

**Westport Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Virtual Meeting-Remote Participation  
February 21, 2023**

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

Absent: Lawrence Holsworth (LH)

Also Present: Al Lees, Nicole Pearsall, Thomas Aubin, Michelle Rapoza, 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.*

(Kar) opened up the meeting tonight, saying we have a couple of things on our agenda tonight but first thing we're going to talk about is the Westport Fiscal Stability Memo and Analysis that was done, and I would love to welcome Al Lees and thank him for coming.

**1. Discussion with Westport Fiscal Stability Group:** Al Lees introduced himself and said He is part of the group that started approximately a year ago a small group just three of us kicking around ideas about what is going on and what may go on in the future with fiscal stability. He continued to say, how we how do we move forward? I was thinking about this this afternoon on my on my porch trying to figure out. What this meant to me and why I got involved and without going into any elaborate detail, I get involved because I am very, concerned about this town. We are in financial difficulty right now. I thought about my father, and I thought about myself and how we operated our business. And what we did? Think of the customer first. When you think about the customer first, you think about the taxpayer first. What are we delivering? What do the customers like? What don't they like? Try things. Don't try things. If the customer doesn't like it, you just start off from scratch. I see this document or as a beginning document to get conversation going, I've had a lot of conversations with many different groups and many different people over the last two weeks, on all different sides. I am proud of the work that our group has done to kind of lay on the table for conversation so that we can, get this going. We have an opportunity to change the business model we have, but people are not happy with

what's going on with the business model we have right now. It's that old saying when you bang your head against the wall, you know all the time and expect a different outcome. If we do not have an override. In my opinion is that we will just continue to go deeper and deeper and deeper into the abyss, if you will, and it just have such minimal services. The Town needs to know that the way the money is being spent is being spent in the best possible way and we may or may not get this override, but if we do, we'll never get another. If we don't. If we don't show the people in this town that the money is being spent. correctly and for the right reasons.

(Kar) said we as a finance committee have been talking about needing an override for years and last year, we finally collectively got it off the ground and had the select board agree and we got it to an article on the town warrant. We said we don't know what the override amount should be. We need more time to come up with the correct number, what makes sense, what's fair and equitable, what's needed. We need to have a 5-year plan. We need to get commitments from all the department heads, the school committee, the select board and all of us combined. If it is a \$3 million override? How are we going to use it? Because again, you know the revenue only grows by a small percentage and inflation is going to continue to outpace it. So that override is going to erode itself in a certain period of time. We need to figure out how to use it.

**2.FY2024 Town Budget, Warrants, Override Discussions:** (Kar) said I have to get an update from Jim Hartnett of an override budget if he is planning a presentation or is he each department going to do a presentation for the override to speak their own words. I know the select board is approving their version, their recommendation of the fiscal 24 budget this evening. It's probably a little too early for us to finalize a budget because we're still waiting for state aid and a couple other things. But we can have a pretty detailed conversation about that maybe next week. Once we get the select boards budget. The biggest issue is going to be any allocation of free cash to supplement the budget or not and then we can move ahead.

(CB) said I have a request going back to the select board again because they have kind of the view. It had been mentioned in a couple of posting or articles about this forward five year plan, so the Fiscal Stability Committee had a five year financial forecast prepared by Bay Coast Bank paid for the analysis to be done of a five year financial forecast of just operations, but I would like to hear from the select board after their review of the various issues across the town, what the five year needs are of for the town.

(GC) said on motor vehicles does anyone one what we budgeted for the revenues and what's the difference if there is ? I think it just be interesting to see what was actually budgeted for fiscal 24 and what we're seeing is the actual commitment or could we get a report on the revenues.

(Nicole Pearsall )said for motor vehicle fiscal 23 I like it was 2.7 million .

(Kar) mentioned the last version of the budget we had which was I think it December version and so that did have Jim Hartnett's estimate of the revenue. When board of selectman conclude their budget today, I will update the finance committee budget and you'll see all the revenue components, so we'll have that for next week meeting.

(CB) mentioned that Jim Hartnett indicated that he has taken a more conservative approach that previously were before we were budgeting roughly 95% of the prior year's revenues and I believe he's been able to take that down to I think 88% of the prior revenues because he was concerned with recession, inflation, interest rates.

**3.Committee Updates /Liaison Reports:** N/A

**4.Minutes:** The minutes for February 07, 2023, was presented for approval. (CB) motioned and (HM) seconded to approve. The roll call vote was 4 in favor with two abstain.

**5.Topic for next Meeting Agenda** Fiscal 2024 Budget

**6.Meeting Schedule:** February 28,2023

**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 (KAR) and (CB) seconded the roll call vote in favor was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jessica McKane Recording Clerk

**REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:**

02-07-23 Meeting Minutes.pdf

2023 02 21 AGENDA INDEXED.docx

final-report\_2-2b\_1.pdf

fiscal\_stability\_report\_summary\_-\_final.pdf