



LANCASTER FINANCE COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes of Tuesday, April 25, 2023, 6:15pm
Meeting held via ZOOM
(Meeting ID 886 1328 9643)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Susan Smiley called the meeting to order at 6:15PM. Roll call was taken, Richard Trussell, present; Michelle Vasquez, present; Jocelyn Mylott, present; Emily Kerrigan, absent; Susan Smiley, present. Also in attendance were Finance Director Cheryl Gariepy and Town Administrator Kate Hodges.

2. MEETING MINUTES

A. Review and Approve previous meeting minutes – 2/7 and 3/21.

Jocelyn Mylott moved to approve the meeting minutes of February 7, 2023, and March 21, 2023. Richard Trussell seconded. *Vote taken, Richard Trussell, Aye; Michelle Vasquez, Aye; Jocelyn Mylott, Aye; Susan Smiley, Aye. Motion passed. [4-0-0]*

3. FY24 BUDGET BOOK REVIEW – Discuss any open concerns or highlights, inclusive of ARPA and CPA funding requests

No questions or concerns were raised by any Finance Committee members.

4. TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLES – review/vote upon FinComm recommendations

Article 1. Chair Smiley stated that no decision was needed, that it had been made for them.

Article 2. Chair Smiley stated that nothing was needed.

Article 3, Revolving Fund Account Budgets. Mr. Trussell asked Ms. Smiley what her recommendation was; she replied that she did not necessarily have one but that the Finance Committee should have a recommendation so that it can be announced at Town Meeting. Ms. Smiley asked for the beginning balance; Ms. Gariepy explained that Town Meeting appropriates the maximum that could be spent from a revolving fund, which is based on fees collected. Mr. Trussell asked how this number was derived; Ms. Gariepy explained it is based on prior year. Ms. Vasquez moved to recommend Article 3; Mr. Trussell seconded. Ms. Smiley asked what the minimum balance would be, specifically about Recreation; Ms. Gariepy explained that the goal

would be at some point for Recreation to be self-sustaining. Ms. Hodges noted that in February 2022, Recreation fees totaled about \$53.00, while in February 2023 receipt totaled about \$9,700, so that there are now more programs and more money re-invested into programs. Mr. Trussell recapped, stating that Recreation was now a fee-based organization. Ms. Smiley asked about the \$358 allocated to the Recycling Center; Ms. Hodges explained that this was the remaining balance in their account. *Vote taken; Richard Trussell, Aye; Michelle Vasquez, Aye; Jocelyn Mylott, Aye; Susan Smiley, Aye. Motion to recommend passed. [4-0-0]*

Article 4, Water Main Replacement, \$4 million. Mr. Trussell asked for the balance of the Water Department's current free cash. Ms. Gariepy explained that it was about \$2 million, but that this is not being used, that the \$4 million would be through borrowing. Questions were asked about specific details; Ms. Hodges and Ms. Gariepy referred questions to the Water Department and to DPW Superintendent Bartlett. Mr. Trussell moved to accept as written, noting that future requests should be presented in a more timely manner. Ms. Vasquez seconded, stating that water systems are in serious need of repair, although more information would be helpful. *Vote taken; Richard Trussell, Aye; Michelle Vasquez, Aye; Jocelyn Mylott, Aye; Susan Smiley, Aye. Motion to recommend passed. [4-0-0]*

Article 5, Renewable Energy Enterprise Fund. Mr. Trussell stated that his understanding was that the solar credits and the bond would diminish through the years. He asked if we were getting to the point where there would not be sufficient funds. Ms. Gariepy explained that there is enough money to maintain. Mr. Trussell moved to approve the article as presented; Ms. Vasquez seconded. Ms. Smiley asked when end-of-life for the solar field is anticipated. Ms. Gariepy stated that it continues to bring in revenue. Ms. Smiley what the balance is in retained earnings; Ms. Gariepy stated it is currently \$694,000. *Vote taken; Richard Trussell, Aye; Michelle Vasquez, Aye; Jocelyn Mylott, Aye; Susan Smiley, No. Motion to recommend passed. [3-1-0].* Ms. Vasquez asked Ms. Smiley why she had voted no; Ms. Smiley stated that she felt that this should be funded through retained earnings; discussion ensued, with Ms. Vasquez explaining the enterprise fund.

Article 6, Finance Operation of the Water Department. Mr. Trussell, noting that this is funded by the people using it, moved to recommend as presented. Ms. Mylott seconded. *Vote taken; Richard Trussell, Aye; Michelle Vasquez, Aye; Jocelyn Mylott, Aye; Susan Smiley, Aye. Motion to recommend passed. [4-0-0]*

Article 7. Ms. Smiley stated that this did not need to be acted on.

Article 8, Compensation Plan. Ms. Hodges explained that this schedule is for non-union, non-classified employees, less than ten employees. If the override does not pass, this would need to be revisited. Ms. Smiley asked about voting on union contracts; Ms. Hodges explained that these are not voted on. This Article would give non-union, non-classified employees a 2% raise. Ms. Smiley asked why the warrant indicated that the FinComm recommended favorable action; Ms. Hodges explained that this is part of the budget and that when the FinComm had voted to recommend favorable action on the Operating Budget, this would have been included. Mr. Trussell moved to recommend favorable action on this article; Ms. Smiley seconded. *Vote taken; Richard Trussell, Aye; Michelle Vasquez, Aye; Jocelyn Mylott, Aye; Susan Smiley, Aye. Motion to recommend passed. [4-0-0]*

Article 9, CPA (Community Preservation Act). Ms. Smiley felt that it was inappropriate to recommend on this because the CPA does not fall under the Finance Committee's purview. Mr. Trussell thought that a statement should be made indicating that the article has been reviewed is not in conflict with any other budget. Ms. Vasquez agreed that this does not fall under the FinComm's purview. No action taken.

Article 10. No action taken.

Article 11. No action taken.

Article 12. No action taken.

Ms. Hodges advised that stating "no action taken" might indicate that the FinComm was actually recommending that the article be removed from the warrant and that Town Meeting should take no action. Ms. Smiley asked that the recommendation for Articles 9 and 10 be changed to state, "no purview, thus the Finance Committee has no recommendation." The committee concurred.

Article 13. Establishment of Abutter Lot Sales Program. Ms. Hodges explained that this article was prepared by her; there is another similar article based on a citizens' petition. The article based on the citizens' petition is based on a program in place in the Town of Littleton; Ms. Hodges expressed the opinion that there are some provisions in Littleton's program that do not fit in Lancaster. Because there is a monetary component to this article, i.e., determining cost per square foot, FinComm might want to be involved. Ms. Vasquez asked about staff costs/time to administer this program. Ms. Hodges addressed questions, explaining that this would return some property to the town's tax rolls. Ms. Mylott moved to recommend favorable action on Article 13. Ms. Vasquez seconded. *Vote taken; Richard Trussell, Aye; Michelle Vasquez, Aye; Jocelyn Mylott, Aye; Susan Smiley, Aye. Motion to recommend passed. [4-0-0]*

Article 14. Not discussed.

Article 15. DCAMM. Ms. Hodges announced that she has procured a grant, with MassDevelopment, in the amount of \$37,000 to do the first environmental assessment and pre-planning for the DCAMM project, and as a result DCAMM has extended the timeframe by six months to determine highest and best uses. Ms. Hodges reviewed the issues involved with the project. No vote taken.

Article 16. Establishment of Tax Fairness Committee. Ms. Hodges explained this article; the program would probably take about two years to implement. Ms. Smiley asked how this tied into the Senior Tax Abatement program. Mr. Trussell moved to accept as presented; Ms. Mylott seconded. *Vote taken; Richard Trussell, Aye; Michelle Vasquez, Aye; Jocelyn Mylott, Aye; Susan Smiley, Aye. Motion to recommend passed. [4-0-0]*

Article 20. Citizens' Petition Article re. Abutter Lot Sales Program. Ms. Smiley thinks the Finance Committee should not offer a recommendation on a citizens' petition based article. Mr. Trussell thinks that the work that Mr. Murphy has done to bring this forward should be

acknowledged. It was agreed that a statement will be made at Town Meeting. Ms. Mylott moved for the Finance Committee to take no action, but that a statement prepared by Ms. Hodges thanking Mr. Murphy for his work will be read at Town Meeting. Ms. Smiley seconded. *Vote taken; Richard Trussell, Aye; Michelle Vasquez, Aye; Jocelyn Mylott, Aye; Susan Smiley, Aye. Motion to recommend passed. [4-0-0]*

5. OLD BUSINESS – anything to review?

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS – anything new to review?

The Finance Committee requested of Ms. Hodges that they are seated in the front row at Town Meeting, rather than on the stage.

Ms. Smiley thanked Ms. Hodges, Ms. Gariepy, and the committee for their help during her time on the Finance Committee.

7. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Trussell moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Smiley seconded. *Vote taken, Michelle Vasquez, Aye; Sue Smiley, Aye; Richard Trussell, Aye; Jocelyn Mylott, Aye. Vote passed. [4-0-0]*

Respectfully submitted,

Approved and accepted: 6/20/23