



## **TOWN OF HOPEDALE**

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### ***Finance Committee***

### **August 25, 2021 Meeting Minutes 7:00 pm, via Zoom**

#### **Attendees:**

##### *Present:*

E. Callahan, C. Hodgens, D. Madigan, P. Maloney, C. Strapponi, K. Wilson

##### *Absent:*

D. Comastra, D. Piatt

The Finance Committee meeting was opened at 7:03 pm by Chris Hodgens.

#### **Votes:**

The minutes of July 26, 2021 were presented. All voted in favor.

#### **Events:**

1. The Finance Committee Chair advised the Committee of various operational expenses identified in the weeks after July 1, 2021 in need of funding. The source of funding will originate from monies raised through debt-exclusion (approximately \$90,000) and updated revenue projections (\$30,000).
  - a. Approximately \$40,000 for the purpose of satisfying estimated collective bargaining agreements for the Clerical Unit, DPW and Dispatch.
  - b. Ambulance and Fire Expenses: \$25,000 for FY'22 and \$30,000 from FY'21.
  - c. Salary increase of \$15,000 for the Town Treasurer/Collector. A new agreement was reached by the Select Board in response to her intended resignation.
  - d. Wage Scale adjustment of \$7,000 for the open Library Director position. The Library Trustees have experienced difficulty in securing a candidate due to the current pay scale.

The Committee discussed the issue of optics around the above items. At the time of the debt-exclusion vote, the documented intentions for monies raised were to fund previously acquired debt; therefore, making room in the operating budget to fund capital investment-type purchases versus operational or salary expenses.

2. Significant Expense/Capital Investments

The Committee reviewed the ranking sheet and considered items that should/should not be included as a capital-type of expense. A process for sharing the document in a central depository (360 file, OneDrive, Google Drive, etc) for easy editing and revision control was discussed. Diana Schindler will advise Department Heads of the availability of the document

for updating with a request to have the document finalized by September 3, 2021 at the latest. Meetings will be scheduled with Department Heads to have detailed discussions and allow for public participation. Long-term master planning was also raised as an important issue. The current state of the Town Hall building was used as an example.

3. Special Town Meeting

The Select Board is in the process of scheduling a Special Town Meeting during the month of October. Work on the capital expense recommendations is requested to be complete by September 27, 2021.

4. Leaf Pick-Up Program

Members of the Road Commissioners Board and Highway Superintendent, Chris Nadeau were present to comment on the leaf pick-up program.

- a. The sustainability of the program is heavily dependent upon having safe, reliable equipment; the current vehicle is well beyond typical life expectancy due to diligent maintenance.
- b. There is an approximate 6-month lead time on a new vehicle. If an order were to be placed this fall, it would not be available for use until the next cycle. Costs for this year's program could be increased if additional personnel or vehicles need to be utilized.
- c. The subject of fee-for-service was discussed. This was not a favorable option as it would present difficulties to manage and administrative costs for billing and collection.
- d. Tim Watson, Water & Sewer Manager, indicated he is in need of a replacement jet truck; if there is an opportunity to find a multi-use vehicle, he would be in favor of exploring it as an option.
- e. The Finance Committee requested the Road Commissioners to research costs relating to a lease-to-own vehicle. Given the potential life expectancy of the vehicle, a 5-to-7-year lease could be advantageous.

5. Tim Watson gave various updates on Water & Sewer operations: PFAS issues have been identified, water storage is an ongoing topic, he is working on various grant opportunities and he is interested in getting information as early as possible on the future of the Draper Mill property to determine the impact to Water & Sewer.
6. A brief discussion of the draft financial policy document was held. The Committee agreed to break it down into smaller sections, assign areas of responsibility to members, and submit one section at a time to the committee for final acceptance.
7. The Chair reminded the Committee the trash and recycling contract is up for renewal this year; it will be a topic on future agendas.

The Finance Committee will meet on September 8, 2021 at 7:00pm.

The Chair called the meeting to Adjournment at 8:28 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Elizabeth S. Callahan*

Recording Secretary  
Hopedale Finance Committee