



**Finance Committee  
Regular Meeting  
01/08/24**

I. Call to Order

PRESENT: Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Tingle

ABSENT: Bevilacqua

II. New Business

A. Elect Chairperson & Vice Chairperson

Discussion to elect Chairperson after resignation of Chair, James Archibald, and Vice-Chairperson, a position that was not previously elected. Suggestion to elect a Clerk to oversee all records are being retained and all postings are meeting Open Meeting Law, most Committee members did not feel that was necessary at this time. Marcia Zosac is interested in Chairperson, she was previously the Chairperson for the Hull, MA Finance Committee for four years and has served as a member in Merrimac for many years. Mike Marden is interested in either position, but is happy to continue focusing on his role as Chairperson on the Capital Planning Committee. Tom Ackerman is interested in Vice-Chairperson. Marcia and Tom both elected unanimously.

1. Elect Marcia Zosac as Chairperson

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Rob Gustison
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Kenneth Tingle, Board Member
<b>AYES:</b>	Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Tingle
<b>ABSENT:</b>	Bevilacqua

2. Elect Tom Ackerman as Vice-Chairperson

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Mike Marden
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Thomas Ackerman
<b>AYES:</b>	Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Tingle
<b>ABSENT:</b>	Bevilacqua

B. Minutes Approval

1. Finance Committee - Regular Meeting - Oct 2, 2023 6:30 PM

The meeting minutes of October 2nd, 2023 were tabled per a vote on 10/16/23 to wait until after the Open Meeting Law presentation from Town Counsel. A member made revisions to the minutes which were given to the previous Chairperson and not distributed to the Committee. Based on the Open Meeting Law presentation and Committee Members understanding of Open Meeting Law, the current Chairperson feels we are meeting all mandated requirements for meeting minutes, specifically regarding the summarizing of discussion during the meeting. A motion was made to accept the minutes as originally presented.

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](mailto:commissioner@townofmerrimac.com) or 978-346-0525.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>ACCEPTED [6 TO 1]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Rob Gustison
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Mike Marden
<b>AYES:</b>	Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Tingle
<b>NAYS:</b>	Bender
<b>ABSENT:</b>	Bevilacqua

**C. Preliminary Budget Review**

Finance Directors Memo, Carol McLeod:

Overall budget is seeing a 9.9% increase based on Department's requests, and there is only a 2% increase in revenue. Local receipts will be set later and left at the level they are now, and the projected cherry sheets from the State are in. The Pentucket Regional School District budget has a regular increase of about 3%. The Assessors are looking to hire an Assessor upon the retirement of Ed Davis, which is a mandated position. They are also looking to move the Clerks position to Assistant Assessor to be in line with the work she is actually doing. Police and Fire both have significant requests for increase employees. The Whittier Tech Building Project is projected to be a \$680,000 per year increase starting in FY28. Once the vote goes through we will need to discuss further, with the recommendation from the Finance Director being that the Select Board do an over ride at Town Meeting.

Select Board Recommendation/Priorities, Chris Manni:

Biggest potential impact is the Whittier Tech Building Project, with the impact to the Town overall being \$20.4 Million dollars. The debt is the Whittier School District's, not the Town's. The hope is that the State comes through with funding/earmarks and also some Federal funding. The MSBA has approved the project and is overseeing the process. Pentucket Regional will vote on their budget February 27th, looking at a 3% increase and will have a joint meeting to go over their budget. Essex Tech is looking at a level number of students. COLA was brought back down to 3% after last years 5% increase. Police is looking for two more full time officers, in the Strategic Plan the Select Board does support another officer. Fire/EMS is looking for increases in staffing as well. Veterans Assistance is requesting to increase the State minimum for property taxes- right now we have about 40 Veterans and about \$25,000 in exemptions. This would result in a revenue reduction in the operation budget- the highest exemption level currently is \$1,000. The ADA Transition Plan we continue to chip away at, this winter the sidewalks towards the schools are being cleared through a contract funded from the Commission on Disabilities budget. The Select Board will continue to educate on the Finance Committee's process through the yearly Finance Public Forum and at Town Meeting.

**D. Reserve Fund Transfer- Legal**

1. Motion to approve Reserve Fund transfer of \$20,000 to Legal Expense 01-151-5303

On top of regular expenses, the Town has been involved in a legal case regarding the Library since July and has been responsible for all legal fees. Now that a filing has gone through the court the Town will rely on the insurance company to appoint us an attorney. The Reserve Fund Transfer will only temporarily get us out of the negative.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Thomas Ackerman
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Mike Marden
<b>AYES:</b>	Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Tingle
<b>ABSENT:</b>	Bevilacqua

**III. Adjourn**

1. Motion to Adjourn

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Marcia Zosack
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Mike Marden
<b>AYES:</b>	Zosack, Marden, Gustison, Luoma, Ackerman, Bender, Tingle
<b>ABSENT:</b>	Bevilacqua