

**Westport Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
Virtual Meeting-Remote Participation
January 31, 2023**

Present: Karen Raus (KAR), Cindy Brown (CB), Hugh Morton (HM), Lawrence Holsworth (LH), Charles "Buzzy" Baron (BB), Gary Carreiro (GC)

Absent: Zachary Lebreux (ZL)

Also Present: Keith Novo, Jim Whitin, Michael Burris Nicole Pearsall

KAR opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

KAR read the following: This meeting is being held remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts *'March 12, 2020, order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30A Section 20 and on June 16,2021 Governor Baker signed an Act relative to extending certain COVID-19 measures adopted during the state of emergency. This meeting is being recorded.*

(Kar) opened up the meeting saying thank you everyone for coming tonight we are continuing with our Fiscal 24 Department Budget Meetings.

1.Fy2024 Budget Meetings with Departments:

- A. **Information Technology** Keith Novo was in attendance to present the Fy24 departmental budget Keith Novo said for Fy24 budget the wages \$34,310 there and for expenses as \$303,600 for total \$337,910. The Town Administrator had amended the request that I had submitted and in an additional \$40,000 in the wages to have more time to support the community. That was the only change from the town administrators from my request to through the town administrator. Equipment repair that remained the same from the prior year. Software maintenance did increase by about \$3000 and another \$5000 increase in switch maintenance. Online Services that remained the same from the prior year. Telephone did increase of \$3000 we did put a new phone system in this past year, and we put in some redundant digital connectivity. We have an order on new printer copiers for all the town and they will be approximately an \$8000 increase to provide for the continuing maintenance of those printer copiers. Support services that remain the same and additional equipment that remain the same as well.

B. Planning Board Jim Whitin and Michael Burris was in attendance to present the FY24 departmental budget and Jim Whitin said I am the chair of the Planning Board, and we have Michael Burris, who is our new town planner, and I think he's been with us since October. Our budget for FY23 versus FY24 there is a difference in the pay scales of both the assistant planner and the planner which was presented to the Personnel Board and the Select Board of middle of last year. So that we could retain the assistant planner and to hire the new town planner .The increase in salary is really only the 2% increase based on what was approved last year and we did that within our budget last year because we didn't have these folks online for the full year, so everything else on our budget the expenses is exactly as it was last year, just changed the dollar amounts on various items, Michael Burris said the projects and other administrative items that we've been involved with since I started in October and then since prior, these metrics would all be for FY23 the department has been involved with eight approval not required ,three special permits, five pre -application consultations we have applied for, we have applied for ,or in the process of applying for a 10 different grants .

C. Highway Department Gary Carreiro was in attendance to present the FY24 departmental budget for the highway department Gary Carreiro said Chris Gonsalves could not make it this evening. I will be presenting his budget on his behalf. The request from the from the town administrator, has been level funded, level services. He presented a budget nothing really has changed. The big thing with the Highway Department is the labor. They have 8 workers that run the department and it is getting more difficult every single year for them to perform their duties. I met with Chris last week and Chris said fuel and oil should be okay but hard to tell. (GC) said I think we'd have to look at an expense report from Nicole to see how far along they are with the expenses. (Kar) asked how many full time people are there now and how many does Chris feel that he needs to be able to maintain the services that he's providing? (GC) said he would like to see an increase of \$200,000 for their budget.

2.FY2024 Town Budget, Warrants, Override Discussions: (Kar) said part of what we do is the Finance Committee is our job is to review the budgets and make a recommendation at town meeting. Our job is not just to present the budget, but it's also to present a form of analysis of what that budget is. Part for us is we need to do some sort of presentation along with the numbers that kind of describes these sort of things that each department is lacking. It is important to be driven by the department itself and they need to be an advocate for themselves. I think we also hold a responsibility with the recommendation that we make to help provide whatever information we can that we're not just presenting here's the budget if people don't know what we go through to review the budgets. (LH), you're asking great questions about, have we done this analysis, does this make sense and many of it has been done but we need some sort of educational framework that then supports those numbers that what we've done and support from the department themselves as well. Last year I put together a presentation of understanding municipal finance and how it relates to Westport. Maybe this year we continue along with, what are the needs of the departments that aren't being filled sort of put together, a summary form that's digestible and in a memo framework that helps explain things to the town.

(BB) said we have made some experiments in the past with respect to trying to do some education before town meeting. I want to suggest that maybe at our next meeting, maybe we set up a subcommittee of the Finance Committee to look into what other towns do. I think that (LH) might be very surprised to discover that there are towns that regularly do an excellent job of education. We could learn and could try to do our best this year to begin to match them in that effort.

(BB) said I would like to make a motion that we set up a subcommittee that looks into whatever towns have gone that begins now plan doing the best we can do this year of educating both for town meeting and to the extent that we're committed if we are to an override educating for that and that that override .(BB) motioned (LH) seconded the roll call vote in favor was unanimous.

(Kar) said I would talk about the school committees approved budget that was provided to us. The FY24 they approved I guess in December is \$21,706,159. When you compare that against the Fy23 approved budget that was approved at town meeting. Excluding the \$300,000 in free cash that was a onetime use only to fund the budget, the FY23 approved budget was \$20,035,369. The difference between those two numbers since the school budget is \$1,600,790 or an 8.3% increase is what the school is requesting. We are far away from resolving where we're at. The town administrator currently has a balanced budget subject to things that are still pending like we talked about the Diman assessment and the State aid There's an approved budget using the formula that we use every year for the school, which is giving the school 54% of the net revenue, that comes in. The town administrators' current budget for the school is \$20,627,332. As compared again to the Fy24 School committee approved budget of \$21,706,159 so we are currently off \$1,078,827. that's where we stand coming in for the school to come in next week.

3.Committee Updates /Liaison Reports: (CB) said I went to the long-term building committee last week. I was only able to be there for a short time it was really to discuss putting the topic on the warrant to open it up for discussion. There will be an article drafted it was very rough long diatribe of the explanation with a very short question before it that's to be continued. The Audit Committee has not met. We will probably meet maybe in March.

4.Minutes: The minutes for January 24, 2023, was presented for approval. (LH) motioned and (HM) seconded to approve. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

5.Topic for next Meeting Agenda: Department Budgets, School Department

6.Meeting Schedule: February 07,2023

7. Correspondence: N/A

8. Topics not reasonably anticipated forty-eight (48) hours in advanced of the meeting:
N/A

Adjourn There being no further business to come before this meeting a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:35pm was made by (HM) and (GC) seconded the roll call vote in favor was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica McKane Recording Clerk

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:

01-24-23 Meeting Minutes.docx

0.2023 01 31 AGENDA INDEXED.docx

1aFy24 IT.pdf

1dFy24 Planning .pdf

155 IT TA Rec 12-5-22.xlsx

IT Operating Budget memo for Fy24.docx