**Westport Finance Committee (Fincom)**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Virtual Meeting-Remote Participation**

**July 7, 2020**

Present: Karen Raus (KAR), Charles “Buzzy” Baron (BB), Tracy Priestner (TP), Hugh Morton (HM), Cindy Brown (CB), Thomas Schmitt (TS), Gary Carreiro (GC), Kevin Rioux (KR)

Absent: Bob McCarthy (BM)

Also Present: Tim King (TK)

GC opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

GC read the following: Under MGL Chapter 30A, section 20(f) – Meeting being recorded. *Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Westport Finance Committee is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order.*

*A reminder that persons who would like to listen to or view this meeting while in progress may do so by following the remote links:* https:// meet.google.com/vmz-byhv-zhz or dial in to this number: +1 608-501-0739‬ PIN:

**Minutes:** 6/23 were presented for approval. TP motioned and CB seconded and the roll call vote in favor was unanimous.

**Reorganization: Chair:** A motion was made by TS and seconded by TP to nominate GC as Chair. GC accepted the nomination. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

**Vice-chair:** A motion was made by HM and seconded by TP to nominate KAR as Vice-Chair. KAR accepted the nomination. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

**Appointments:** A list of annual appointments as Fincom reps to various committees was received from the BOS. One vacant position was the ADA Transition Plan Committee. CB agreed to accept the position. TS motioned and HM seconded to make all the appointments. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

**Year-end Transfers:** Town Hall/Annex General Expenses to Personnel Services for $2k to cover a contractual step increase and added overtime from COVID. TS motioned and KAR seconded to approve. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Snow & Ice/Highway to Legal Expenses for $64,516.71 to cover additional legal costs this year. An overview of legal costs incurred was reviewed by HM. This is a portion of a previous transfer presented to Fincom that was taken back because of lack of funds. The previous transfer was from Health Insurance but those funds will be needed for the increase in unemployment costs due to COVID. HM motioned and KAR seconded to approve. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Police Personnel Services to Police General Expenses for $50k. This is to purchase cruisers that were taken off the town meeting warrant. TS motioned and HM seconded to approve. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

**Reserve Fund Transfer:** This request is from Legal for $17,469.98 to cover the remaining legal costs for FY20. This is due to the reasons previously stated with the year-end transfer. CB motioned and HM seconded to approve. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

**Annual Town Meeting:** The clerk read the articles previously voted on. Votes were taken on the rest as follows:

Article 1: To set the salaries of t elected officials. CB motioned and TP seconded to recommend. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Article 2: This was the FY21 budget voted on tonight.

Article 3: To vote on capital expenditures. The security cameras and loader we recommended free cash. All other items as printed. TS motioned and TP seconded to recommend. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Article 5: To make the Collector position appointed. CB motioned and HM seconded to recommend. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Article 7: To transfer a sum of money into the stabilization account. While this was vetted as a good concept, the Fincom felt it should happen at the end of town meeting when we know the final balance of free cash. HM motioned and GC seconded to recommend the article but only if it was at the end of warrant. TK said he would put it on the agenda for the BOS to make the change next Monday at their meeting and Fincom can vote on it at the next meeting 7/14.

Article 8: To appropriate funds for the Marine Services budget. CB motioned and KAR seconded to recommend as presented. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Article 11: To appropriate funds for the Community TV budget. KAR motioned and HM seconded to recommend as presented. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Article 14: To appropriate funds for the Elementary School roof. TK stated this is to authorize the borrowing that will be partially reimbursed by the MSBA. The amount was unsure. GC suggested to get the exact figure from the superintendent and vote at the next meeting.

Article 15: TK spoke that this was gain an easement to property that abuts the new Jr/Sr School. There was some issues as to who owned the piece of property and there has been a law suit filed by the property owner and this is to take it by easement so the town has a clear title. BB motioned and CB seconded to recommend. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Article 16: TK said this is home rule petition. TS said it is the piece of property next to the new watershed building that this easement has always been used and now making it official. TK said no money is involved. CB motioned and TS seconded to recommend. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Article 17: To appropriate $25k for a Hazardous Waste Day. TK spoke to the BOH and they said they can wait and would pass over the article. CB motioned and TP seconded to not recommend. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Article 18: To appropriate $13,760 for two roll-off containers for the Transfer Station. The money would come from receipts reserved. CB motioned and KAR seconded to recommend. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Article 19: To revise a town by-law regarding Marijuana Establishments. HM motioned and KAR seconded to make no recommendation. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Articles 26-31: These are new road acceptances. GC said we didn't have any information regarding these roads from the Planning Board or Highway Department. A motion was made by HM and seconded by CB to make no recommendation. The roll call vote was 3 yes and 4 no so the motion failed. GC asked the clerk to reach out to both departments for some guidance.

**FY21 Overall Budget:** KAR presented the final budget presented by the BOS which was a decrease of 20% revenue totaling $43,446,031. The working group worked very hard to bridge the gap with only a small amount of free cash used to balance the budget. Tony Viveiros, School Committee, spoke on a memo from the school that increased the school request for FY21 $230k. Much discussion ensued regarding the lack of funds available to cover this increase and the fact that the working group, which included the school committee, had a balanced budget. He explained the school committee had met the evening before and determined a need for the increase. Tom Aubin, JR/SR HS Principal/Asst. Superintendent, spoke on additional reductions in staffing if not funded with the $230k. Fincom reiterated he fact if any more funding was to be given to the school, the town would suffer in loss of jobs and services to the town including police officers, firefighters and highway employees. Suggestions to the school committee were negotiations with the union and non-union employees to bridge the gap and to take a closer look at all expenses to see if there was money. The other suggestion was to live within the budget that was agreed upon during the working group. GC and some of the members, reminded them how dangerous it was to use free cash to balance the budget and cause a structural deficit for years to come. Suggestions were made to have a town meeting later in the year when actual cherry sheets revenue is finalized at the state level and hope to restore some staffing on both the town and school side. The committee decided to vote on the budget without the $230k additional funding for the school. HM made the motion and TS seconded to use the final budget presented by KAR. The roll call vote was 7 yes and 1 no. GC hopes we can continue the discussion later in the year.

**Liaison Reports:** KAR mentioned that the audit committee would be meeting soon once the Sue Brayton, the new Treasurer, has time to go over the previous management letter.

TS mentioned paving at the Harbor that is coming along beautifully. CB confirmed that they are doing a good job.

**Other:** GC reminded the committee and audience that town meeting is scheduled for Saturday, July 25th at 9am behind the high school. More information will be available on the website soon.

GC wanted to thank everyone for all their hard work on the budget and warrant. This has been a very difficult year even before COVID.

CB mentioned a Facebook post that showed the tax rate compared to other towns and wanted to mention that we are well below the comparable towns in the area and we hope to keep it that way.

Adjournment and next meeting: There being no further business to come before this meeting, a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m. was made by TP and seconded by TS and the roll call vote in favor was unanimous. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be on July 14th at 7 p.m. as a virtual meeting with remote participation only.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole J Pearsall, Recording Clerk

REFERNCE DOCUMENTS:

Year-end transfers

Reserve fund transfer

KAR updated FY21 Budget spreadsheet

6/23 Minutes

Annual Town Meeting Warrant and Index

List of Annual Appointments from the BOS

Memo from Westport Community School