

**Westport Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
Virtual Meeting-Remote Participation
March 7, 2023**

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

Also Present: Nicole Pearsall, Jim Hartnett, Betty Slade, Susan Brayton

KAR opened the meeting at 6:31 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.*

1.Fy2024 Budget : (Kar) opened up the meeting saying to give everyone a update last week the Select Board by by-law had to finalize their recommendations to the Finance Committee, which they did and sent it over to us in no sooner than they did that the state came out with the governor's budget, which was a change in a positive change in some state aid numbers that are coming to Westport based on the governor's budget. I forwarded those numbers to you and did our version of the Finance Committee budget this past week and we talked about on how we would spend those additional dollars .We talked a little bit about Jim Hartnett's suggestion for those and he went through those with the select board last night. We have those that just came to us probably an hour ago in our packet. Jim, I'm going to turn the floor over to you, but first I'd like to thank you for all your hard work that you've done on this budget .

Jim presented the Fy24 Budget presentation recommendations and said we looked at additional funding that became available through the state. Made some recommendations to this committee on to the Board of Selectmen and then forward it to this committee as to where we could consider putting that additional funding. The school department budget the original allocation that we were looking to get to the school was \$20,634,352. That was based on the revenues prior to the governor's budget. The Board of Selectmen recommended \$500,000 in free cash to get them up to \$21,134,352. The minimum request, so the base budget request was just slightly higher than that, but the \$160,810. what we tried to do or what I tried to do in the revised budget with additional state money is we still have that base budget. Original number of \$20,634,352 it increased from \$300,000 with the state money. Using free cash from \$500,000 to \$300,000 and then adding an additional \$60,252 that would normally have been on the town side just to get us up to the \$21,295,162 which is the number that they had requested. On the town side looking at about \$363,810 expenses in most of these expense accounts have

been reduced over the last few years. \$160,810 would go to the school to get them up to their numbers. So that would be utilizing the additional funds from the government budget. The Board of Selectmen they were in favor of those expenditures.

Jim continued and said free cash the Board of Selectmen looked at last night there's a recommendation from the CIPC recommends first group of items and articles seven for \$761,000 and also recommends an additional \$380,000 improvements mainly to technology that would be funded through ARPA . Out of the free cash, we have \$21,50,487 and \$761,000 was recommended by the board to go towards Article 7. Article 5 would have \$300,000 toward the school budget \$100,000 sick leave and vacation buyout and \$300,000 campground short term debt . Article 9 \$40,000 for assessor's reevaluation program, Article 15 \$150,000 toward the old high school ,Article 22 local grant match \$30,000 and Article 24 wage study \$30,000 Which brings up to \$950,000 per the board \$300,000 to the stabilization account. And then the additional \$139,487 which may get reduced if we put more money into the school from free cash.

2.Override Discussions: (Kar) talked about the override to continue educating and getting the information out for the ballot. and we could as well and would love more time to prepare educational documents If override conceivably it could fail at town meeting. The Select Board could still proceed to an election, a ballot, and then hold a special town meeting afterwards if the election passed to appropriate the funds. (Kar) continued to say for the override the first step is understanding where are we right now, what does the FY24 budget look like? what' is the structural deficit that's built into there? What services are missing from this budget .We need education material which should be in process pretty soon once we come close to finalizing the budget, Then the second big piece into the education is what are you going to use the override for? Jim's Hartnett already laid out plans with the Selectboard on how they plan to use it. The third piece of education, which is probably the simpler one, is how much is it going to cost the taxpayer. We can calculate and we have that information and then we go from there. (Jim Hartnett) continued with the override presentation and said these numbers can be adjusted over time and we can get some different ideas Last night the Board of Selectman were leaning towards the increasing the levy by \$1,000,000 each year in appropriating \$750,000 to the budget each year and the \$250,000 to the stabilization account each year.

3.Committee Updates /Liaison Reports: N/A

4.Minutes: The minutes for February 28, 2023, was presented for approval. (CB) motioned and (GC) seconded to approve. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor with 2 abstained.

5.Topic for next Meeting Agenda: Semi -final Budget ,Next steps on override

6.Meeting Schedule: March 14, 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 8:56pm was made by (CB) and (HM) seconded the roll call vote in favor was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica McKane Recording Clerk

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:

02-28-23 Meeting Minutes.docx

0.2023 03 07 AGENDA INDEXED.docx

FY24 FINCOM Draft 03-02-23.xlsx