

Town of Dartmouth
400 Slocum Road, Room 304
Dartmouth, MA 02747

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING DISCUSSION NOTES
MARCH 16, 2023

Finance Committee Members present:

Robert Gauvin, Chair
Janine Simmons, Vice Chair
William Boles
Teresa Hamm
Elizabeth Huidekoper
Brian O'Hare
Adam Silva (joined the meeting during the Reserve Fund discussion)
John Sousa

The Finance Committee met at 5:30pm, Mr. Gauvin presiding. Mr. Gary Carreiro, Director of Budget & Finance/Treasurer was present to provide information and answer questions.

Mr. Gauvin stated that this subject should have been on the agenda last week and this week, although there was no quorum at the last meeting. He summarized the proposal which is to take \$100,000 from the Reserve Fund and transfer it to the Legal Fund for a potential challenge to Title V requirements of the Mass Department of Environment Protection (DEP). He stated that he talked with Select Board Chair David Tatelbaum about a transfer from the Reserve Fund as FinCom discussed at the last meeting. Mr. Tatelbaum was supportive of the idea and suggested that FinCom write the Select Board a letter. The upside of this transfer would be that if a challenge is to occur, the Select Board would have the funds at hand. If they decide not to spend the money, it would go back into Free Cash. There is no downside. FinCom has the authority to transfer the funds. This transfer would be taking an important public stand on the issue.

Mr. Boles stated that he read in the newspaper that Senator Montigny and Representative Markey are building a legislative challenge. Would it be better to wait for this outcome? Mr. Gauvin stated that the regulations are scheduled to become effective May 31, 2023. He would like the Select Board to have the funds at hand in case a challenge is prepared and feels that time is of the essence. Enacted legislation is hard to get reversed.

Mr. O'Hare asked if this would be a contingency fund, going to the Select Board. Mr. Gauvin responded yes, it would be used at the discretion of the Select Board. He stated that the challenge is to the regulatory process that has taken place which may have violated Open Meeting Law, not necessarily to the scientific content of the regulations. Mr. O'Hare stated that he would go along with the group, but would prefer that there be a need expressed by the Select Board before voting.

Ms. Simmons stated that the bill that Senator Montigny and Representative Markey put forth in January may take years to pass; thus the need for a contingency fund as the matter is reaching a head in May. Right now, the legislators have only three signors of the bill. She added that this is not the first time that monies have been transferred from the Reserve Fund in anticipation of legal fees. She feels that the Town needs to take a stand.

Ms. Huidekoper stated that she would rather the Select Board ask for the funds with an explanation of their potential use than just vote the transfer without context. She is somewhat uncomfortable with this process.

Ms. Hamm stated that it is important that the Select Board knows that FinCom stands ready to support them in this endeavor; a message should be sent. She concurred with Mr. O'Hare and Ms. Huidekoper with a concern over taking money from the Reserve Fund without it being requested.

Mr. Carreiro stated that the Reserve Fund has stood at approximately \$510,000 for several years, with the only expenditure in the recent past being funds for the new library. There is now \$501,000 in the Reserve Fund. There is no rule about how much money should be in this account. Whatever is spent during this year will be added back in at the Fall Town Meeting.

Mr. Sousa asked if Town Meeting has to approve this transfer. Mr. Gauvin stated that no, FinCom has direct authority over the Reserve Fund. Mr. Sousa responded that in this case, he sees no need to rush the transfer, and does not believe the regulations will go into effect May 31, 2023 with so much controversy. He stated that a message of support and that a transfer would be available, should be sent to the Select Board, and prefers to get a specific request from the Select Board. It is unclear if other towns will join a class action suit if the word gets out that Dartmouth has put up \$100,000 for a challenge. They may "let Dartmouth do the fighting".

Mr. Carreiro stated that Mr. Gauvin could speak with the Select Board to let them know that FinCom will stand behind them and transfer funds if they so request. Mr. O'Hare stated that FinCom's support should be in writing.

Mr. Silva asked if other municipalities are mounting similar campaigns. Eventually there will be a group to challenge the regulations. Ms. Hamm stated that at the UMASS Dartmouth presentation, municipalities were invited to attend. She noted that the towns are all on their own schedule of response. Mr. Silva stated that a letter to the Select Board is prudent.

A motion to recommend that Mr. Gauvin draft a letter to the Select Board offering Title V challenge support and a transfer of funds only for legal services should it become necessary, and to bring the draft letter to the next FinCom meeting for review, was made by Ms. Huidekoper. Ms. Hamm seconded the motion, adding that Mr. Gauvin should attend the next Select Board meeting to bring this letter to their attention and note FinCom's concern. This will be a visible and important statement. The motion was approved unanimously. Mr. Carreiro will add this item to the next agenda.

1. FY24 Budget Hearing: Various Town Departments

Mr. Carreiro presented the various FY2024 proposed operating budgets of Town departments:

152 - HUMAN RESOURCES
155 - MIS
161 - TOWN CLERK
162 - ELECTIONS
171 - CONSERVATION
175 - PLANNING BOARD
176 - APPEALS
241 - BUILDING
291 - EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
292 - ANIMAL CONTROL
295 – HARBORMASTER –Inadvertently skipped over, will be discussed at next meeting
299 - NATURAL RESOURCES
510 - HEALTH
541 - COUNCIL ON AGING
542 - YOUTH COORDINATOR
543 - VETERANS
610 - LIBRARY
630 - RECREATION
670 - DCTV

He did not discuss these departments in full, but instead highlighted some of the budget proposals selected from the MUNIS report. He stated that this level of detail, which FinCom usually doesn't review, is available for every department. Schedule A is the summary of spending, which is what FinCom usually reviews, but he thought members would prefer to see more detail.

The Police Chief requested that overtime salaries for officers assigned to Town Meeting details be transferred to the Town Meeting line, resulting in a large increase to the Town Meeting line and a decrease in the Police budget.

The Legal Fund is level funded. This does not include any additional funding for special cases. The Town Administrator works with the Legal Department to determine scope of work. Members expressed interest in learning more about Legal Department expenses and operations.

The Steelworkers Union negotiations have been concluded, so that increase is built into the Human Resources budget. None of the other contracts have been settled and therefore are not included in the budget, although a projection number has been forecast.

The Human Resources Director's current salary is 30% higher than the past Director. Mr. Carreiro believes that the position is not in a union but is a contract position with annual increases built in. Mr. O'Hare would like more information on the process.

The biggest increase in the MIS Department is for software contractual increases and fiber optic high speed internet. Ms. Hamm would like more information on the System Analyst position since this position seems to belong in the MIS Department. The website layout functionality is still being worked on. Mr. Boles stated that the Town software is canned and cannot be changed, so what is the role of the System Analyst? Mr. Carreiro stated that there are continual trainings, upgrades, meetings with every department, tweaking each package for each department, and more. Ms. Huidekoper stated that regardless of where the IT personnel sit, strides should be made toward the Select Board goal of making the Town more efficient.

Mr. Sousa pointed out that the IT person for the Police Department is supervised by the Town's MIS Director which seems reasonable for good communication and efficiency, but the funds for that operation should be included in the Police Department budget as a cost to operate that department, not from MIS. Mr. Carreiro stated that at least 90% of the Police IT employee's tasks are for the Police Department. Mr. Silva pointed out that the Police Department has also proposed removing funds from its budget for Town Meeting overtime details. With respect, this strategy of removing costs from the Police Department should be looked at. Mr. Carreiro responded that perhaps MIS questions could wait for Mr. MacInnes.

There are only two new positions being proposed on the Town side, which Mr. MacInnes will discuss at a later meeting. What is the process for deciding which departments get new positions? Mr. Carreiro stated that Mr. MacInnes reviews all the wish lists for new personnel and makes decisions. He stated that the overall budget on the Town side is a 2.7% increase, but the only increased headcount is for the two positions that Mr. MacInnes will discuss. The budgets that he is presenting have been recommended by himself and Mr. MacInnes.

The Town Clerk is asking for a 7.2% increase in salary. Mr. Carreiro stated that this is in line with the Steelworkers Union and other comparable communities' salaries. As an elected official, Town Meeting must approve the salary. Members stated that the Town Clerk received a large increase last year. This will be a question for Mr. MacInnes. Mr. Sousa feels that large salaries for management while workers are receiving very small increases are untenable; there has to be some fairness. Mr. O'Hare would like to see a performance evaluation before approving a large raise. Mr. Silva stated that as an elected official, there can be no performance evaluation for the Town Clerk except by the voters who can vote her in or out. The Town Clerk is working on gaining certification. Costs on maintenance of election machines have increased.

Mr. Sousa noted that office supplies seem to be increasing in almost every department. Mr. Carreiro stated that paper among other items has increased tremendously.

The Conservation Commission requested additional staff. Mr. Carreiro stated that the department has transitioned fully to View Permit and along with that change, paperwork may decrease. The department head, Mr. Marc Garrett, Environmental Affairs Coordinator, has had extensive discussions with Mr. MacInnes on the subject of additional personnel. The department now has a second full time employee, and works with interns. The review process starts with the applicant applying online, but reviews go to individual departments to finalize the process. Ms. Hamm asked for information about management of Town-owned land and the state requirements for inspection which was specified in a lengthy letter accompanying the department's budget

proposal. If state requirements are not being met due to lack of staffing, that is a problem that must be addressed. Mr. Gauvin stated that this should be taken up with Mr. MacInnes. Ms. Huidekoper asked to see the fee revenue for the Conservation Commission which goes into the General Fund. It is listed under Miscellaneous Fees.

The Planning Board has a new Assistant Director. The Director is in the Steelworkers Union. An 8.6% salary increase is requested. Mr. Carreiro stated that every person in each department is reviewed by a department head, and all Steelworker salaries are set by goals and achievement of goals. He believes the Planning Board would be the body to set goals for the Director. Mr. Sousa disagreed based on his experience on the Planning Board. At the time he served on the Board, the Director was not in a union and was given goals by the Planning Board. When the position was changed to the Steelworkers Union, the Board was told specifically that it is the union that sets goals for its members, not the Board. He does not know how it is being handled now. In the current situation, the Planning Board Director quit her post, and was then hired back at a higher grade. This was likely done outside the union agreement and any performance goals. Mr. Carreiro stated that the budget is set at the highest possible raise for the position if all goals are met. That may not be the amount rewarded if the person does not meet all goals. Mr. Silva pointed out that usually the budgeted amount and the actual are the same, meaning a person reached 100% of their goals, an unlikely scenario for any person. Mr. Sousa stated that this goes against what unions stand for, that everyone should get the same fair treatment, management and workers alike. This is another question for Mr. MacInnes.

The Community Development Director position was eliminated to create the Assistant Town Administrator position, with those duties integrated into the new position.

The Facilities Department is supervised by Mr. Timothy Lancaster who is also the Director of Parks & Recreation. This position is under the Steelworkers Union. Mr. Carreiro will confirm the percentages of budget assigned to each position. Ms. Hamm concurred with Mr. Sousa that the budgets should be separated out and detailed.

Ms. Hamm stated that a descriptive comment should be made on the MUNIS report when large variances are proposed such as salary increases. She also noted that the Building Inspector did a good job on his proposal, even noting where cost cutting measures could be taken. He may have been the only department head to do so.

The Sealer of Weights & Measures position has been difficult to fill. Administration is looking at a restructuring plan.

Bristol County Agricultural High School's budget increased even though Dartmouth student enrollment numbers went down by six. When the FY2023 budget was prepared, the information did not become available until May, resulting in a \$79,000 deficit. The bill has been paid but the line item transfer has not yet occurred. This year, the school sent its information early and although their School Committee has not yet voted it, the administrator feels confident with the number. New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School's budget has decreased slightly. Their School Committee has also not yet voted the budget.

The Snow and Ice budget has increased due to gasoline prices.

The Board of Health's budget includes a non-union employee, possibly a nurse, hired in FY2020 who has not received a raise in all that time. Mr. Carreiro will follow up. The cost of deer removal is included in the Animal Control budget which is part of the Board of Health.

Mr. Boles stated that the Council on Aging requested an operating budget to include a new part-time receptionist and other restructuring. Mr. Carreiro stated that the budget presented tonight is a level funded budget. The capital budget includes \$300,000 for a kitchen renovation and \$15,000 for planning. The Director position has a large increase which includes longevity, a benefit available to long-serving employees. The custodial hours have been recommended to be transferred to the Facilities Department. There should be efficiency in the transfer. The Library custodial position is also recommended for transfer. Mr. Gauvin is concerned that the Town's population is aging, yet the COA budget is level funded. There were several questions; Mr. Boles will discuss with the COA Director and bring answers back at the next meeting. Ms. Hamm pointed out that positions are grant funded but several permanent positions have been created over the past few years. Mr. Carreiro will request that the COA Director present briefly at the next meeting to answer questions.

The Library has candidates for the Library Director position. The custodial position has been removed. The MAR budget is fully funded. Electrical expenses are down due to solar installations. The Director salary budget has been lowered with the current Director retiring. Ms. Hamm stated that in her experience, incoming professionals are asking for higher salaries than outgoing retirees, not lower.

Parks & Recreation parts replacements have gone up 37%, with postage higher for mailing beach stickers now that the residents can purchase them online. The Police detail has increased for summer concerts. Income for the Bucket, beach programs, and concerts should be self-supporting. A 47% increase in overtime for summer camps is due to the department unable to find new hires. Mr. Sousa stated that the goal should be to retain employees to fill the positions, not to simply raise the overtime budget. Ms. Hamm stated that Mr. Lancaster had to close the office a few times so that the staff could assist with programs because they could not find enough new hires. The department had to compete with the state for hiring lifeguards, who will receive an increase this summer. Mr. Carreiro will follow up with Mr. Lancaster over these issues.

There is a 6% increase in payment to Massachusetts Association of Insurance Agencies (MAIA), a group health insurance agency.

Mr. O'Hare would like a summary of how much is paid annually to consultants for services. Mr. Carreiro will follow up.

2. FY24 School Department ongoing discussion

Mr. Gauvin contacted Mr. James Kiely, Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations to ask if answers to FinCom's questions were available. Mr. Kiely responded that he has been too busy

but will attempt to get the remainder of the answers as soon as possible. Mr. Gauvin requested the information to be sent, if possible, no later than one week before the School Committee budget hearing with FinCom.

The School Department budget will be presented at a 3% increase.

3. Any Minutes Available for Approval

A motion to approve the discussion notes of the March 9, 2023 meeting was made by Ms. Simmons, seconded by Ms. Huidekoper, approved 8-0-0.

4. Upcoming FY24 Budget Hearings:

- DPW Water/Sewer Enterprise - Thursday, March 23, 2023
- Dartmouth Public Schools - Thursday, March 30, 2023
- Board of Selectmen, Facilities, Finance – April 6, 2023

5. Any Item Not Known 48 hours in Advance

Regarding the current banking crisis that everyone is reading about, Mr. Carreiro stated that the Town does business with multiple banks, institutions that he feels are sustainable. Massachusetts banks in general are reasonably solvent. The Town has FDIC insurance. Although the current banking industry crisis is very concerning, most of those problems are with venture capital, long term Treasury notes, and crypto-currency. He has received letters of reassurance from some of the banks that the Town has services with.

6. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:35pm was made by Ms. Simmons, seconded by Mr. O'Hare, approved unanimously.

Approved on: _____ by the Finance Committee.