



TOWN OF HOPEDALE

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Finance Committee

October 4, 2021 Meeting Minutes 6:00 pm, via Zoom

Attendees:

Present:

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

Absent:

D. Piatt

The Finance Committee meeting was opened at 6:02 pm by Chris Hodgens.

Votes:

1. The minutes of September 27, 2021 were presented. All voted in favor with Dennis Madigan abstaining due to absence.

Events:

1. The Committee reviewed the significant expense/capital item list updated by Diana Schindler.
2. The Committee took a second read of the warrant articles for Special Town Meeting. Various items were discussed including:
 - a. Article 2 did not have an amount associated with the text (estimated at \$5,000). The van driver utilized by the Council on Aging is paid from salaries not technical expenses; this is an accounting/clerical adjustment for appropriate classification of expenses.
 - b. Prior year invoices were further explained; expanded information was requested on the warrant.
 - c. The new contract for the Treasurer/Collector was discussed at length. Diana Schindler indicated efforts are underway to shift certain positions from "at-will" to contract. The Committee emphasized their understanding of paying positions and people competitively and fairly while approaching the implementation of any compensation strategy deliberately and with sensitivity to the Town's current and future financial position.

**Ken Wilson exited the meeting at 6:59 pm for a prior commitment.*

- d. Information concerning vehicle requests was shared by Chiefs of Police and Fire. The Committee would like to see further information on the current fleet, i.e. make, model, year, maintenance records, proposed disposition upon upgrading, etc. The establishment of a sub-committee to examine a regular schedule of obsolescence, replacement, cost per mile, etc. was discussed. With a lack of information on the upcoming budget cycle the Committee agreed on taking a conservative approach. Colleen Strapponi indicating the fleet listing provided for insurance purposes would be a beneficial place to start. Ricardo Lima (Hopedale Police Dept.) requested the Committee to consider the needs and safety of the departments requesting vehicles and offered information indicating the Police Chief is the only individual that can approve the vehicles being purchased for the Police Department.
3. Don Comastra inquired about the increase to the average tax bill, not just the tax rate. This information needs to be available to the public prior to and at the Special Town Meeting. Len Guertin raised a question regarding a project to update valuations on properties. A discussion followed regarding how that is dovetailed with the tax rate.
4. A question was raised regarding potential tax revenues from the opening of the High Hopes facility; the first payment of 3% is turned over through the state in the first quarter following their operations. Initial expectations are in the \$15K - \$20K range.
5. The Committee will meet again to review the motions for Special Town Meeting and indicate favorable/not favorable.
6. Special Town Meeting
October 16 at 11:00 am

The Finance Committee will meet on October 13, 2021 at 6:00 pm.

The Chair called the meeting to Adjournment at 7:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth S. Callahan

Recording Secretary
Hopedale Finance Committee