



## **TOWN OF HOPEDALE**

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### **Finance Committee**

### **January 19, 2022 Meeting Minutes 7:00 pm, via Zoom**

#### **Attendees:**

##### *Present:*

E. Callahan, D. Comastra, C. Hodgens, P. Maloney, K. Wilson

##### *Absent:*

D. Madigan, D. Piatt, C. Strapponi

The Finance Committee meeting was opened at 7:02 pm by Chris Hodgens.

#### **Votes:**

The minutes of December 8, 2021 were presented. All voted in favor with Ken Wilson abstaining due to absence.

#### **Events:**

##### **1. Revenue Forecast**

Chris Hodgens met with Diana Schindler regarding revenue forecasting for the upcoming budget cycle. Funds have started to come in from marijuana sales and associated excise. Representatives from businesses have requested a review of impact fees (a separate item from sales tax). Diana spoke to various expenses that can be considered an impact and is working with departments to further define the translation to a fee. \$660,000 has been certified as free cash.

##### **2. Discussion of Potential Budget Impacts**

- a. Identification of structural deficits in the areas of health insurance, salaries, wages, etc.
- b. Awaiting further information from the state regarding Unrestricted Government Aid (UGA) and other Cherry Sheet details
- c. The largest component of crafting the budget will be salaries and wages – the Finance Committee is seeking feedback from the Select Board/Town Administrator for guidance
- d. Diana shared a spreadsheet reflecting projections based on a 2.5% increase in UGA, new growth and debt exclusion.
- e. Diana recommended further examination of the Fire and Ambulance budgets with result of aligning the budgets to be more reflective of the actual service delivery; in

recent years we have seen further activity in the Ambulance service vs. Fire. Diana will have a conversation with Chief Daige in the coming weeks.

3. Budget Development and Reporting Tools

Diana proposed using the Town's accounting module VADAR to facilitate budget requests from departments. She will research the capability of the system and provide an update at a later meeting.

4. Status of Union Contracts

The labor contracts for DPW, Clerical, Fire, Call Fire and Dispatch remain unsettled. The Finance Committee will need to discuss further reserving funds in a "control account" versus allocating funds by department to comply with Annual Town Meeting warrant language and procedural requirements.

5. Other Considerations for Wage Increases

- a. Health Insurance cost share is currently 80%/20%. Diana quoted approximately 100 retirees and 200 active employees on the Town's health insurance plan this year. We could see an increase higher than \$350,000, but awaiting more solid information.
- b. Last year the Finance Committee recommended a compilation of various factors including CPI for the Boston area as a starting point for salary increases; this will be discussed further in a future meeting.
- c. Diana has received feedback from various boards and committees regarding the reinstatement of stipends.

The Committee will meet on February 3, 2022 at 7:00pm.

The Chair called the meeting to Adjournment at 8:31pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Elizabeth S. Callahan*

Recording Secretary  
Hopedale Finance Committee