

**FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes**  
**Zoom Number 856 2862 2450**

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MILLBURY, MASS.

Date: September 27, 2023

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Present: Kuphal, O'Connor, O'Connell, Cooper, Wells, Pratt

Absent: Cooney

Meeting called to order at 6:34 p.m.

Motioned by Wells, seconded by Pratt to accept the minutes of August 8, 2023 as written.  
Kuphal, yes; O'Connor, yes; Cooper, yes; Wells, yes; Pratt, yes; O'Connell, yes

Jen O'Connell: Do we have any Reserve Fund Transfers?

Jennifer Barrett: We do not. We ended up putting in a Warrant Article to take care of this.

Jen O'Connell: The next business is to discuss the Warrant. Are we allowed to vote since the Selectmen voted on it? Can we do this before we have our Public Hearing?

Jennifer Barrett: The Selectmen voted to close the Warrant. You can vote the articles. If at your Public Hearing, anything arises, you can certainly reconsider your vote.

Jen O'Connell: Are all of the budget items going through as raised and appropriated?

Jennifer Barrett: That is my suggestion.

William Pratt: Has Free Cash been certified?

Jennifer Barrett: No, it hasn't. It should be done by the Special Town Meeting. We can use Free Cash, but by using this source, it limits what we can use at the Annual Town Meeting. We are also using Capital Reserve, which you don't normally see us using. This is money that has been authorized by Town Meeting to be used for projects that need to be borrowed. The money in this account is money that we did not need to use.

William Pratt: What other things can the money be used for?

Jennifer Barrett: This can only be used for Capital Items that need to be borrowed.

Jen O'Connell: How much is in this account?

Jennifer Barrett: There is \$176,000 in the account.

#### Article 1-Insurance for New Fire Headquarters/Cyber Protection and Increased General Liability

Jen O'Connell: How many police vehicle accidents have we had? This is what is in the rationale for the article.

Jennifer Barrett: This is not just vehicle accidents. This also includes workmans comp and injuries on duty. We had 4 officers out on Workmans Comp over the last few years. This increases our insurance rates. This takes 1-1 ½ years to catch up with these. It takes 2-3 years to clear this up.

Jen O'Connell: If we vote no on this, what happens?

Jennifer Barrett: It has to be paid, so it would go on the re-cap, which would go against the tax rate.

Jen O'Connell: I have zero interest in increasing the tax rate. I would rather see it come out of Free Cash.

Jennifer Barrett: The tax rate is actually going down. The valuations have skyrocketed.

Karyn Clark, Acting Town Manager, joined the meeting

Charles Cooper: I see that you have included a new cyber protection. Did we not have it before?

Jennifer Barrett: This was not part of our old policy.

William Pratt: What does this encompass?

Karyn Clark: Many municipalities have been hit by phishing scams and ransomware. This would also include insurance on the system. We would all need to be trained. I have dealt with this during my time in Worcester.

William Pratt: Training is critical. Do we have steps in place to control this?

Jennifer Barrett: For actual payments, there is a specific step that we need to do.

William Pratt: What policy do we have in place for people who do not follow the plan?

Karyn Clark: That is what we will be looking into. There is a way to see how many clicks people use. In some instances, people have lost their ability to access even their emails if they do not follow the rules.

William Pratt: We need the HR Policy first?

Karyn Clark: Once we have the staffing, I will work on this policy. I am doing the work of several people and I have to try to prioritize.

Russell Wells: Have you certified the Free Cash yet?

Jennifer Barrett: No, I haven't. I do not know the exact figure at this time.

Motioned by Wells, seconded by Pratt to accept Article 1 as written and that \$100,000 be transferred from Free Cash for the purpose of funding this article. Kuphal, yes; O'Connor, yes; Cooper, yes; Wells, yes; Pratt, yes; O'Connell, yes

## Article 2-Employee Benefits

Jen O'Connell: Our normal open enrollment period is in March and April, which doesn't give us much time to figure out the budget for the following year. Next year they are changing the open enrollment period.

Jennifer Barrett: We want to change it to February, so that we can get a more accurate figure.

Jen O'Connell: Is there an incentive to not taking the insurance?

Jennifer Barrett: You have to be enrolled for a year, then if you opt out, I believe you receive a \$2,500 incentive.

Karyn Clark: We are in the talking stages of changing the program, so we can lower our premium.

Jen O'Connell: The employees would have larger co-pays, but the premium goes down. We did this when Dave Marciello was here and we had to pay back some of the larger co-pays per the

agreement. There comes a time when the Town is going to have to discuss with the unions to increase the employee cost on the insurance.

Charles Cooper: I don't understand how the amount budgeted for new hires increased.

Jennifer Barrett: We budgeted for anticipated new hires. Some replacement staff opted to be on the insurance, whereas their previous counterpart was not.

Motioned by Pratt, seconded by Wells to recommend that Article 2 be accepted as written and that \$240,000 be transferred from Free Cash for the purpose of funding this article. Wells, yes; Pratt, yes; Cooper, yes; Kuphal, yes; O'Connor, yes; O'Connell, yes

#### Article 3-Prior Year Bill-Paul Giorgio, Peak Properties

Jen O'Connell: What happens to that person if they apply for another permit?

Charles Cooper: I wouldn't issue a permit until it is paid back to the Town.

Jennifer Barrett: We could send it to the Deputy to get it recovered. This has been a deficit for 2 years. I need to clear the books. This affects our Free Cash.

Motioned by Pratt, seconded by Wells to recommend that Article 3 be accepted as written. O'Connor, yes; Kuphal, yes; Cooper, yes; Pratt, yes; Wells, yes; O'Connell, yes

#### Article 4-Prior Year Bill-Powers Industrial Supply

William Pratt: This says it is going to be paid out of the current year. Can't we just pay it and if we go over budget, then come back for it later?

Jennifer Barrett: I am using it, but I need to get the Town to authorize my paying it.

Motioned by Pratt, seconded by Wells to recommend that Article 4 be accepted as written and that \$295 be transferred from available funds for the purpose of funding this article. Wells, yes; Pratt, yes; Cooper, yes; O'Connor, yes; Kuphal, yes; O'Connell, yes

#### Article 5-Upgrade to School HVAC System

Jen O'Connell: We replaced what was broken, but didn't fix the brain.

William Pratt: If it's been 20 years, why not wait until the Annual Town Meeting?

Jennifer Barrett: We need it working now, so that they have heat during the winter.

Kevin Kuphal: How firm is the \$60,000?

Jennifer Barrett: It is a pretty accurate number.

Motioned by Wells, seconded by Pratt to recommend that Article 5 be accepted as written. O'Connor, yes; Kuphal, yes; Wells, yes; Cooper, yes; Pratt, yes; O'Connell, yes

#### Article 6-Windle Field Upgrade

Jen O'Connell: At the last Town Meeting, we were promised by the Town Manager that the \$300,000 was all we needed and that the rest of the money would be covered by the developer.

Jennifer Barrett: We had 2 developers that promised \$50,000 each. I did not know that there were strings attached to the money. The money that was received had to go into the General Fund. We need to authorize the money to go into this account in order to follow Mass General Law.

William Pratt: My issue is that we are already a year later and we have seen nothing done.

Jennifer Barrett: The intention was that it was going to be done in the summer.

William Pratt: Why can't we wait until the Annual Town Meeting to do this?

Jennifer Barrett: The money has been received. It just needs to go into the proper account. If we wait until the Annual Town Meeting, it would push the project further out. If we do it now, we can start it in the spring.

Motioned by Wells, seconded by Pratt to recommend that Article 6 be accepted as written.

Cooper, yes; Pratt, yes; Wells, yes; Kuphal, yes; O'Connor, yes; O'Connell, yes

#### Article 7-Emergency Electrical System-Municipal Office Building

Karyn Clark: We have a generator. We found that when we had a power outage, it only serviced a few lights. The phones, computers and the refrigerator that holds the vaccine were not working. We need a new sub panel to cover the critical areas of the building. We were not aware that the generator was not going to cover those areas.

William Pratt: This looks like an enormous fail on the contractor. This should have been tested once the generator was installed.

Jennifer Barrett: We also want to do line testing when we have the sub panel put in, so we know which plugs go to which circuit breaker.

Motioned by Wells, seconded by Pratt to recommend that Article 7 be accepted as written.

Wells, yes; Pratt, yes; Cooper, yes; O'Connor, yes; Kuphal, yes; O'Connell, yes

#### Article 8-Tanker Truck for the Fire Department

Jen O'Connell: This money that we are transferring from is money that was not used on a prior capital item. This is part of a borrowing account that was not spent.

Jennifer Barrett: This was during the time that the price costs peaked. We have known that the truck was \$100,000 over what was authorized. The additional \$40,000 is for the outfitting of the truck. Any surplus money will go back to the Capital Fund.

Kevin Kuphal: Unless this truck has safety issues, this seems like a good article to vote down and put in the Annual Town Meeting.

Jennifer Barrett: This truck was ordered in 2022. It will be ready in the spring. The \$140,000 will not raise the tax rate.

Kevin Kuphal: What happens with the purchase if we do not approve this article?

Jennifer Barrett: The \$575,000 already came out of Free Cash.

William Pratt: There is no impact on the tax rate. There is no competing contract to use these funds.

Motioned by Cooper, seconded by Wells to recommend that Article 8 be accepted as written.  
Cooper, yes; Wells, yes; Pratt, yes; O'Connor, yes; Kuphal, yes; O'Connell, yes

#### Article 9-Renovate Locker Rooms-Police Station

Jen O'Connell: How old are the lockers at the High School? They still work.

William Pratt: These are specialized lockers. This should have been on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant last spring.

Karyn Clark: We just received the grant through Senator Moore. This funds  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the project. The Town is picking up  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the cost.

Jen O'Connell: We could push this until the Annual if that is what we decide on.

Jennifer Barrett: This grant expires on June 30, 2024. If we wait until May to do this, our portion would not be available until July 1, 2024.

William Pratt: While looking through the Warrant before this meeting, my thought was that people are taking advantage of the fall meeting and the lower quorum to get their items pushed through. With your explanations, I can see where some of them need to be done, but there are some that could wait.

Charles Cooper: Is the cost for the HVAC and electrical hookup included in these prices?

Jennifer Barrett: Yes, they are.

William Pratt: I would like to have some way of reinforcing the need to have everything done at the Annual Town Meeting and not try to push items through at a fall meeting.

Kevin Kuphal: You may want to highlight just the important features in the explanation.

Motioned by Pratt, seconded by Wells to recommend that Article 9 be accepted as written.

Pratt, yes; Wells, yes; Kuphal, yes; O'Connor, yes; Cooper, yes; O'Connell, yes

#### Article 10-Firearms, Holsters, Ammunition-Police Department

Jen O'Connell: Do we still outfit our Special Police?

Jennifer Barrett: Yes, we do. This is why we need more.

Charles Cooper: It wasn't asked for in their budget line item. The amount was reduced dramatically in Equipment Maintenance.

Judith O'Connor left the meeting.

Jennifer Barrett: That is for the tazers. Ammunition is in the Supplies Account.

Kevin Kuphal: How many do we need to get us to the Annual Town Meeting?

Jennifer Barrett: We would have 2 different firearms. If you are going to transition from one weapon to another, it is better to change them all.

Karyn Clark: I just received a message from the Chief and he said that the weapons can wait.

Motioned by Wells, seconded by Pratt to recommend that action on Article 10 be indefinitely postponed. Kuphal, yes; Wells, yes; Pratt, yes; Cooper, yes; O'Connell, yes

## Article 11-Police Department Collective Bargaining Agreement

Jen O'Connell: I thought we built in a cost in their budget to cover this? I feel this should be pushed off until the May meeting. The Town voted an increase this past May.

Karyn Clark: The contract ended June 30, 2023. Sean negotiated with them, on behalf of the Board of Selectmen. They asked for a lot of things. We found that the pay they receive is below market rate. This is to get them closer to the market rate. They also agreed to change their payroll to bi-weekly. This helps with our shortened staff.

Jennifer Barrett: The Chief also revamped his scheduling to allow for more coverage per shift and to have a Sgt. on duty for each shift. This amount would allot a wage adjustment to bring them in the direction of other Towns. Next year's amount will be in the budget.

Motioned by Wells, seconded by Pratt to recommend that Article 11 be accepted as written and that \$90,000 be transferred from Free Cash for the purpose of funding this budget. Cooper, yes; Pratt, yes; Wells, yes; Kuphal, yes; O'Connell, yes

## Article 12-Old Fire Headquarters

Jen O'Connell: You still don't have a figure for this?

Jennifer Barrett: We are still waiting for the figures for each option to come in. We hope to have more information by November.

Kevin Kuphal: What happens if we wait til spring?

Jennifer Barrett: This is a safety issue.

Karyn Clark: The Board of Selectmen asked Sean to get a current report on this. The east wall is not stable. Administration was moved to Station 2 and the Chief is in my office. The trucks are the only things being housed at that building. We had to put in a port-a-potty, because the bathroom is located in the area of the unstable wall. We may also have an asbestos issue. We are still looking at our options. We don't want to spend the Town's money twice.

Charles Cooper: Maybe we can just state that the money is to be used to address the safety issue.

Motioned by Pratt, seconded by Wells to defer our recommendation to the Town Meeting Floor. Kuphal, yes; Pratt, yes; Wells, yes; Cooper, yes; O'Connell, yes

Jen O'Connell: We have a couple of bills to approve and sign.

Motioned by O'Connell, seconded by Wells to approve a bill for the Sutton Chronicle in the amount of \$17.60 and one in the amount of \$16.57. Kuphal, yes; Pratt, yes; Wells, yes; Cooper, yes; O'Connell, yes

Motioned by O'Connell, seconded by Wells to approve a bill for the Association of Finance Committees in the amount of \$220.00. Kuphal, yes; Pratt, yes; Wells, yes; Cooper, yes; O'Connell, yes

Jen O'Connell: We already approved to let 2 people attend the Annual Seminar for this year. If anyone is interested, please let me know. The seminar is on Saturday, November 4, 2023 in Sharon.

Russell Wells: I am interested.

William Pratt: I am interested.

Motioned by O'Connell, seconded by Wells to adjourn at 8:55 p.m. Kuphal, yes; Pratt, yes; Wells, yes; Cooper, yes; O'Connell, yes

*William Pratt*  
*William Pratt*  
*Russell Wells*  
*Judith O'Connell*  
*Chad R. Cooper*  
*Jen O'Connell*