members of the Finance Committee noted and the Town Administrator confirmed no significant change in the dollar figures from the previous year. Recommend: 7-0-0;
- Article 5: The Town Administrator confirmed the proposed budget would be balanced, that it included the full amount assessed by the Triton School Committee, and that the town's debt service continued declining. Recommend: 7-0-0;
- Article 6: The Town Administrator confirmed the current balance of the Stabilization Fund and reviewed the process for funds to be added and allocated from that fund. Recommend: 7-0-0;
- Article 7: The Town Administrator confirmed the funding stayed consistent with the previous year's budget. Recommend: 7-0-0;

- Article 8 and Article 21: regarding Article 8, members of the Finance Committee noted and the Town Administrator confirmed that a slight reduction in funding from the previous year's budget due to the actual expenses needed to fund PEG access;
 - Regarding Article 21, the Town Administrator explained the various options available to the Finance Committee and the Select Board with respect to the funds currently held in the PEG Access and Cable Related Fund;
 - Select Board Chair Greco related the relevant history of the town's Media Committee, including the current state and desired state of publicly available television coverage of town meetings. Select Board Chair Greco and Finance Committee Member Visconti discussed the various funding and technology components to reaching that desired state;
 - The Chair noted the questions raised by members of the public in emails to the Finance Committee and Town Counsel Mead assured the Finance Committee that Article 21 had been thoroughly reviewed and the actions related to the PEG Access funds recommended in the article would be in compliance with relevant Commonwealth laws;
 - Recommend Article 8: 7-0-0;
 - Recommend Article 21: 7-0-0;
- Articles 9, 10, 11, and 12: The Town Administrator commented on various components and Finance Committee members held minimal discussion before voting 7-0-0 to recommend each of these articles.
- Article 13: The Town Administrator confirmed the funding noted for each item in the article were "not to exceed" amounts. Capital Committee Chair Jesperson explained how the Capital Committee came to recommend these specific projects, the process for rating each proposal, and the rationale behind a few of the specific items. Jesperson also answered specific questions, including which projects were one-time expenditures and which required or were part of multi-year budgets. Recommend: 7-0-0;
- Article 14: The Chair and Members of the Finance Committee discussed why the committee should vote to recommend or not recommend this article, despite the lack of an immediate financial effect on Newbury's budget or overall finances. The Chair noted that failure to pass this article by the Commonwealth's deadline could result in loss of grants and could force the town to pay for legal fees related to any measures taken by the Commonwealth. Finance Committee Visconti, the Planning Board's Taylor, Select Board Chair Greco, and Town Counsel Mead discussed the long-term implications of the article, should the zoning changes result in new housing in Newbury. Recommend: 6-1-0;
- Article 20: The Town Administrator explained that the family which had established the trust in question brought the article to the Select Board for consideration. Recommend: 7-0-0.

Concerning old business, the Chair reported on the most recent District Communication Committee meeting and discussion around a reinvigorated Alternative Assessment Committee, with the Chair and Finance Committee Member Keys committing to participate.

The next meeting of the Finance Committee is set for April 16th and the meeting adjourned at approximately 8:44pm.