

Town of Adams Massachusetts 01220-2087

FINANCE COMMITTEE

TOWN HALL BUILDING
8 PARK STREET

Thursday, May 28, 2020, 7:00 p.m.

Adams Town Hall, 1st Floor Meeting Room, Adams MA

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER: On May 28, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. the Finance Committee held a meeting in the first floor meeting room of Town Hall. Present were Chairman Burdick, Vice Chairman Cowie, Members Cushenette, Corrigan, Tomkowicz, Kupiec, Foster, Johnson, Meczywor, Butler, Kline. Also present were Town Administrator Green, Board of Selectmen Chair Hoyt, Library Director Jayko, and Board of Selectmen Member Nowak.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/91920843739?pwd=VGRBWnpzU00wb1gvZUVZOU9oeUVUQT09>
Meeting ID: 919 2084 3739, **Password:** FINCOMM

Dial by your location: 1(929) 436 2866; **Meeting ID:** 919 2084 3739; **Password:** 524534

Chairman Burdick 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.

Vice Chairman Cowie inquired how the Town will proceed with the budget as there is a question about state funding to the Town. He noted that if the Finance Committee approves everything then gets changes from the state, the Committee will have to meet to approve it again. He pointed out that if Town Meeting approves the budget, the Town is obligated to raise money for what is voted on and if the funding from state is not there the Town is obligated to fill the shortfall. It was explained that the Town of Adams is in no different position than any other municipality and contingencies have been made to call for another Town Meeting to redo the budget as it would not be funded. Discussion took place about the possibility of proportional budgets, and COLAs and how they are paid out were explained. Concern was expressed about the Finance Committee making decisions about paying out COLAs and being in a compromising financial condition down the road. *Town Administrator Green* advised this has been researched thoroughly over the last 60 days, and he has spoken with Division of Local Services, Department of Revenue and other municipal officials. He advised that there are three ways forward: to move forward with a month-to-month budget with 1/12 funding, where the Town cannot spend any capital outlay funds or move forward with capital projects or labor agreements and their 2% COLA; to make cuts within the budget without knowing what the state reduction would be which will impact service delivery; or to move forward with the numbers provided in January knowing they will not hold up and then surgically cut the budget. It was noted that receipts were estimated conservatively and that Town Counsel, the Department of Revenue and the Division of Local Services were consulted and the budget has to be cut prior to submitting the tax recap sheet.

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It was explained that the Town anticipates an early fall Town Meeting with numbers to make cuts before submitting the recap sheet. Areas of the budget that can be cut were identified, and it was cautioned that this information is not being provided because it impacts people's jobs and there is no wish to create panic. *Vice Chairman Cowie* inquired if there is a legal opinion stating what is proposed to be done at a second Town Meeting so town taxpayers are not obligated to have to provide tax revenues voted on at a Town Meeting in June. It was explained that Town Counsel St. John III provided that legal opinion. It was pointed out that the Finance Committee responsibility and duties are to determine whether the Town can afford what is being proposed, and that the Committee Members should be advised on what is being proposed for budget cuts as it is information that needs to be known, but not shared. It was explained that it is a fine line with public meeting requirements and it is not clear if the information would meet Executive Session criteria. *Board of Selectmen Chair Hoyt* explained that the Budget Sub-Committee met with the Town Accountant and Town Administrator, who were asked to put together areas of the budget that could possibly be cut if the Town must go that route. She noted that the Town Administrator worked with department heads to level fund or cut their budgets where they could to keep it as lean as possible and to minimize personnel cuts. She explained that the Budget Sub-Committee was made aware of what areas can be cut. *Member Corrigan* advised that as a Member of the Finance Committee it was concerning to be told that someone at a meeting made cuts and will tell the Committee Members about it later. He expressed concern that once the budget is ratified the Town is responsible to fund the whole amount to McCann Technical School and Hoosac Valley Regional School District. *Member Foster* echoed the concerns and expressed a need for a "Plan B". It was explained to the Committee that \$800,000 in cuts have been identified and if needed the Town will probably lose all employees and services. *Chairman Burdick* expressed disagreement in releasing the information on potential staffing cuts as it may not need to happen and to release the information in a public forum and have it gone to the media would be detrimental. *Member Cushenette* expressed that whatever elements make up the \$800,000 cuts should be up to the Town Administrator and staff and there is enough information for this Committee to move forward. *Member Tomkowicz* expressed agreement with the need to keep potential staffing cuts private and stated all that is needed is the minimal amount of information for the Committee to decide. Clarification was requested as to why \$800,000 in cuts were needed if there is a 10% loss in aid from the state and it was explained that this amount would cover the worst scenario. There would not be a cut of \$800,000 if only \$250,000 was needed. It was explained that other communities cut preliminary budgets and have other areas they could more easily cut, and others are going with the 1/12 monthly budget. The parameters of the 1/12 monthly budget were reviewed and it was explained that the Town would only spend what is needed to keep on the lights until the figure from the state indicates what to cut. It was explained that the capital projects would not be able to go forward in this model. The uncertainty of the state and federal government funding and reimbursement was outlined and it was explained that the Town will get more information in a few months. It was explained that the Town could agree to the 1/12 process or move ahead now and when the firm numbers are available to cut the budget at that point rather than cut staff where it may not be necessary. *Board of Selectmen Member Nowak* explained that he is not on the Budget Sub-Committee and clarified that he has no privilege to see the proposed cuts. *Member Corrigan* advised that the school budgets total over \$6 Million and if the budget is adopted the Town is locked into paying the whole amount. He inquired if the Town has to cut \$800,000 if the Schools would share the cuts or if the Town would take all of the cuts out of Town Services. It was clarified that it would require a Special Town Meeting to go ahead, and it would be easier with Hoosac Valley Regional School District than with McCann Technical School since there are more municipalities involved.

It was expressed that it should be egalitarian and the School District is in the same boat as the Town and the school funding would be reduced all at one shot at Town Meeting. It was noted that Cheshire is not planning a Town Meeting by July 1st. Town Administrator Green will be meeting with Superintendent Dean and Cheshire Town Administrator St. John IV on Monday. It was clarified that if the Town of Adams cannot approve its part of the School budget it would be paid in the 1/12 budget. Town Meeting is currently earmarked for June 22nd at 6:30 pm under a pavilion with tents and a sound system. It was noted that there is currently only one Citizens Petition, and nothing but financial related items on the warrant.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: *The minutes for the May 6, 2020 and May 7, 2020 meetings were submitted for approval. Motion made by Vice Chairman Cowie to approve the minutes for May 6, 2020, second by Member Corrigan. Voted in favor were Vice Chairman Cowie, Members Butler, Corrigan, Cushenette, Foster, Johnson, Kline, Kupiec, Meczywor and Tomkowicz. Motion passed.*

Motion made by Vice Chairman Cowie to approve the minutes for May 7, 2020, second by Member Johnson. Voted in favor were Vice Chairman Cowie, Members Butler, Corrigan, Cushenette, Foster, Johnson, Kline, Kupiec, Meczywor and Tomkowicz. Motion passed.

APPROVAL OF FY2021 BUDGET: *Member Foster* presented a question on step increases, and expressed concern that staff is getting raises three months before they should. It was pointed out that Chapter 200 of the Personnel Rules and Regulations covers compensation and merit increases, and the way they are supposed to be handled. Clarification was made on how and when staff is paid step increases. *Chairman Burdick* advised further information will be provided on it for clarification. The furlough of Town employees furloughed was noted, and the health insurance of these employees is still covered. It was clarified that the furloughed staff is collecting unemployment. It was noted that if the furloughed staff stay out of work until June \$30,000 in unspent funds will be going into Free Cash. It is anticipated that the staff should be back full time by the end of June. It was explained that stipends were not paid out and transportation was not used for the schools and a suggestion was made that the School District return the unspent funds to the Town. It was pointed out that the School Committee was not present and therefore could not answer the questions on their budget. It was explained that the School District would have two choices on what to do with the funds, either return them to the Town or put them into their Excess and Deficiency Fund. *Member Foster* noted that this could be significant funding and he would like to get that information before the budget is approved.

Executive: Selectmen, Town Administrator, Town Counsel, Moderator, Town Report. It was explained that the only change made was that one Board of Selectmen Member reduced his salary by \$1,000. There were no questions on this budget.

Finance & Technology: Finance Committee, Reserve Fund, Employee/Retiree Benefits, Accountant, Technology, Insurance. There were no questions on this budget.

General Government: Assessor, Treasurer-Collector, Debt Service, Town Clerk, Elections, Registrar of Voters, Codification. *Member Meczywor* advised he would be abstaining from this budget line due to a conflict of interest. There were no questions on this budget line.

Community Development: Community Development, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Zoning Board, Historical Commission, Agricultural Commission. There were no questions on this budget line.

Inspection Services: Inspection Services, Weights/Measures Inspector. There were no questions on this budget line.

Public Health: Board of Health. *Member Foster* advised he would abstain from this line item. There were no questions on this budget line.

Public Safety: Police Department, Animal Control Officer, Parking Management, Emergency Management, Forest Warden. There were no questions on this budget line.

Public Service: Council on Aging, Veterans Services, Memorial Day Remembrances, Library. There were not questions on this budget line.

Public Buildings: Police Station, Registry of Deeds, Town Hall, Public Buildings/Property Maintenance, Community Center, Adams Memorial Building, Visitors Center. There were no questions on this budget line.

Public Works: Tree Warden/Insect and Pest Control, Public Works Administration, Department of Public Works, Highways, Snow & Ice Control, Flood Control, DPW Garage/Equipment Maintenance, Transfer Station, Wastewater Treatment Plant, Wastewater Collection, Cemeteries, Parks & Grounds, Celebrations – Seasonal. There were no questions on this budget line.

Motion made by Member Johnson to approve the Executive, Finance and Technology, General Government, Community Development, Inspection Services, Public Health, Public Safety, Public Service, Public Buildings and Public Works Budgets, second by Member Corrigan. Voted in Favor were Members Butler, Corrigan, Cushenette, Johnson, Kline, Kupiec, Meczywor, and Tomkowicz. Voted in opposition were Vice Chairman Cowie and Member Foster. Motion passed.

Regional Schools: Hoosac Valley Regional School District. Member Corrigan asked to hold this budget line for further discussion.

Northern Berkshire Vocational Regional School District/McCann. Member Corrigan asked to hold this budget line for further discussion. Members Butler and Kline advised they will abstain from voting on this budget. Member Foster disclosed that he has a niece in the school system. Member Corrigan noted that he asked what they want by line item but doesn't know what was spent from the year before. He advised that he would like a letter to go to both schools stating when they present budget next year to show what was spent year before, the same way the Town budget is received. *Motion made by Member Corrigan to have the letters described drafted by Vice Chairman Cowie, second by Member Johnson. Member Butler abstained. Voted in favor were Vice Chairman Cowie, Members Corrigan, Cushenette, Foster, Johnson, Kline, Kupiec, Meczywor, and Tomkowicz. Motion passed.*

Motion made by Vice Chairman Cowie to approve the Hoosac Valley Regional School District Budget, second by Member Tomkowicz. Voted in favor were Members Butler, Corrigan, Cushenette, Johnson, Kline, Kupiec, Meczywor and Tomkowicz. Voted in opposition were Vice Chairman Cowie and Member Foster. Motion passed.

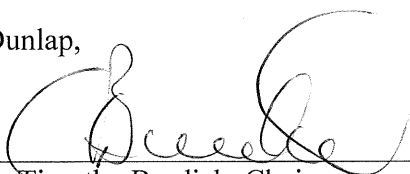
Motion made by Vice Chairman Cowie to approve the Northern Berkshire Vocational Regional School District "McCann School" Budget, second by Member Johnson. Members Butler and Kline abstained. Voted in favor were Members Corrigan, Cushenette, Johnson, Kupiec, Meczywor and Tomkowicz. Voted in opposition were Vice Chairman Cowie and Member Foster. Motion passed.

Scheduling for the next meeting was briefly discussed for the warrant article vote for Town Meeting. A request was made to have Town Meeting in the Memorial School gymnasium, and it was explained the Governor's guidelines limit gatherings to under ten people. Members were advised to plan on a remote meeting taking place. It was explained that a draft of the warrant will be provided by the end of the business day on Monday.

ADJOURNMENT: *Motion made by Vice Chairman Cowie to adjourn the meeting, second by Member Johnson. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Burdick, Vice Chairman Cowie, Members Butler, Corrigan, Cushenette, Foster, Johnson, Kline, Kupiec, Meczywor, and Tomkowicz. Motion passed.*

The Meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary



Timothy Burdick, Chairman