

WEST NEWBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Date, Time, Location: **Wed. March 29, 2023, 6 PM** (1910 Bldg.)

Attendees (& initials): Chris Wile (CW), Rob Phillips (RP), Walter Burmeister (WB), Dan Innes (DI), Ross Capolupo (RC), Jim Sperelakis (JS), Angus Jennings (AJ). Guests/Participants: SB: Wendy Reed (WR), Rick Parker (RP), David Archibald (DA); Town Clerk: Jim Blatchford (JB); Planning Bd: Tim Cronin (TC)

1. Call to Order: 6:00 PM
2. Public Comment: None
3. Approval of Minutes: 3/15/23 FC Mtg Minutes. Motion to approve, with revisions (i.e., with specific dollar amounts listed for articles): CW. 2nd: DI.
Approved 5-0-1 (JS abstained, absent from Mar 15 mtg)
4. Warrant Article Review (Annual/Special) (Note: article #s can/will change):
 - Draft #40: Solar Bylaw Amendments: Article brought forward by Town Planner & Planning Board to update the large scale, ground mounted solar photovoltaic installations (LGSPI) overlay district bylaw. The amended bylaw will allow installations throughout Town, provided they meet certain identified criteria. Town Counsel has also advised that our current LGSPI overlay district may be too restrictive to meet the requirements of the Town's Green Communities Designation. Although there is no out-of-pocket cost to the project, beyond staff time and Town Counsel review, the proposed amendment is expected to protect the town from a potential zoning challenge and the litigation costs associated with defending such a challenge. RP also explained that there may be financial upsides for the Town, e.g., revenue generation, from LGSPI installations. AJ & TC shared a Town map designating specific sites, along an corridor with existing 'Phase 3' power. DI asked if the Town would be expected to pay any costs if National Grid desired an increase in the Town's capacity/footprint for Phase 3 power? The consensus was this was highly unlikely. Motion to Approve: CW. 2nd: RP.
Approved 6-0. Rationale will be written by Sue Brown, Town Planner.
 - Draft #5: Instructions, Rules and Regulations for Bd of Water Commissioners: This draft article was discussed with the SB and Town Clerk. RP circulated a proposed abstract of the article that he & FC Chair CW had drafted. The joint group discussed the reasoning for the article, specific language and a

delineation of what would appear in the article versus the FC booklet rationale. The reasoning/background behind the perceived need for this article is the likely significant future capital outlay which will be required to fund new well field and water distribution construction, as well as repair/replace existing aging piping and other infrastructure. It is anticipated that these expenditures will be funded by WN taxpayers, as opposed to self-funding from Town water rate-payers. A robust discussion ensued. DA commented that the Town's intermunicipal water agreement, with Newburyport, has been 'stagnant' since the 1980s and requires updating. AJ felt that any future regional water agreement would need to be considered and signed by both the SB and Water Bd. The SB, at their choosing, can either add comments and language to the draft FC article circulated, or draft their own, at their prerogative. JS suggested a 'friendly amendment' to the last sentence of the draft article wording, as follows: "...present the plan to the Water Commissioners, ~~and to the Select Board,~~ and the Town." Motion to approve article, as modified: RP. 2nd: CW. **Approved 6-0**. Rationale: RP & DI. At this point, the joint meeting with SB and Town Clerk concluded.

5. FY24 Budget Line Item Adjustments:

- Parks & Recreation: \$38,272 requested, a \$13,487 increase (+54.4%) vs FY23. This reflects a minor adjustment from the previous FC guidance, so that wages of \$5,072 are included in the operating budget, as opposed to funded separately via the Revolving Fund. Motion to approve: CW. 2nd: RP. **Approved 6-0**
- Adjustments to Town FY24 Operating Budget: AJ presented several recommended budget line item adjustments, all of which carry a relatively minor dollar amount. These had been voted favorably by the SB during their prior meeting. Specifically as follows:
 - Board of Registrars Salary & Wages: from \$6,600 to \$6,800.
 - Veteran's Benefits: Budget reduction from \$24,240 to \$6,000, reflecting the unfortunate passing of a benefits-eligible Town resident.
 - Salary & Wages: The SB had suggested changes in several salary/wage lines to reflect their approved 3% non-union COLA (cost of living adjustment). The bottom line budget increase will be approx. \$23,748, allocated amongst several Town depts.
 - FICA: Adjustment of +\$925, to \$57,331, reflecting the increased COLA adjustment from 2% to 3%.
 - Water Dept. Salary & Wages: increase from \$307,209 to \$317,467 reflecting the 3% COLA adjustment (previous budget submission had 0% COLA), plus consideration of a Water Dept. Operator obtaining a Grade II Water Treatment License, and subsequent salary adjustment.

Motion to accept all budget adjustments presented: WB. 2nd: CW. **Approved 6-0**

- Salary & Wage Adjustments to reflect increased COLA: The entire FY24 operating budget's Salary & Wage lines have been adjusted to reflect the cost impact of the SB's 3/13/2023 vote to set FY24 non-union COLA at 3% (instead of the 2% built into the initial proposed budget). Motion to approve the increased COLA of 3%: RP. 2nd: DI. **Approved 6-0**
6. Town Manager Updates: AJ mentioned that CW, RP and he will be working on the introduction letter to FC booklet. The joint meeting, to review Town Meeting articles, with SB, Moderator, Town Clerk, Town Counsel and Town Manager is scheduled for Mon. April 10 at 7 PM (see # 7 immediately below)
7. Communications & future FC meeting schedule:
- M. Apr 10 immediately following joint SB/Moderator/FC mtg to approve minutes and review any addit. Items.

Adjournment: Motion to Adjourn: CW. 2nd: JS. **Approved 6-0** at 7:26 PM