



**Finance Committee
Regular Meeting
02/06/23**

- I. Call to Order
 - 1. Roll Call
- II. Minutes Approval
 - 1. Finance Committee - Regular Meeting - Jan 9, 2023 6:00 PM

For the roll call to show board member names when posted.

RESULT:	ACCEPTED [7 TO 0]
MOVER:	Thomas Ackerman
SECONDER:	Mike Marden
AYES:	Archibald, Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Tingle
ABSTAIN:	Bender
ABSENT:	Bevilacqua

- 2. Finance Committee - Regular Meeting - Jan 30, 2023 5:30 PM

Change "form" to "from". For the roll call to show board member names when posted.

RESULT:	ACCEPTED AS AMENDED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Thomas Ackerman
SECONDER:	Mike Marden
AYES:	Archibald, Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Tingle
ABSENT:	Bevilacqua

- 3. Finance Committee - Regular Meeting - Jan 31, 2023 6:00 PM

For the roll call to show board member names when posted.

RESULT:	ACCEPTED AS AMENDED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Marcia Zosack
SECONDER:	Thomas Ackerman
AYES:	Archibald, Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Tingle
ABSENT:	Bevilacqua

- III. Town Clerk, Registrar, Census, Vital Statistics

Gwen Lay Sabbagh, Town Clerk

The Town Clerk's office has seen a large increase in public records requests- especially during election time. New requirements for early voting and mail in voting has created a large increase in workload. Each time a person goes to the registry of motor vehicles they automatically get re-registered to vote, and the office is required to check the records. An increase in Salary is an increase of hourly rate and request to be moved to a different category (from grade 11 to 12), which goes hand in hand with the increase in work load to the office. This would put the clerk on par with other Department Head's in the Town. The extra responsibilities are not only in voting and registration, but responsibilities that come with the new ethics transition, and a high volume of record keeping for public records requests not related to elections. The salary increase for this position is approved from the Finance Committee as it is in elected official position. An Expense increase in professional development is for the assistants training. The assistant is going into her third year. Spending going into the end of December is low as most of the spending is for this quarter- the census and getting ready for the elections. The registrar salaries is set by law and depends on how many registered voters are in Town. There is also a postage increase in both the Town Clerk expense, Election and Registrar expense- more people are requesting ballots. Having the dog licensing and election schedule mailed with

the census is a savings in postage. This coming year has the Presidential primary, the local election, primary and state election- in the fiscal calendar there will be three.

IV. Board of Health

Christine Berube, Chairperson

There are no changes to the Board of Health budget with the Salary increase being just cost of living. There is a State grant that the BOH is now a part of, with \$300,000 to be split between four towns (Merrimac, West Newbury, Groveland and Amesbury) for the next 8 years starting July 1st. Amesbury will hire an administrator to oversee the grant as they are largest town of the four. The grant money will cover additional education and town related items for board of health offerings/classes to offer to the public. Anticipating being level funded for the next eight years. The BOH has minimal record keeping on the Town side. The state Maven program does track some records that are required to be kept at the state level. Continue to work closely with Brienne at the COA to ensure the Nurse position is working for everyone. Finding it difficult to fill the administrative assistant position at ten hours a week.

V. Planning Board

Sandy Venner, Chairperson. Denise McClure, Planning Consultant

The salary for the admin position has decreased from 6 to 4 hours in the office, and will stipend the meetings like other boards. Having a Planner on board takes a lot of the responsibility off the admin position, the more technical things will now fall to them and the basic handling of records go to the admin. The expenditure is down for the first half of the year as most expenses come towards Town Meeting. Last year the Planner/Consultant position was approved as a Special Article for \$10k and this year we are requesting \$15k goes into the Legal/Consultant omnibus line. The advertising line previously had been overspent, and there will be significant zoning changes coming up. The line for Zoning Consultant/MVPC in the past was used to work with someone who was familiar specifically with an attorney who was familiar state wide with zoning language. MVPC in the past has helped update the Housing Production Plan, but they do have their own LTA grant funds to assist with the process. The Planner/Consultant position is not planning board specific but available town wide.

VI. Police, Animal Control, Parking Clerk

Eric Shears, Police Chief

Budgeted for 9 full time officers, currently have 8 and working to fill the vacant position. Right now until the vacant position is filled we do have an officer working alone at night. Currently the only 24/7 staffed department in Town. In addition to policing we provide dispatch for the whole community. Dispatch calls are increasing, and arrests are decreasing as they are being summonsed to court instead which is better for both parties. Salary increase of four full time officers is requested in a reasonable amount of time, would like to have a plan in place for staffing going forward. The cost with benefits for 4 full time Patrol Officers is approximately \$500,000. In the process of negotiations with dispatch and officers, the increase in rates is based on an 5% estimate during negotiations. Expense increase by \$9,600. Revenue brought in from grants, gun permits and details. Each officer works 12 hour shifts in a 4 day rotation- the town and union have negotiated to keep that payroll at 42 hours. When anyone needs to take time we try to fill with part time officers, if its dire to fill the shift than a full time will fill in, but it creates overtime. If there were three people assigned for a shift it would create the amount of coverage needed. The current 4 reserve officers need to attend the bridge program per state requirements. There is an immense amount of training from reserves, part and full time, which creates a cost to coverage the absence. Expense increases vehicle repairs and maintenance of \$1,400, the fleet is aging in general. Advertising and legal notices an increase of \$700, this includes the PR firm increase in price. Police software licensing increase of \$500 for the in house computer software and various other programs. Police vehicle fuel increase of \$7,000 based on a seven month average on what was previously spent. The shooting range currently we go to is Newton NH Rod & Gun club, which costs \$1,000 and we go twice a year for annual qualifications. When they are not busy a certified firearm instructor can go with a student to get what needs to be done. The State is in talks to open three ranges, but none are near here. Employee retention has been an issue the last few years for many reasons, one specifically was due to working shifts alone. We are a small town but we have population pockets, a large amount of calls are out on 495 assisting State police. The call volume we are seeing an increase in could be attributed to more people working from home. Police attempt to respond to every fire and ambulance calls, we would rather respond and leave if not needed. Mutual aid primarily is

with Amesbury, but with the Rocks Village Bridge back open we are rekindling the relationship with West Newbury. The gun permits post-covid had a rush, but now has averaged out. Capital requests will be for a new marked cruiser and an unmarked cruiser. In the past we have had Ford, transferred to Dodge Chargers but have transitioned back to Ford. Another request for a 44mm Less Lethal Program which would be for Defense Technology Tactical Single Launchers, they shoot a foam ball 5ft-131ft and is a good alternative between baton/taser and a gun.

No changes to Animal Control and Parking Clerk.