

**Westport Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Virtual Meeting-Remote Participation  
December 05, 2023**

Present: Karen Raus (Chair), Cindy Brown (Vice-Chair), Al Lees, Michelle Orlando, Zachary Lebreux, Christopher Thrasher(left early) Gary Carreiro (left early)

Also Present: Susan Brayton, James Hartnett, Beverly Bisch ,Chris Leonard

Absent: Hugh Morton, Lawrence Holsworth

Karen Raus called the meeting to order at 6:32pm, and a Pledge of Allegiance .

Karen Raus 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 March 29, 2023, Governor Healey signed a Supplemental 2023 Budget Bill allowing remote and hybrid meetings options for public bodies through March 31, 2025. This meeting is being recorded.

**1.Department Budget Meetings:**

- A. **Council on Aging :** Beverly Bisch was in attendance to present the Fy25 budget. Beverly Bisch mentioned the town paid 45.8% of my budget and the grants paid 54.2% of my budget, the budgets over half a million. We have 23 staff, but the town is only paying for myself Josh and a part time janitor, and they take a little bit of the some of the van driver salaries. Other than that, everybody else is grant funded.
- B. **Treasurer/Collector/Debt Service:** Sue Brayton was in attendance to present the Fy25 budget. Sue Brayton mentioned on the treasurer /collector side of the budget minimal changes. Some increases on the salaries from contractual agreements as the expense side, I've increased several items a little bit for expenses such as postage, which we know is going up everything that I have that are going up on expenses, bank services, payroll services same as last year and major changes. Sue Brayton continued with the debt services and mentioned the debt budget is pretty straightforward. The two schools, Diman and Bristol Aggie, we don't know for sure but before we actually finalize and go to the budget. I will have better numbers for both Bristol Aggie and Diman.
- C. **Shellfish/Marine Services :** Christopher Leonard was in attendance to present the Fy25 budget Christopher Leonard mentioned for the Shellfish budget is pretty much the same as last year. There was a 2% to 3%.Everything is staying the same as last year a bare bones budget for electricity and just things to keep us operating. Last year our budget was \$86,667. This year it is \$88,241, an overall increase of about \$1600. The personnel that work in the shellfish department have two full-time employees and six part-time employees. Marine Services budget Christopher mentioned the only increases really are with that 2% or 3 % salary raise for everybody. Everything else is just business as usual. Christopher mentioned looking at the end of the budget we are at \$125,000

last year and \$127,000 this year. And so overall we're looking at an increase of about \$2200.

**2.Discussion: Fy23 Turnback's and Free Cash:** Town Administrator mention we have 1.6 million in turnback's and just over \$900,000 of debt services and employee benefits that we will not see next year which are one-time turnback's.

**3.Discussion :Fiscal24/Fiscal 25 budget ; 5-year operating /capitol plan:** Town Administrator ( Jim Hartnett ) gave a presentation mentioning the Budget Schedule giving the Select Board a balanced budget on December 18th . The Select Board to give their budget to the Finance Committee on February 20th. Select Board Warrant to Finance Committee on March 10<sup>th</sup> and Select Board approves Warrant on March 25<sup>th</sup> with lastly the Annual Town Meeting on May 7<sup>th</sup> . The Town Administrator continued mentioning that we have made some improvements overall in town as the budget process has gone over the last couple of years. local receipts we're down to 80% of actual. This time they're open around 96%, which is extremely high. Just gives us a little bit of flexibility. New growth is certified and came in at \$279,395 over. And normally estimate about \$400,000, came in at \$679,000 Town side also have expense accounts for the department. Budgets have pretty much been level funded. We've had some minor budgets, electrical fuel, and a few other things, but for the most part we're add increased our budgets, we've not created any new positions. With new growth with local receipts has been. As far as revenue trends go this is our local receipts. The excise tax, which is a big one that's about 50% of our local receipts, levelled off the last two years and actually from 2022 to 23 and actually decreased slightly . The primary budget, what we're looking for is standing projecting about 1% increase over last year, while the better idea which January comes around when we get the governor's budget. We are waiting for Chapter 70 funding, which is the one that could make a difference. I was expecting salaries with contract and raises of 2 or 3 percent. The department expenses again are level service almost level funded, health insurance probably about 5% increase. We should have better numbers over the next month. Pension assessment increased at 5.8%, that is a fixed number . State assessments budgeted for a 3.2% increase will refine those numbers as the state numbers come in over the next couple months. Our health insurance account we had a turn back about \$556,000 and that was because we had two months where we did not have to pay for the health insurance.

**4. Committee/Liaison updates:** N/A

**5.Minutes:** The minutes for October 4, 2023 , was presented for approval Cindy Brown motioned and Michelle Orlando seconded to approve. The roll call vote was 5-0 in favor. Raus;aye Brown ;aye Orlando ;aye Lebreux ;aye Lees ;aye

The minutes for November 14, 2023 , was presented for approval Michelle Orlando motioned and Cindy Brown seconded to approve. The roll call vote was 5-0 all in favor Raus;aye Brown ;aye Orlando;aye Lees;aye ; Lebreux ;aye

**6.Topic for next Meeting Agenda:** N/A

**7.Meeting Schedule:** January 2, 2024, Remote January 3, 2024 , Hybrid with Select Board and School Department

**8. Correspondence:** N/A

**9.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 8:50 pm was made by Al Lees and Michelle Orlando seconded the roll call vote was 5-0 all in favor. Raus ;aye Brown ;aye Orlando;aye Lees ;aye Lebreux ;aye

Respectfully submitted,  
Jessica McKane  
Finance Committee Recording Clerk

**REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:**

Marine Services Fy25 Budget Narrative.docx  
Budget Debt 2025.xlsx  
Fy25 Budgets Shellfish and Marine Services new .xlsx  
Budget Treasurer 2025.xlsx  
TurnbacksFy23.xlsx  
Shellfish Fy25 Budget Narrative.docx  
541 COA (1).xlsx  
12-5 -23 agenda  
10-04-2023 meeting minutes.docx  
11-14-2023 meeting minutes.docx

