

**Westport Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Virtual Meeting-Remote Participation  
January 23, 2024**

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

Also Present: Jim Hartnett, Matthew Armendo,Christopher Dunn Carol Freitas

Absent: Duncan Law, Michelle Orlando

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.*

Karen Raus (Chair) opened the meeting with continuing with budget department meetings

**1.Department Budget Meetings:**

- A. Veterans Services:** Carol Freitas was in attendance to present the Fy25 budget. Carol Freitas mentioned that with my budget I did submit a decrease in my veteran's benefits line because unfortunately we lost a lot of Chapter 115 clients over the last few years. The rest of the budget is pretty standard bare bones as it is. I did just request slight increases in my veteran's graves budget because the cost of flags is going up and the number of veterans who are buried in Westport is also going up. A \$50 budget increase for flags. There are two-line items, there's the veteran's benefits and then there's the medic's line. And the difference between the two is the veteran's benefits are what is paid directly to the recipient. Which could be to help them with housing costs, heating costs. medical reimbursement, premiums, copays, The Medics line is what I use to pay vendors. I have agreements with CVS and the Westport Apothecary to direct bill me for, for recipients of this program for prescription.so they're not paying out of pocket and waiting for reimbursement. But also, it pays for hearing aids. Payroll burial assistance that is a one of the benefits under the chapter 115 program and it's for anybody who's low income who they don't necessarily have to be a chapter 115 recipient they just have to not have the means to pay for our burial and there is a cap on that the very from the benefits which was \$25,000 decrease. I requested the \$8000 to be reallocated due to having to pay for more hearing aids which are about \$2000 I did also request an increase, slight increase in my travel for mileage reimbursement I do go to training in June every year for four days.

- B. Board of Health /Animal Control /Transfer Station :** Matthew Armendo was in attendance to present the FY25 Matthew Armendo mentioned for the Animal Control department we have been trying to hire a part-time animal control officer for some time now, but we haven't had any luck. We decided to kind of abandon that entire process for now and by doing so. There was \$20,000 allocated for that position. We left \$5000 out of that \$20,000 in a part- time line item, potential fillings in case we needed some extra help if we ran into a big jam. And we're going to shift \$7500 over to the overtime line to support additional hours for our current animal control officer. Matthew Armendo continued with the Board of Health and mentioned there were some mandatory salary increases and some contractual increases because of contractual obligations and those two mandatory promotions increased 4.4% which equals \$19,393.00. FY24 our total was four \$434,819. And FY25 a total of \$451,212. Matthew Armendo continued with the Transfer Station mentioning it was level funded for FY25 except for mandated salary increases. One staff position was downgraded to attended one. We advertised for workers which was a Class B license but couldn't attract so we hired in another attending. Which essentially decreases the rate for FY25 in that line item. Our recycling program increased from \$16,000 to \$20,000. We're tracking to spend \$21,000 this year on the recycling program in FY24. Garbage disposal a \$100 increase .The Board of Health fee increases in several recycling categories this year to offset the higher recycling costs, due to recent significant increases and curbside pickup costs, we're seeing an increase in the number of transfer station users. The transfer station has a net increase for FY25 of 1% from FY24 \$339,158 to FY25 \$342,506.
- C. Police Department :**Chief Christopher Dunn was in attendance to present the FY25 budget. Chief Christopher Dunn presented a power point presentation of an overview of the department budget and continued with the budget mentioning everything stayed the same from FY24to FY25 except contracting wage increase that will be in negotiations which contract expires in June .
- D. Select Board :** Jim Hartnett was in attendance to present the FY25 budget Jim Hartnett mentioned the contractual salary increases and two full-time clerks that we have administrative salary. The salaries are pretty much in line with another raises. Expense accounts carrying forward what was there last year professional services we used for a variety of reasons Professional services using a portion of this year to offset. additional costs for the wage study ,public consultants and facilitators in the past also using a little bit to fill in some of the gaps. They don't have any other accounts that we can really transfer money from. Expenses are pretty straightforward.
- E. Town Hall /Annex:** Jim Hartnett was in attendance to present the FY25 budget Jim Hartnett mentioned the Town Hall and Town Hall Annex is pretty straight forward. Went over a few lines on the budget from heating and the electricity to repair and professional services line items.
- F. Legal Budget:** Jim Hartnett was in attendance to present the FY25 budget Jim Hartnett mentioned it went up about \$10,000 we use it for variety of issues to zoning and personnel issues.

**G. Cemetery Department :** Jim Hartnett was in attendance to present the Fy25 budget Jim Hartnett mentioned the budget is straight forward. We have three employees. We have a seasonal line item we budgeted \$30,000 but over the past years it's anywhere from \$25,000 to \$30,000 we have spent on seasonal help. Overtime budget is about \$9000 mainly for Saturday burials. On Expenses the equipment repair we bumped up a little bit from \$2500 to \$5000. We reduced the building repair and maintenance from \$6000 to \$3500.

Total overall expenses going up from \$38000 to about \$39000.

**2.Discussion :Fiscal24/Fiscal 25 budget ; 5-year operating /capitol plan:**

Karen Raus mentioned the governor's budget might be released tomorrow so we can tentatively have a joint meeting on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January to start on the next phase of the budget.

**4. Committee/Liaison updates:** Karen Rause mentioned the finance committee needs someone for the Infrastructure Committee as a liaison. Christopher Thrasher mentioned he would like to be the liaison.

**Motion:** Hugh Morton made a motion to assign Christopher Thrasher as a liaison to the Infrastructure Committee Al Lees seconded the vote. The roll call was 5-0 Morton; aye Lees; aye Brown; aye Lebreux ;aye Raus; aye Thrasher abstained ,Carreiro (left early)

**5.Minutes:** The minutes for January 16, 2024 , was presented for approval Al Lees motioned and Cindy Brown seconded to approve. The roll call vote was 6-0 in favor Morton :aye Raus ;aye Brown :aye Thrasher; aye Lees; aye Lebreux; aye ,Carreiro (left early)

**6.Topic for next Meeting Agenda:** Joint Meeting with Select Board and School Committee on next phase of budget on 1-31-24 and then Department Budget Meeting on 2-6-24 both are Hybrid meetings.

**7.Meeting Schedule:** January 31, 2024, February 06, 2024

**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 8:43pm was made by Cindy Brown and Christopher Thrasher seconded the roll call vote was 6-0 all in favor. Raus ;aye Morton ;aye Thrasher ;aye Lees ;aye Brown; aye. Lebreux; aye Carreiro ;(left meeting)

Respectfully submitted,  
Jessica McKane  
Finance Committee Recording Clerk

**REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:**

FinCom overview Jan24rev1.17.docx  
BOH

BOH.pdf  
ACO budget.pdf  
Transfer Station.pdf  
WPD\_proposed \_budget\_Fy2025.pdf  
WestportPolice-FinCom\_F2025pptx  
Fy25\_Draft Five Year Capitol Plan 1-3-24.pdf  
Fy25\_Draft Five Year Financial Plan 1-3-24.pdf  
Fy2025 Budget Memo to FinCom  
Veterans.pdf  
Fy2025 Budget Memo to FinCom.pdf  
Fy2025 Budget Proposal.xlsx  
sb.pdf  
Fy25 Budget schedule as of Jan23.xlsx  
Town.hall.pdf  
Legal.pdf  
01-16-24 Meeting Minutes Finance Committee.pdf  
2024 Jan 23 2024 AGENDA.docx  
Infrastructure Committee meeting minutes

