



**Finance Committee
Regular Meeting
03/18/24**

I. Call to Order

PRESENT: Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Bevilacqua (6:00 PM - 7:51 PM), Davis

ABSENT: Tingle (Excused)

II. Minutes Approval

1. Finance Committee - Regular Meeting - Mar 4, 2024 6:00 PM

RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Mike Marden
SECONDER:	Rob Gustison
AYES:	Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Bevilacqua, Davis
EXCUSED:	Tingle

III. New Business

A. Whittier Regional Vo-Tech

Maureen Lynch, Superintendent. Kara Kosmos, Business Manager.

Enrollment up 2%, two more students this year. No longer accepting choice students, if the student is accepted and enrolled and they move out of district they can stay, but transportation is not provided. Payroll, health insurance and other insurance is the primary expense in the budget. Other expenses come from expanding educational opportunities, and the social/emotional health of students. The loss of the ESSR funds was expected as of June 30th. The replacement of electrical panels and the wastewater treatment plant pumps are the largest expenses for maintenance coming up. Required net school spending is up 2.5% and the Chapter 70 aid is up .34%, with the district budget up 2.59%. The total community assessment is 2.13% or \$343,133. Costs were cut by using grants to purchase equipment, and cutting three teaching positions and two aid positions due to lost funding for those positions. Grant funds received have increased with a total of \$3,874,648 for FY24. The total Merrimac assessment of \$706,624 includes the capital assessment.

B. Open Discussion & Voting

Finance Director Recommendations

Pentucket Regional new assessment, original \$970,000, was brought down at the first regional meeting to \$600,000. New assessment is approximately \$400,000- they have cut some positions, are using revolving accounts and working on looking for financial aid for transportation. Committee members are looking for clarification on what the cuts were specifically.

Fire request submitted for Salaries and Expenses was for the maximum range in the salary comp assessment of other town's. Suggested salary increase of \$3/hour for the 4 full time staff will bring them to the middle of the range. This is prioritized instead of hiring more EMT's.

Police request submitted for Salaries and Expenses was for two new full time officers. Suggested this year supporting one additional full time offer in the budget beginning July 1st.

The location of this meeting is wheelchair accessible and reasonable accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities requiring assistance. If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact the Town of Merrimac's ADA Coordinator, Robert Sinibaldi, at least two business days in advance of the meeting: commissioner@townofmerrimac.com or 978-346-0525.

Council on Aging submitted for Salaries and Expenses was for additional hours for the outreach coordinator. Can not support additional staff hours, but would like to look for other funding opportunities possibly through the BOH regional grant.

With all the cuts there is still a deficit of \$102,439.

In the Finance Committee Letter for Town Meeting the Committee would like to highlights the best practices, including not using the free cash for the omnibus budget. In addition request in the Capital Planning Letter would like to include detailed rational on the purchases.

1. Motion to approve Total Moderator Expense, Total Selectmen Salaries and Wages, Total Selectmen Expense, Total Capital Planning Salaries and Wages, Total Capital Planning Expense, Total Finance Committee Salaries and Wages, Total Finance Committee Expense, and Total Reserve Fund

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Mike Marden
SECONDER:	Thomas Ackerman
AYES:	Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Bevilacqua, Davis
EXCUSED:	Tingle

2. Motion to approve Total Finance Department Salaries and Wages with adjustment in Assessors Salaries and Wages line, and Total Finance Department Expenses

Change/Adjustment: Assistant Assessor Wages for increase over a 2 year period, decrease of \$3,369.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Thomas Ackerman
SECONDER:	Mike Marden
AYES:	Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Bevilacqua, Davis
EXCUSED:	Tingle

3. Motion to approve Total Bonding Officers, Town Counsel/Legal, Town Hall IT Salaries and Wages and Town Hall IT Expense

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Mike Marden
SECONDER:	David Luoma
AYES:	Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Bevilacqua, Davis
EXCUSED:	Tingle

4. Motion to approve Total Census Expense, Total Town Clerk Salaries and Expenses with adjustment, Total Town Clerk Expense, Total Elections Salaries and Wages, Total Election Expense, Total Registrar Salaries and Wages, Total Registrar Expense, Total Vitals Salaries and Wages, Total Vitals Expense

Change/Adjustment: Remove requested additional 5 hours for Town Clerk Assistance, decrease of \$6,164.

RESULT: APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Thomas Ackerman
SECONDER: Mike Marden
AYES: Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Bevilacqua, Davis
EXCUSED: Tingle

5. Motion to approve Total Conservation Salaries and Wages and Total Conservation Expense

The agreement with Newbury to share a Conservation Agent has ended. Agent position hours back in the Salaries line.

RESULT: APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Thomas Ackerman
SECONDER: Mike Marden
AYES: Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Bevilacqua, Davis
EXCUSED: Tingle

6. Motion to approve Total Open Space Expense, Total Planning Board Salaries and Wages, Total Planning Board Expense, Total Appeals Board Salaries and Wages, Total Appeals Board Expense, Total MVPC Expense and Total Rent Control Expense

RESULT: APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Mike Marden
SECONDER: Thomas Ackerman
AYES: Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Bevilacqua, Davis
EXCUSED: Tingle

7. Motion to approve Total Town Building Expense with adjustment.

Change/Adjustment: Reduce Town Heating, decrease of \$10,000 and Reduce Copier Lease, decrease of \$400.

RESULT: APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Thomas Ackerman
SECONDER: Mike Marden
AYES: Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Bevilacqua, Davis
EXCUSED: Tingle

8. Motion to approve Total Town Report Expense

RESULT: APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Thomas Ackerman
SECONDER: Mike Marden
AYES: Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Bevilacqua, Davis
EXCUSED: Tingle

9. Motion to approve Total Cable Access Salaries and Wages and Total Cable Access Expense

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Thomas Ackerman
SECONDER:	Mike Marden
AYES:	Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Davis
EXCUSED:	Bevilacqua, Tingle

C. By-Law Change

Proposed changes to the draft by-law to read:

3.5 Limitation on Appointment

(1) The Town Moderator shall not appoint to the Finance Committee any person who at the time of appointment:

- (a) is serving as an elected official of the Town
- (b) is an employee of the Town or of the Pentucket Regional School district, Whittier Regional Vocational School or Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School
- (c) is a member of the School Committee of the Pentucket Regional School District, Whittier Regional Vocational School or Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School
- (d) is a member of the Board or Commission of any regional body serving Merrimac.
- (e) is not a registered voter of the Town of Merrimac

IV. Adjourn

1. Motion to Adjourn

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Thomas Ackerman
SECONDER:	Rob Gustison
AYES:	Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Davis
EXCUSED:	Bevilacqua, Tingle