

Lunenburg Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Bilotta Meeting Room
Lunenburg Town Hall
March 13, 2025

Present Members: Chair Chris Menard, Vice Chair Jean Russell, Committee Member Tanya Dall, Committee Member Ana Lockwood, Committee Member Mike Rupp, Committee Member Jay Simeone

Absent Member: Clerk Tom Gray

1. Call to Order

The meeting opened at 7:00 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Announcements

There were no announcements.

4. Public Comment

Rhonda Liscio, 181 Reservoir Road, inquires if there is a direct impact on the town's bond rating if the town does not contribute to OPEB.

5. Town Manager & Finance Director Reports

There were no reports from the Town Manager or the Finance Director.

6. Scheduled Meetings

a. Municipal Building Design Committee

Michael Ray Jeffreys, 1170 Mass Ave., provided the Municipal Building Design Committee presentation.

The biggest problem the Committee is facing is the TC Passios building. TC Passios school was transferred from the school dept to the Select Board. This triggered TC Passios Design Committee to see if that building could be repurposed to be used as a municipal building. The building is roughly 55,000 square feet. An architectural firm conducted analysis of the building and met with a variety of community stakeholders. The cost estimation was 23 million then the pandemic hit and supplies skyrocketed. Before the meeting in May the price rose to 29 million. It could cost 14 to 15 million just to get the building up to the current code. At the town meeting it was decided not to move forward for a vote.

The Committee then changed back to being a Municipal Building Design Committee in order to look at all municipal buildings and not just at TC Passios. They determined that Town Hall and the Ritter building needs to be modernized and ADA accessible.

ARPA funding was used to bring in an architectural firm, structural engineers, mechanical engineers to create a plan. The trade cost of each building is below:

Meeting House and renovation: \$2,624,843

Ritter Memorial renovation: \$2,068,279

Town Hall: \$6,937,520

Sitework: \$1,657,520

Subtotal trade costs \$13,288,086

Subtotal with contingencies and escalation: \$15,281,299

Total construction cost with GC OH&P: \$17,840,917

There are 2 options for payment. A 30-year bond would be an average cost per household of \$300 for a 30-year bond or \$400 per household for a 20-year bond.

Mike Rupp inquires what the cost would be to take care of the buildings.

Michael Ray Jeffreys is unsure and would be difficult to estimate.

Ana Lockwood questions how much of the new space will be meeting space versus office space Michael Ray Jeffreys states there would be 6,500 square feet that can be used for meeting space.

b. Parks Commission

Anita Scheipers, Chair of the Parks Commission, and Karin Menard, Clerk of the Parks Commission, provided the presentation.

There has been a new updated design for Marshall Park. The project has been scaled back and will only be built on already developed areas. The dog park, wetland trails, and other improvements are no longer included in the new design. The new design consists of 3 phases.

Phase 1: Construction of the driveway including parking spaces, playground, sports courts, and walking trail. A total of 120 parking spaces will be added.

Phase 2: Construction of the men's baseball field, ladies' softball field, and parking off of Chestnut Street.

Phase 3: Constructions of buildings including large pavilion with restroom facilities, concession stand, and picnic area.

The timeline is as follows:

- Design package and permitting will start in May and conclude in September.

- Bid process preparation will start in October and be awarded in

December.

-Sitework construction will start March of 2026 and conclude by May of 2027.

The Commission intends to re-apply for the previously awarded grants.

Regarding future park maintenance, the Facilities Director is in the process of getting maintenance scheduled for the various park components.

Mike Rupp questioned if the fields are ever rented, and Anita Scheipers confirms that is an option and the fees are used to pay for expenses.

Tanya Dall asks if there are any plans to implement any summer school programs at that location. Karin Menard hopes that the town will get behind the mission of having the recreation director become full-time and she would be able to run programming. This would be a prime location for outdoor activities.

Jay Simeone shares his concern regarding maintenance and operational costs.

Rhonda Lizio, 181 Reservoir Road, questions how much money has already been spent on the project. Karin Menard confirms that \$50,000 from capital plan has been approved. At the special town meeting \$184,000 was allocated. Lastly, \$250,000 of ARPA funds have been used.

c. Other Monied Articles

The Town Manager confirmed that other monied articles would be all free cash transfers and those are up in the air until Tuesday.

d. Administrative, Unclassified and Debt

There is \$393,881.14 in the reduced debt services this year. \$284,412 of that total is being used to offset the capital program. The remaining \$109,469 will be used to balance the budget.

7. Public Hearing

There was a motion to open public meeting by Jay Simeone, seconded by Ana Lockwood.

John Bowen, 162 Highland Street, states that the Committee is tasked with making a budget as an advisory committee for the citizens and shouldn't be by what everyone department wants.

Glenn Mcleod, 436 Reservoir Road, disagrees with the building plan proposal. There has been a lot of talk about affordable housing and the housing crisis. The real conversation should be affordable living. It is becoming very unaffordable to live in

Massachusetts. There are so many demands on individual budgets as it is. His primary concern is to make the municipal employees feel appreciated and that they receive fair pay.

Dave Passios, a former Lunenburg resident, former member of the finance committee, presently located in Jefferson, New Hampshire, questioned if there is another public hearing date scheduled. Chris Menard confirms there will be another public hearing scheduled for March 27th or April 3rd.

There was a motion to close public hearing by Jay Simeone, seconded by Ana Lockwood.

8. New Business

a. Outline Finance Committee Annual Report

Chris Menard confirms there needs to be a decision about prop 2½, levy limits, excluded debt and policies. If any Committee member has ideas, they should email them to Chris Menard.

9. Old Business

a. FY26 Budget Discussions*

b. FY26 Warrant Articles

c. Budget Task Force Recommendations

10. Minutes

There was a motion to approve the minutes from February 20, 2025, by Jay Simeone, seconded by Jean Russell.

11. Committee Reports

Chris Menard suggest that the Committee watch the joint meeting with the School Committee and the Select Board.

12. Actions and Topics for Future Meetings

The school department will be returning on March 20, 2025. There was a vote last night and the final decision about the allocation of money will be presented to the Committee.

13. Important Dates & Upcoming Meetings

a. Thursday 3/20/2025

b. Thursday 3/27/2025

14. Public Comment

Karin Menard, 672 Page Street, encourages departments to apply for grants. The mass office on disability offers an ADA improvement grant that can be applied to planning and projects. In FY 2024, \$3,932,321 were allocated to communities. For FY 2025 the ADA improvement grant totaled \$4,910,668. This consisted of 59 grants,

25 for planning and 34 for projects. Karin Menard agrees with Michael Ray Jeffreys that all town buildings need to be accessible to residents. Additionally, she would like to see more space for meetings.

Jay Simeone references the availability for grant writing services. That money was to be used to contact consulting companies that write grants with the expertise to make it easier to get the grants.

15. Adjourn

There was a motion to adjourn by Jay Simeone, seconded by Tanya Dall. All in favor.

The meeting closed at 10:34 PM.