

Town of East Bridgewater Finance Committee

175 Central Street
East Bridgewater, MA 02333
Town Hall



Finance Committee Meeting Minutes Tuesday, February 13, 2024

Members present: Dan Picha, Dave Walsh, Karen Harhen, Lisa Allington, George Jouvin, Karin Gilman

Member(s) absent:

Guest(s): Rebecca Johnson (Assistant to Town Administrator/Select Board), Anthony Benigni (applicant for Finance Committee member), Melanie Dean (Town Accountant), Charlie Seelig, Town Administrator

1. Finance Committee Chair Dan Picha opened the virtual meeting at 6:18 pm.
2. Motion to approve meeting minutes from January 17, 2024 Finance Committee meeting was made by Karin Gilman, seconded by Lisa Allington, and approved 6-0.
3. New member interview with Anthony Benigni, resident of 25 Stone Meadow Drive, who has applied to be a member of the Finance Committee. Dan Picha explained the overall role of the Finance Committee, as well as the timeline of budget planning process over the next few months. Anthony is a 10+ year town resident with two young children, and is also Dave Walsh's neighbor, who has expressed interest in the workings of the town. He is a senior executive in the healthcare industry and has extensive experience in IT and has been successful in increasing the revenue of several companies. He has attended various town meetings over the last 7+ years. He does travel for work occasionally, but at his discretion. FinCom members will discuss tonight and make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen, who is responsible for appointing the position.
4. Dan Picha opened discussion about the FY25 budget planning process. All FinCom members have met with their respective town department heads, except for the schools, whose budget is still in progress. Dave Walsh said we need to understand the implications of the police dispatch contract, since the timing of joining a regional dispatch is now January 1, 2025, instead of July 1, 2024. Town Accountant Melanie Dean said we have a deficit of ~\$500,000 (or about 1% of total budget), without the schools, or any of the following: patrol officer contract increases, Library department contract increases, and various department head contract increases. We will begin to schedule budget presentations at the end of February (after school vacation week). Dan will send out proposed meeting dates, and anticipates having approximately 4-5 meetings to review all department budgets.
5. Discussion on new Finance Committee candidate, Anthony Benigni, was favorable. Karen Harhen made a motion to recommend the appointment of Anthony to the Board of Selectmen, seconded by Karin Gilman, and approved 6-0.
6. Special Town Meeting is scheduled for next Tuesday, February 20th, with three articles being presented.
 - a. Article 1: Request for funds to install a new athletic field turf at Junior/Senior High School for \$1.7 million. Bids came in today from architects who did feasibility study. We only received

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two bids, which the architects will review and send over details soon. Lowest bid including 12% contingency is for \$1.99 million, next bid is \$450,000 higher. Dave Walsh said Capital Committee has had lengthy conversations about the necessity of new field as well as financing options. The town can use different funds to help pay for it, including interest earnings on Capital Stabilization fund and unused AARPA funds. Typical life span of turf field is approximately 10 years, and this one has lasted 12 years already. This single field is used by multiple teams, which a grass field would not support. New turf construction has different components that could last up to 30 years (e.g. padding), but moving forward, we should budget for this recurring expense. Motion to recommend this article was made by Dave Walsh, seconded by Karin Gilman, approved 6-0.

- b. Article 2 is related to the logistics of the property lease for Leland Farms with no financial impact involved.
 - c. Article 3 is a request by the Fire Chief to reallocate money originally budgeted for sick leave buy-back to cover sick pay. Dave Walsh made a motion to recommend this article, seconded by Karin Gilman, approved 5-0-1 (abstention by Karen Harhen).
7. Motion to adjourn meeting was made at 7:07 pm by Dave Walsh, seconded by Lisa Allington, approved, 6-0.

Respectfully submitted, as approved at 03/04/2024 Finance Committee meeting, by Karen Harhen, Finance Committee Clerk.