

Auburn Finance Committee
Minutes of the Meeting – October 4, 2023

Members Participating: Kevin Kennedy, Ed Coleman, Patrick Jones,
Michael Marshall, George Graham and
Stephen Consilvio
Members Absent: Trevor Sansoucy
Also Present: Town Manager Ed Kazanovicz

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M. by the Chair Kevin Kennedy.

Mr. Kennedy announced that this open meeting of the Finance Committee was being conducted both in-person and remotely, consistent with Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022, which suspends the requirement of the Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a publicly accessible physical location. Further, all members of public bodies are allowed to participate remotely as long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting.

For the public to join the meeting remotely, by telephone call 1-786-535-3211 access code 991-599-357, join by computer: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/991599357>.

All supporting materials that have been provided to members of this body are available on the Town's website. The public is encouraged to follow along using the posted agenda.

Mr. Kennedy noted that the meeting was being recorded by Auburn Cable Television.

The Chair announced that all members expected to participate in the meeting were present in-person.

Town Manager Ed Kazanovicz gave a budget summary presentation relating to the articles on the October 24, 2023 Special Town Meeting Warrant. He said that the amount requested under Article 2 was \$495,500.00, with \$163,149.00 coming from Ambulance Receipts and \$25,000.00 from Pakachoag Enterprise Funds. The total appropriations utilize tax levy of 0.53% out of the allowable 2.5%, leaving excess levy capacity at \$9.3 million.

The Finance Committee discussed the articles on the town meeting warrant and voted the following recommendations.

Article 2. Amends Article 3 of the May 2, 2023 Annual Town Meeting, (Operating Budget for FY2024). Mr. Kazanovicz gave an overview of the article and increases in various departmental accounts and revenue sources. The Town Manager said that, as he has stated at previous meetings, the increase in the Salary Wage Reserve Account was recommended for potential salary adjustments for some positions that have been under review.

Mr. Kazanovicz said that certification of Free Cash has come in at \$21,363,298.00. There was discussion about increases in the residential home values that could impact taxes. Mr. Kazanovicz advised that the cycle for recertification of values has changed from 5 to 3 years.

The Town Manager discussed the town's adopted financial policies.

Mr. Kazanovicz advised that the budget adjustment in the Firefighters Account was needed for the four new Firefighters with a starting date of January 1st, with two being paid from tax levy and two paid from ambulance receipts.

Mr. Marshall asked how the new firefighters would affect the status of the impact shifts.

The Fire Chief Stephen Coleman was participating remotely and he discussed staffing levels and he said that with the additional staff, the minimum staffing would change from 10 to 11 per shift. The Chief said that his goal as per recommended standards would be to continue efforts to get to the minimum staffing of 13/shift.

The Chief also discussed the impact on the Fire/Rescue Department of the 40B housing project under construction in West Auburn relating to call volume and fire inspections.

Mr. Marshall asked about the Patrol Account amendment.

The Deputy Police Chief Scott Mills was in attendance and explained that there is a proposed one new Patrol position starting in January.

Deputy Chief Mills discussed the new line item for Body Cam Storage. He described the grant that the department has been awarded to purchase the equipment and that there are ongoing discussions relative to impact bargaining. The grant doesn't pay for cloud storage for data retention to take care of public records requests.

Following the discussion, the Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 2 (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Marshall) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 3. Designates Whitman Bailey Drive as a public road. Mr. Kazanovicz advised that there will be a motion at the town meeting to postpone the article indefinitely.

He said that there is a lot of information that the community needs to supply to support the petition and they will resubmit a petition for the next town meeting.

The Finance Committee voted to defer to the petitioner on Article 3 (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Marshall) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 4. Amends Article 12 of the May 2, 2023 Annual Town Meeting to increase the Medicaid Reimbursement amount approved for FY24 from \$125,000.00 to \$140,000.00. Town Manager Kazanovicz explained that Medicaid funds are reimbursed after the fact for services rendered; such services are provided by the Auburn Public Schools in support of Medicaid-eligible students. The School Committee is requesting to increase the reimbursement amount, based on prior receipts, along with projections of student needs and their eligibility for reimbursement in FY2024.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 4 (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 5. Appropriates the sum of \$95,800.00 from Free Cash for the installation of new or the upgrade of security doors and windows at various schools within the Auburn School District. Mr. Kazanovicz explained that the doorways would primarily be at the two primary schools and the intermediate school and the cameras and monitoring work would be done for all the schools.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 5 (Motion made by Mr. Coleman; motion seconded by Mr. Marshall) voted in favor 5 to 1. Mr. Jones opposed.

Article 6. Repurposes CIP Funds by amending Article 4 of June 2, 2020 Annual Town Meeting to appropriate the balance of \$30,000.00 and repurpose said balance of \$30,000.00 to the Central Office Administration Building for Window Replacement and Building Upgrades. With the assistance of the Auburn D.P.W., the School Department was able to complete the Bryn Mawr School Parking

expansion project with funds remaining. The School Department is requesting to repurpose this \$30,000.00 for needed replacement of windows and building upgrades.

Some members expressed concern with spending the money on the school building only because of the uncertainty as to the West Street property relative to the possible use for public safety at some point.

Mr. Kazanovicz explained that the School Department had put this money on hold pending the outcome of the public safety facility. The Select Board has taken a vote that they would not pursue a joint public safety facility, and there is more of a focus on fire headquarters at the site, which would allow this building to stay in place. There is a need for windows at this time to address some of the energy needs.

Mr. Marshall made a motion to recommend approval. Mr. Graham seconded the motion and the Committee voted 2 in favor to 4 opposed. Mr. Marshall and Mr. Graham in favor and Mr. Consilvio, Mr. Coleman, Mr. Jones and Mr. Kennedy opposed. The vote failed.

Mr. Jones made a motion not to recommend Article 6. Mr. Coleman seconded the motion, and the Committee voted in favor 4 to 2. Mr. Jones, Mr. Consilvio, Mr. Coleman and Mr. Kennedy were in favor and Mr. Marshall and Mr. Graham opposed - passed.

Article 7. Appropriates \$5,250.00 from General Fund Revenues for firewall security review.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 7 (Motion made by Mr. Marshall; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 8. Repurposes \$90,000.00 from the Ambulance Reserve for Appropriation account by amending Article 4 of the May 3, 2022 Town Meeting, "Replace Ambulance" as follows: (1) appropriates \$15,000.00 for personal protective equipment/turnout gear for firefighters; and (2) appropriates \$75,000.00 to replace garage doors at Fire Headquarters.

The Fire Chief explained that the article seeks to repurpose the balance of a prior Town Meeting appropriation to use up said balance of the appropriation, not needed for the original purpose, for necessary expenses.

Chief Coleman advised that personal protective gear (PPE)/turnout gear has a maximum life span of ten years and the gear is inspected and tested annually in accordance with NFPA standards. During this year's inspections eight sets of PPE failed were taken out of service and have to be replaced.

Now that it has been determined that Auburn Street will stay a fire station, they are seeking to replace the doors.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 8 (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 9. Appropriates \$208,468.81 from Bond Premium Proceeds and \$255,531.19 from Free Cash for radio infrastructure equipment and improvements to the town's Public Safety Communications system.

Chief Coleman recapped the problem at the Rochdale Street primary radio site (former Landfill), and the failure of the electrical system when power was lost to the main site back in July. A new radio site on Prospect Street for fire is being requested to provide better coverage in the west end of town and bring coverage from 74.7% to 93.0% with a three-site simulcast system. Also the existing fire rescue base radio replacement project that first appeared on the CIP at the 2020 annual town meeting has suffered delay due to cost escalation on simulcast equipment and supply chain issues.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 9 (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Marshall) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 10. Appropriates \$100,000.00 from Free Cash for conceptual designs of a proposed fire station on West Street.

Due to the construction escalation over the past several years, the original public safety facility project came in about \$25M higher than expected, making the estimated project cost \$78M. The information was provided to the Select Board in July, and the Board voted to eliminate the Police Department from the proposed project and focus on the construction of a new fire headquarters only to replace station 2 on West Street. Mr. Kazanovicz explained that approval of this article would allow for conceptual designs of the new fire headquarters to be generated.

Mr. Consilvio raised the question if other more suitable sites had been considered for the public safety facility. He discussed his concerns with the West Street site and potential alternatives.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 10 (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Marshall) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 11. Appropriates \$11,000.00 from General Fund Revenues to cover costs associated with the first year of the implementation process for Police Department Accreditation through the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission.

Deputy Police Chief Scott Mills explained the certification process.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 11 (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 12. Approves a revolving account for the Department of Development and Inspectional Services, pursuant to MGL Chapter 44, §53E½, for the purpose of collection of revenue generated by Town-owned EV Charging Stations for operation and maintenance; expenditures not to exceed \$_____ annually.

Director of Development & Inspectional Services(DDIS) Darlene Coyle was present and explained the proposal for a revolving account. She advised that \$25,000.00 would be an appropriate expenditure limit.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 12, with expenditures not to exceed \$25,000.00 annually (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Marshall) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 13. Appropriates \$10,000.00 from General Fund Revenues to supplement previous appropriations to allow the Board of Health to conduct a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day in the spring of 2024.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 13 (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Marshall) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 14. Appropriates \$51,000.00 from Free Cash for FY2025 Assessors revaluations.

Mr. Kazanovicz explained the new requirements for conducting property revaluations.

The Finance Committee voted to recommended approval of Article 14(Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Marshall) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 15. Appropriates \$60,000.00 from the Town of Auburn's Fiscal Year 2024 General Fund Revenues for Training, Support and Services.

The Town Manager explained that funds were for the Vision Appraisal Services upgrade and for training and support.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 15(Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Marshall) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 16. Repurposes funds by amending Article 9, approved at the October 24, 2017 Special Town Meeting to appropriate the balance of the original appropriation of \$100,000.00 for 064222-581850 LED Street Lights and repurpose said balance of \$100,000.00 to Sidewalk Pedestrian Safety.

Town Manager Ed Kazanovicz explained the two parts for funding the new program for sidewalk pedestrian safety, which are the provision under Article 2 for permanent funding in the operating budget and Article 16, which seeks an amendment to a prior article that would repurpose funds. The actions would support the creation of a new municipal sidewalk program that prioritizes access and safety of pedestrians by installing new sidewalks, including by not limited to the expansion, repair and replacement of existing sidewalks and signalization.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 16 Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Marshall) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 17. Appropriates \$500,000.00 from Free Cash to the Town OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) Liability Trust Fund. Town Manager Kazanovicz discussed the status of the OPEB Trust Fund.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 17 (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 18. Appropriates \$100,000.00 from Free Cash to the Town Stabilization Fund. The Town Manager advised that the balance in the Stabilization Fund is slightly under \$4.5 million.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 18 (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 19. Appropriates \$3,100.00 from the Cemetery Perpetual Care Account for the purchase of cemetery maintenance and funeral set-up equipment.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 19 (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 20. Appropriates \$80,000.00 from Sewer Retained Earnings to procure services, equipment, and materials to repair the Odor Control System at the Pinrock Wastewater Pumping Station. DPW Director Joanna Paquin discussed the work that is needed at the Pinrock Pumping Station.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 20 (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Marshall) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 21. Amends Article 13 of the October 26, 2021 Special Town Meeting so as to repurpose the appropriation of \$65,000.00 from retained earnings, from the replacement of a fairway mower, to the purchase of a mower.

The DPW Director advised that this article relates to the Pakachoag Golf Course.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of Article 21 (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Marshall) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Article 22. Amends the Town of Auburn General Bylaws, by deleting, in Chapter XVII, "Traffic, Orders, Rules and Regulations", Section 17.12 Town of Auburn - Special Speed Regulation No. 6085 (Southbridge Street Court), Section 17.13 Town of Auburn - Special Speed Regulation No.7021 (Pinehurst Ave. and Pakachoag St.), and Section `17.14 Town of Auburn - Special Speed Regulation No.7021(Central Street).

The Finance Committee voted to defer to the petitioner (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Marshall) voted in favor 6 to 0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 P.M. (Motion made by Mr. Jones; motion seconded by Mr. Coleman) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Submitted: Sharon A. Kwiatkowski
Adm. Assistant to the Town Manager

The following documents were part of the Finance Committee's Meeting of October 4, 2023 and are retained in the Executive Office of the Town Manager:

- October 4, 2023 Agenda
- October 24, 2023 Special Town Meeting Warrant