

Town of Adams Massachusetts 01220-2087

FINANCE COMMITTEE

TOWN HALL BUILDING
8 PARK STREET
TOWN CLERK
ADAMS MASS.

Wednesday, May 6, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Meeting Minutes

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CALL TO ORDER: On the above date the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee held a joint meeting on the first floor of Adams Town Hall. It was announced that Board of Selectmen Vice Chairman Bush, Members Nowak, Blanchard and Duval, and Finance Committee Vice Chairman Cowie and Members Butler, Corrigan, Cushenette, Foster, Kline, Kupiec, Meczywor and Tomkowicz were attending the meeting remotely for COVID-19 emergency purposes under 9410 CMR 29.10(5). The meeting was called to order at 7:14 p.m. by Board of Selectmen Chairman Hoyt and Finance Committee Chairman Burdick. Present in the room were Town Administrator Green, Town Accountant Beverly, Town Assessor MacDonald, Tax Collector/Treasurer Rice and Town Clerk Meczywor.

Chairman Hoyt advised that "pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 *Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18*, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Town of Adams Board of Selectmen is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. A reminder that persons who would like to view this meeting while in progress may do so by tuning into Channel 1303, thank you to Northern Berkshire Community Television OR by calling (888) 788-0099.

Call in Connection:

Video: <https://zoom.us/j/98470910023?pwd=MDJYSGVYb3JHUE8rS0huUXNPTzArZz09>, Meeting ID: 984-7091-0023, Password: TOAFY21. **Phone:** 1-929-436-2866, Meeting ID: 984-7091-0023, Password: 452499

FY2021 Budget Introduction: *Town Administrator Green* read aloud a letter of introduction to the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget. The letter of the budget strategy was also reviewed. Town Accountant Beverly gave an overview of expenses and the charts.

FY2020 Budget Review: *Town Accountant Beverly* gave a lengthy review of the changes in the budget. Personal Services were noted as increasing over FY2020. Elected, Appointed and Non-Union budgets were outlined and Operating Expenses were reviewed. The Capital Outlay, technology upgrades, and debt service were explained. Free Cash was reviewed and it was noted that funds were used to fund infrastructure. The Town Administrator budget is seeking \$20,000 for a charter review, and additional increases are for a software replacement for the Assessor, for the Library Building, and \$217,000 for replacement of sewer pipes for the Route 8 Commercial Street project. It was explained that the project is \$9 Million in construction costs through state funding, which are managed by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, and a section of sewer line needs to be replaced. Funding from the state does not allow for sewer line replacement. The DPW Equipment Maintenance budget line was reviewed for capital purchasing. It was pointed out that \$50,000 for the Wastewater

Treatment Plant capital study will be eliminated from the Capital Outlay due to the grant through the Community Compact. Wastewater upgrades that are needed were reviewed and the prioritization schedule through the capital outlay and other funding sources was outlined. It was noted that in addition to the Capital Needs Study, it will include a study on the use of the sewer rate to fund sewer plan. The Russell Field House remodel was reviewed and \$25,000 is in the budget to remodel it. Assessments were made on the Cherry Sheets. Library state aid is being offset and raising the allowance for the exemption of \$450,000. The Hoosac Valley High School Debt Exclusion was reviewed, and it was noted that state aid trends have gone up. It was explained that it is not clear whether General Government Aid will be reduced by 10%, 20% or another amount due to Covid-19. Local receipts were noted as being all estimated numbers, which were very conservative. Excise Tax has been estimated and the number will likely change. It was explained that \$500,000 to \$800,000 of this budget is prepared to be cut if need be once more information is available from the state, with a variety of options. It was noted that cuts will impact personnel and services. Perpetual Care has no total but the amount in the fund was noted. Free Cash numbers were reviewed and it was explained that some will be used to offset the tax rate. The Levy Limit with the proposed budget was scrutinized. Levy Ceiling was defined and excess levy capacity was noted. The shifted residential tax rate with the proposed Fiscal Year 2021 budget was outlined. Funding through property taxes includes \$2.2 Million in new growth, and the tax shift was noted as being at \$3,373 for an average family tax bill. Clerical errors were noted and corrected to show an increase of \$152. In the Cemetery, Parks and Grounds budget it was reviewed that lights were not working in Russell Field, and the grant does not fix the lighting. There is no funding in the budget to address the lights and a plan for lighting work was briefly reviewed. Town Assessor MacDonald will provide the Board and Finance Committee information on the \$2.2 Million growth. It was explained that the cannabis fund is awaiting the Retail/Medical Marijuana business opening, and it was noted that cannabis sales are regulated by the Cannabis Control Commission through the state, and they cannot work on the Adams location until they complete work on an eastern Massachusetts property. The cultivator is still moving forward but Covid-19 has slowed down the site work. Health insurance rates were noted as being set annually, and the Town could see a third or fourth year of no increases. The Field House at Russell Field was explained as being tackled on another fiscal year but \$25,000 will be in this budget to fix structural issues if needed.

Finance and Technology: Employee/Retiree Benefits were noted as having a cost of living adjustment for an old insurance claim. The Compensated Absence fund was briefly reviewed, and it was anticipated that the Town will spend it all by the time all retirements are calculated for June 30th.

Accountant: The Accountant budget expenses were reviewed and there were no questions.

Technology: A brief review was done of the expenses for Harper's Payroll Service for accountability. It was noted that the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Department of Public Works Garage will have interactive timeclocks installed. Two Mobile Data Terminals in the cruisers are being replaced, as well as increased broadband technology, online permitting software, and heating, cooling, and upgraded automation for the police station.

Property & Liability Insurance: A large increase for property casualty insurance was noted as a cost of doing business. The ransomware attack and other building issues were noted as a factor. It was explained that the retirement assessment increased but pension funds are down approximately \$8 Million due to the pandemic, and are climbing back up. Insurance costs were reviewed for retirees. Workers Compensation Insurance rates are noted as going up and are calculated into personal services.

Town Assessor: Personal Services were reviewed. Operational Expenses increased by 4.11% for materials and management consulting for the property cards. The Capital Budget request is for \$5,000 for software changed from CAMA to TYLER as there is still some consulting work left to be done. It was noted that the budget only went up \$400 for postage and expense forms. The \$2.2 Million growth was estimated number based on building permits that are foreseen to be completing by the end of June. Board of Assessor stipends were discussed at length and are noted as being a requirement for officials to keep up education credentials. Consultant fees and cost of living adjustments were reviewed. The budget for education, conferences and meals and reimbursements were discussed. It was suggested that old cards be given to the Historical Society. Last year's equipment budget of \$20,000 was reviewed.

Collector/Treasurer. A brief review of the budget was made. *Tax Collector/Treasurer Rice* explained the status of the debt service and the \$2.5 Million storm damage borrowing. \$500,000 in grant funds were received and will be returned back. It was noted that work is being done to find grants. Grants are still being worked on and the Town is hopeful for more. It was explained that this is the first year of the storm damage bond which is for twenty years.

Town Clerk. A brief review of Personal and Operating Expenses took place. A significant increase in election workers of \$16,000 was noted due to three elections next year. It was noted that hopefully costs will hold through with the ongoing Covid-19 expectations. Health insurance costs were clarified. Registrations and Codification were reviewed.

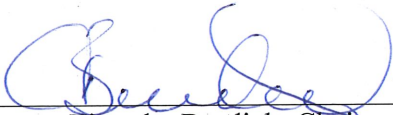
Veteran Services were reviewed. There were no questions.

Executive. Discussion took place regarding the use of Town Counsel with his level of comfort. Medicare match questions will be clarified by the Town Accountant. The Selectmen, Town Administrator, Town Counsel, Moderator, Finance Committee, Reserve Fund and Town Report budgets were reviewed.

ADJOURNMENT: *Motion made by Board of Selectmen Vice Chairman Bush to adjourn the meeting, second by Member Blanchard. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Blanchard, Duval and Nowak. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 9:22 pm*

Motion made by Finance Committee Vice Chairman Cowie to adjourn the meeting, second by Member Foster. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Burdick, Vice Chairman Cowie, Members Corrigan, Foster, Cushenette, Tomkowicz, Kupiec, Meczywor, Butler and Kline. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 9:22 pm

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary



Timothy Burdick, Chairman