



## BOARD OF SELECTMEN REMOTE JOINT MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 3, 2024

Members Present: Richard W. Brewer, Chair  
Steven J. Ouellette, Vice Chair  
Ann Boxler  
Shana Shufelt  
Manuel Soares, Clerk

Also present, James Hartnett, Town Administrator, Susan Brayton, Treasurer (remote) and Nicole Pearsall, Accountant (remote)

Finance Committee Members: Karen Raus (Chair), Cindy Brown (Vice-Chair), Hugh Morton, Al Lees, Zachary Lebreux, Michelle Orlando, Christopher Thrasher, Al Lees(remote) Gary Carreiro (remote, left early)

School Committee Members: Nancy Stanton-Cross and Evan Gendreau

### **6:00 p.m. Call To order & Pledge of Allegiance**

#### 1. Discussion

Karen Raus opened up the meeting having everyone introduce themselves, she continued to explain that back in October the budget process was started. She added that Jim Hartnett, has the first draft of the budget that he presented to the Select Board a couple of weeks ago, and has since been distributed to everyone. There are still a lot of unknowns at this point in terms of revenue from the state aid in particular, and some expenses that are still unknown. At this point there are no position cuts on the town side. The 54% split with the school is posted in that budget and it's barely balanced at this point.

##### a. Fiscal/24/Fiscal 25 Budget

Karen Raus explained that in the past, the budget has been using free cash, with the hopes an override would be passed, that would have helped fund additional revenue on a more permanent basis, making it difficult to balance the budget in a sustainable way over a long-term period and potentially minimizing or not using free cash in the operating budget to balance their budgets.

##### b. 5 Year Operating & 5 Year Capital Plan

Richard Brewer mentioned the 5-year Operating and Capital Plan, that is subject to change at this point.

Jim Hartnett added that in order to move forward, the revenues available for expenses and salaries need to be looked at. Looking back 10 years, he feels pretty comfortable

that the town can sustain 3% increase yearly in the budgets, maybe 3 1/2 percent, that would be roughly \$800,000 for the school and \$650,000 for the town side. The town cannot sustain more than that. Karen Raus added that it's going to get more difficult. The groundwork is there, now to figure out how to manage a sustainable budget. Nancy Stanton -Cross stated that the budget as it stands would cut \$275,000 from our staff. The next thing that needs to be looked at what cuts we can make that are not mandated. We are not mandated to do pre-K, however special needs Pre-K is mandated, another option is half day kindergarten and lose two or three of our kindergarten teachers, or cut staff in classrooms. Stanton-Cross suggested putting more of the taxpayer money into the operating budget, as we need to be a little more flexible with inflation.

Shana Shufelt stated that maybe we should be using that free cash for a special purpose and start funding like we did for vacation payouts, she's not familiar with the mechanism, the town is not directly funding the operating budget, the town is setting aside money that could be used for that.

Karen Raus explained we walked into town meeting with a balanced fiscal 24 budget that already incorporated lots of cuts for both the school and the town. The override would have funded these positions that was discussed to say if we got the override funds.

c. Fiscal Policies (Overall Policies, Budget, Free Cash)

2. Next Steps: Timeline & Deliverables

The Select Board has to present and close their balance budget to the finance committee by February 10, 2024. March 10, 2024, the warrant articles have to be closed.

3. Comments and Statement

None

4. Topics not reasonable anticipated forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting

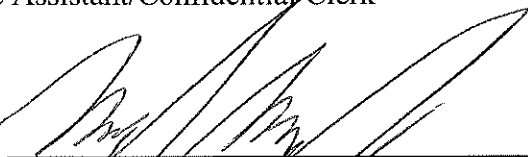
None

5. Adjourn

**MOTION** by Ms. Shufelt to adjourn the meeting at 7:59pm, seconded by Mr. Soares. The Board voted 3-0 in favor via roll call vote; Brewer aye, Shufelt aye and Soares aye.

Respectfully submitted to the Finance Committee by Jessica McKane, Recording Clerk, reformatted and respectfully submitted to the Select Board by Paula Brown, Select Board, Administrative Assistant/Confidential Clerk

APPROVED:



Manuel Soares, Clerk, Select Board Member