



FINANCE COMMITTEE

TOWN HALL BUILDING

8 PARK STREET

Monday, April 5, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER: On the above date the Finance Committee held a meeting in the first-floor gymnasium of Adams Memorial School Building. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Burdick. Present were Chairman Burdick, Vice Chairman Cowie, Members Butler, Cushenette, Duval, Foster, Johnson, Meczywor, Melito, Mucci, Nocher and Tomkowicz. In the room were Town Administrator Green, Board of Selectmen Chair Hoyt, Community Development Programs Manager Ferguson, Town Clerk Meczywor and Administrative Assistant Dunlap. *Members Kline and Kupiec were not in attendance.*

REORGANIZATION: *Chairman Burdick* welcomed new members Jason Nocher and Erin Mucci. He reviewed the annual election process of Chair and Vice Chair and recommended three scenarios. The first suggestion is to elect new officers tonight with service effective July 1st as the new fiscal year begins with current officers stay in place until then. The second suggestion is to have elections tonight and new officers begin effective tonight. The third suggestion is to postpone the elections until end of the budget season. *Motion made by Member Johnson to elect this evening for officers effective July 1, 2021, second by Vice Chairman Cowie. Unanimous vote. Motion passed. Motion made by Member Cowie to nominate Member Cushenette to the position of Finance Committee Chair, second by Member Foster. Vote: unanimous. Motion passed. Motion made by Member Cushenette to nominate Tim Burdick as Vice Chair, second by Member Cowie. Voted in favor were: Vice Chairman Cowie, Members Butler, Cushenette, Duval, Foster, Johnson, Meczywor, Melito, Mucci, Nocher and Tomkowicz. Abstention by Member Burdick. Motion passed.*

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes for the *September 3, 2020* meeting was presented for approval. *Motion made to approved the Minutes for September 3, 2020 as written by Member Johnson, second by Member Cushenette. Voted in favor were Members Butler, Cushenette, Duval, Foster, Johnson, Meczywor, Melito, Mucci, Nocher and Tomkowicz. Abstention by Member Cowie. Motion passed.*

RESERVE FUND TRANSFER REQUEST: *Town Administrator Green* explained the process of the Reserve Fund and Transfer Requests to update new members. He reviewed the topic of the 65 Park Street project on the agenda. *Community Development Programs Manager Ferguson* explained the grant was received in 2018 to put in a chair lift. She advised it is a tricky project because the area is small and what is presented is the final design. She noted that bids came in too high, and the project was put on hold because of the pandemic and uncertain times. She explained that the department took time to review the options, and secured \$15,000 from the state and capital money to dedicate to the project. She reported that the project was rebid again and the lowest bid came back over \$30,000 higher than the bid, and there are additional engineering costs. She explained that the Town is asking for \$40,000 to complete the project and leverage the funds from the state. She noted the necessity of changing out some doors, electrical work, removal of doors and pointed out the complexity of the job.

Chairman Burdick explained that over the last decade the Registry of Deeds has put almost everything online and has been recording via computer. He questioned how long there will be a Registry of Deeds in Adams or in Berkshire County as a whole. He also expressed concern about the costs to upgrade the other buildings in turn after this building is completed. *Town Administrator Green* advised that the Town is in good shape with its public buildings as the Police station, Town Hall, Library and Council on Aging are all accessible, and for the most part Memorial School building is as well. He noted that this is the last building to be done and it is likely that the Registry of Deeds will probably be consolidated but it is not clear when that will happen. He noted that rent received does not pay for expenses and the Town cannot renegotiate the lease with the state because the building is not 68 degrees or accessible. He noted that if the Town has to get another tenant in the building it will have to be accessible anyway so it is a smart investment from the building owner standpoint. *Vice Chairman Cowie* expressed that this request doesn't fall within the purview of a transfer from the Reserve Fund as it is not an unforeseen transfer and has been going on for over ten years. He noted that Reserve Fund transfers are for extraordinary or unforeseen issues. It was explained that at the end of the year the Town is able to make transfers of other unspent moneys and an inquiry was made whether there were funds in line items in the budget from someone being laid off or that left to put that money into this project. It was pointed out that it would be preferred to have this money go into the Stabilization Fund. *Town Administrator Green* advised he is hesitant to fund this project from Free Cash. It was pointed out that this project has to be contracted within thirty days to accept or deny the bid, and it came in during the second week of March so if it is put off it will have to go out to bid again. It was noted that there is no guarantee the cost wouldn't go up. *Vice Chairman Cowie* advised he reviewed the Free Cash funds and with Covid-19 and the Town Hall closing there should have been money for the project. Discussion took place on the use of Free Cash and what "unforeseen" means, in regards to Massachusetts General Laws. It was explained that it is too late to use Free Cash and it is unpredicted what funding will remain in the line items. It was pointed out that it is a gamble to do that as there are still three months left in the fiscal year on the spending of funds. *Member Foster* inquired if the lift is to get into the building, and it was clarified that a ramp cannot be installed without going way to back of the building. He inquired why this can't be put into the FY22 budget. *Community Development Programs Manager Ferguson* advised that the grant must be used by June 21st. *Member Foster* asked to have Free Cash used for this project. *Town Administrator Green* advised that there is no mechanism to access Free Cash, as it is certified two years before it is available for use. It was explained that Free Cash is certified by the state, and 50% of that amount is represented in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget. \$250,000 the Selectmen put toward the tax rate, a portion was for a workman's comp claim, and the \$83,000 left was put toward a marked police cruiser, a bucket loader repair, parks and cemetery small equipment, public buildings and library repairs. It was noted that the funds must be appropriated by Town Meeting. *Member Cushenette* asked for a list of current and pending projects that are subject to funding requests, and it was clarified that there are no more currently. It was noted that the Russell Field project has a lighting system and grant funds received could not cover the lights but wiring was done underground and poles put in. A local club expressed willingness to underwrite \$4,000 for it, which will close it out. *Member Cushenette* requested a list of ongoing projects pending so there isn't a request for another sum of money in another month. *Member Butler* recused herself and sat in the audience for the vote. ***Motion made by Member Johnson to approve the Reserve Fund transfer request for \$40,000, second by Member Foster. Voted in favor were Members Cushenette, Duval, Johnson, Meczywor, Melito, Mucci, Nocher and Tomkowicz. Voted in opposition were Vice Chairman Cowie and Member Foster. Abstention by Member Butler. Motion passed. Member Butler returned to the table.***

DISCUSSION ON ROLE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS: *Chairman Burdick* noted that getting access to the Finance Committee handbook could clear up misconceptions of the role of Finance Committee Members. He explained that if Members were familiar with the Ways and Means Committee of state legislature, this is how it is set to work. It was explained that the Members receive budgets, look them over, have hearings with department heads and make recommendations to Town Meeting. He explained that the role is not to question department heads about policy, curriculum, day to day or personnel issues unless there is a financial bearing to them. Discussion took place on how to get a copy of the manual or the link, and it was recommended Members join the Massachusetts Municipal Association of Town Finance Committees at <https://www.mma.org/members/finance-committees/>. It was noted that the manual is good to help understand how municipal finance works and the process behind it. He reviewed the budget process. A review was made of the information on taxes, the Department of Revenue approved numbers and the budget data sheets. Personnel Services, Operating Expenses, and Capital Expenses were explained. It was pointed out that information needed beyond what is represented in the budget book needs additional time to be tracked down. It was advised that these requests should go through Chair or Vice Chair. The fleet spreadsheet will be made available for Committee Members. It was explained that there is a transition between Town Accountants. Mary Beverly is in for one day a week and Crystal Wojcik for three days a week. *Vice Chairman Cowie* noted that last year Mary Beverly provided a transfer section to give a better understanding of what is going on in every department, and advised he wanted an up to date copy. *Town Administrator Green* advised that according to the Municipal Finance Relief Act from a few years ago, unlike school districts, the Town can only spend funds authorized by Town Meeting. He clarified that if a department did not spend money in line items, the Town was allowed to transfer municipal line items at the end of the fiscal year. He noted it goes toward the Free Cash number, and is a similar concept to the Excess and Deficiency number at the School District. He pointed out that the Town typically leaves 50% of the Free Cash alone and asks Town Meeting for a Capital Plan. At the end of the year the Town balances out the numbers by transferring the funds. It was stated that Mary Beverly will be asked to get this report to Members for next week for everything spent to date by March 24th and Members will be looking at 2/3 of the way through the year. *Member Cushenette* advised she will be looking for health insurance coverage, splits, and what the Town paid for retirees and the school districts. Specific requests were requested to be emailed. *Chairman Burdick* advised the Finance Committee will begin the Fiscal Year 2022 budget cycle next Tuesday, following same format of a joint meeting to be held with the Board of Selectmen in the same location in person. He noted that four meetings were scheduled, then two for the Finance Committee for a vote. The scheduled meeting dates were outlined.

ADJOURNMENT: *Motion made by Member Cowie to adjourn the meeting, second by Member Foster. Vote: unanimous. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary



Timothy Burdick, Chairman