

Lunenburg Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 31, 2022

Location: In-person at Lunenburg Town Hall and broadcast on Zoom

Present: Chairperson Peter Beardmore, Chris Menard, Jay Simeone, Dave Passios, Tom Gray. Attending remotely, Tom Balish, Evan Watters,

Guests: Town Manager Heather Lemieux, Chairperson Personnel Committee Eric Arnold, Joanna Bilotta-Simeone, Lunenburg Police Chief Thomas Gammel,

1. Call to Order

Mr. Beardmore called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and read a statement regarding the Open Meeting Law, and how all public meetings are legally being held remotely. This meeting was recorded and is viewable on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/VeWlx3solIM>

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Announcements: none

4. Public Comment: Mr. Beardmore informed those in attendance that regarding the Capital Plan, his opinion has changed from voting with the majority of the Finance Committee to voting with his conscience, after reading the charter, citing the responsibility of the committee, and his role as a finance committee member to the voters of Lunenburg.

5. Chair Report: Mr. Beardmore reported that a second public hearing has been advertised for April 14, 2022, as articles on the warrant may need further discussion, including changes to the Salary Administration Plan as well as a potential financial impact regarding a change to the sewer bylaw.

6. Town Manager/Finance Director Report: No report

7. Proposed Fiscal 2023 Wage Schedule and Proposed Salary Administration Bylaw Change: Mr. Arnold informed the committee that the Personnel Committee has met with town counsel in regard to the Salary Administration Plan (SAP), and upon recommendation from the attorney, the plan does need to be updated. Those updates include: removing the layoff procedure from the SAP as it is already covered in the Town Charter; adding Human Resources to the grievance procedure; changing language regarding what constitutes a full-time employee; changing personal time from hours to days; removal of Family Medical Leave Act language as it was conflicting with what's stated in the Charter; upgrading the salary grid to reflect minimum wage, which means a 28 percent increase for Grade 1, a 22 percent increase for Grade 2, and an 18 percent increase for Grade 3. The remaining 17 grades will be increased by 2 percent. The increase on the grid will cost the town \$44,250.77 annually. There are approximately 25 employees on the SAP, and about 15 are on-call personnel. Ms. Bilotta-Simeone added that those on the upper portion of the grid would only be getting cost of living increases after they

reached the highest grade and step, and upgrading the grid addresses that issue. Mr. Passios commented that increasing pay on the lower end will help bring in new talent, and keeping increases, and longevity pay will help with retention. Mr. Simeone asked if there were plans for a professional town-wide wage study, and also suggested the Personnel Committee consider separating wage schedules for hourly, salaried, and seasonal employees. Mr. Gray agreed that keeping track of wages for comparable positions is important. The Finance Committee agreed that wages will be a major topic of discussion in FY23. Mr. Passios thanked the current and past members of the Personnel Committee for bringing the SAP to its current status.

8. Public Hearing on FY23 Budget, Capital Plan, and all financially relevant Annual Town Meeting

Warrant Articles: Mr. Beardmore opened the public hearing. Ms. Lemieux presented the Town Manager's FY2023 Recommended Budget. The town is projected to receive \$30,854,794 in property taxes, \$10,390,105 in State Aid, \$3,110,153 in local receipts, and \$2,350,230 in other available funds, totaling \$5,789,417. Financial articles include: funding the first year of the collective bargaining agreement with the Clerical union, which involves transferring \$15,303 from the FY22 Salary Reserve Account; \$100,000 from free cash to cover expenses regarding consultant fees, removal and disposal of solid waste materials from the Woodruff property; \$450,000 from free cash to demolish 30 School Street, and create a green space design; An amount to be determined to establish a committee to commemorate the town's 300th anniversary; \$44,250 from the FY23 Salary Reserve Account to fund Salary Administration Plan wage increases; and \$2,162,849 for the Capital Plan funded by free cash, appropriated funds, and unexpended capital. Mr. Beardmore recollected a past meeting where Mr. Passios expressed concern over whether the cost of installing HVAC at the Primary School was accurate, as it was made aware that the electricity at the school may not be appropriate for the originally intended HVAC. Mr. Passios said he asked for more information but could not get an answer. Mr. Balish asked where the School St project would be in terms of progress after spending the requested \$371,000. Ms. Lemieux answered that the building will be razed, grading will be complete, and design details will go to another Town Meeting for funds for new construction of the property. Mr. Simeone asked for justification of a part time IT employee. Ms. Lemieux answered that the new employee would be responsible for administrative duties and website content.

Public Hearing public comment: Lunenburg resident Dave Rodgers phoned in to share his opinion on items in the capital plan, and the amount of money proposed to be spent on equipment, vehicles, and projects. Committee members went on to discuss the issues Mr. Rodgers raised: DPW request for utility tractor/mower to handle roadside brush, which is a top resident concern, a Ford F-150 pickup truck for the police department to handle towing, community outreach, and transporting personnel, and the Flat Hill Road drainage design project. Chief Gammel commented that the police department's current fleet of vehicles does not have the proper braking system for the trailers currently in use, and that the police department needs a four-wheel drive utility vehicle. Mr. Passios added that the Capital Planning Committee had several meetings and determined which items were affordable. Mr. Gray added that he will always look to the department heads to best determine their needs. Mr. Menard expressed his concern over finding the source of the water problem on Flat Hill Rd, and wants to be sure the problem is fixed so as not to cause another drainage problem on surrounding roads. Mr.

Beardmore suggested outsourcing some of the brush clearing from roadsides. Ms. Lemieux pointed out there is no appropriation for outsourcing. Mr. Beardmore suggested the committee has the right to make amendments to articles, and raised a scenario where the committee could vote to recommend disapproval of the capital plan article and then make an amendment that would garner the recommendation to approve. Mr. Passios commented that the committee could recommend to reduce the amount of the capital plan, but could not remove specific items from it. Committee members went on to discuss how the town handled the capital plan in 2020 in the throes of the Covid-19 pandemic. Mr. Passios moved to close the public hearing, Mr. Menard seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

9. Discuss and Vote on Recommendations for Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles:

Article A: Written reports of Town Officers and Committees. Mr. Passios moved that the article has no financial impact, Mr. Gray seconded. On vote motion carried unanimously.

Article B: Reauthorizing revolving funds. Mr. Passios moved to recommend approval, Mr. Simeone seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article C: Prior year expenses. Mr. Simeone motioned to recommend approval, Mr. Passios seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Article D: FY22 Budget adjustment. Mr. Passios moved to defer to Annual Town Meeting, Mr. Simeone seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article E: Collective Bargaining Clerical Union first year of FY22 and into FY23. Mr. Gray moved to recommend approval, Mr. Passios seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article F: FY23 Capital Plan. Mr. Gray motioned to defer to Annual Town Meeting, Mr. Simeone seconded. Motion carried 6-0-1. (Mr. Passios abstained) Committee members agreed they'd like to hear from town counsel on what their options might be, as well as the opinion of the newly hired DPW director.

Article G: New department/Facilities Director. Mr. Simeone motioned to defer, Mr. Menard seconded, motion carried unanimously. Mr. Passios added that he'd like to go into Town Meeting with the committee supporting the new position.

Article H: Omnibus Budget, \$41,568,744.92. Mr. Passios moved to recommend approval, Mr. Simeone seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously. Mr. Beardmore commented that the committee did a very thorough job this year of vetting the budget.

Article I: Stabilization Fund, \$100,000. Mr. Passios motioned to recommend approval, Mr. Gray seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article J: Special Purpose Stabilization Fund, \$450,000. Mr. Gray motioned to recommend approval, Mr. Passios seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article K: OPEB \$266,696 transfer from free cash, and \$656.00 transfer from sewer retained earnings. Mr. Passios motioned to recommend approval, Mr. Simeone seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article L: Sewer Enterprise budget, \$1,213,182. Mr. Gray moved to recommend approval, Mr. Passios seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article M: Sewer Capital Reserve Stabilization fund, \$35,545.86. Mr. Passios motioned to recommend approval, Mr. Simeone seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article N: Solid Waste Disposal Enterprise Fund, \$302,000. Mr. Watters motioned to recommend approval, Mr. Simeone seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Article O: Water Enterprise budget, \$20,000. Mr. Passios moved to recommend approval, Mr. Gray seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article P: PEG Access budget. Mr. Passios motioned to recommend approval, Mr. Menard seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article Q: Sale of lots for care of cemetery, \$10,000. Mr. Gray motioned to recommend approval, Mr. Simeone seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article R: Woodruff property, \$100,000 from free cash. Mr. Menard motioned to recommend approval, Mr. Passios seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article S: 30 School St (old Primary School), \$450,000 from free cash. Mr. Passios motioned to recommend approval, Mr. Gray seconded. On vote, motion carried (6-1 Mr. Simeone dissented)

Article T: Salary Administration Plan, amend code to add positions to salary grid Mr. Menard motioned to recommend approval, Mr. Simeone seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article U: Salary Administration Plan wage increase, \$44,000. Mr. Menard motioned to recommend approval, Mr. Simeone seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article V: Salary Administration Plan, Amendment to the Salary Administration Plan Bylaw. Mr. Passios motioned to recommend approval, Mr. Simeone seconded. Committee members agreed they needed more time to make a decision. Mr. Passios withdrew his motion, Mr. Simeone did not withdraw his second. On vote, motion failed (2-5 Mr. Passios and Mr. Simeone supported the motion) Mr. Menard motioned to defer the article to Annual Town Meeting, Mr. Passios seconded. Motion carried. (6-1 Mr. Simeone dissented)

Article W: 300th Anniversary committee, dollar amount to be determined. Mr. Passios motioned to defer to Annual Town Meeting, Mr. Simeone seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article X: Amend General Bylaws. Mr. Gray motioned to defer, Mr. Passios seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article Y: Amend Sewer Bylaw. Mr. Passios motioned to defer, Mr. Menard seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article Z: Amend Protective Bylaw –Non-medical marijuana establishments. Mr. Passios motioned to find no financial impact, Mr. Simeone seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article AA: Amend Protective Bylaw -Water Supply Protection District. Mr. Passios motioned to find no financial impact, Mr. Simeone seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article BB: Amend Protective Bylaw -Location of Districts. Mr. Passios motioned to find no financial impact, Mr. Simeone seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article CC: Amend sewer service area map. Mr. Passios motioned to find no financial impact, Mr. Simeone seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.

Article DD: Resolution in Support of Changing State Flag and Seal of Massachusetts.

Mr. Passios motioned to find no financial impact, Mr. Simeone seconded. On vote, motion carried. (6-0-1 Mr. Passios abstained.)

10. Warrant Letter Update and Discussion: Mr. Beardmore will include committee member feedback, and redistribute the draft. Mr. Menard suggested adding the reasoning behind the committee's decisions on the articles regarding deferral, namely the capital plan.

11. Minutes Mr. Menard motioned to accept the minutes from the March 17, 2022 meeting, Mr. Balish seconded. On vote, motion carried (6-0-1 Mr. Simeone abstained)

12. Committee Reports Committee members updated each other on respective liaison assignments.

13. Public Comment none

14. Next Meetings April 14, April 28

15. Adjourn At 10:28 p.m. Mr. Menard motioned to adjourn, Mr. Passios seconded. On vote, motion carried unanimously.