



Ware

MASSACHUSETTS

Finance Committee
126 Main Street
Ware, MA 01082

Finance Committee Meeting

Meeting Location: Selectmen's Conference Room
Ware Town Hall – 126 Main Street

Meeting Dates: Thursday, April 8, 2021

Meeting Time: 4:00 pm

Due to the outbreak of corona (Covid-19) virus, the Governor has announced an emergency order temporarily lifting the requirement of the Open Meeting Law mandating public access to the physical location of the meeting, provided there is a means of remote access.

The instructions to join the meeting virtually or by phone (via Zoom) are:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85899543897?pwd=YVhzblpvbk1SZ3k0MHJkQUVrV2x0QT09>

By Phone: +1 929 205 6099

Meeting ID: 858 9954 3897

Passcode: 291882

Meeting Agenda items to be discussed:

1. Review of Planning Department, Inspections and COA Budgets
2. Review and vote on Articles for April 24th STM
3. Review and approval of prior meeting minutes
4. Review of any emails or correspondence

At the time of posting of this meeting notice and agenda the above items were the only items known. Should an additional item be brought forward, unless of an emergency nature, it will be placed on a future docket. The general public is invited to this and all meetings of the Ware Finance Committee.

Submitted by

Lynn Nenni
Finance Committee Chair

April 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Finance Committee Members Present: Lynn Nenni, Terry Smith, Devin Peterson

Guests: Stuart Beckley, Town Manager; John Zienowicz, Executive Director Senior Center; Rebekah Cornell, Planning and Community Development Director; Anna Marques, Building Inspector

The Meeting was called to order at 4:15 pm

Item 1) Review of Planning Department, Inspection and COA Budgets:

John Zienowicz led a discussion of the proposed 2022 Senior Center budget. The total Senior Center budget request was nearly the same as FY 2021 at \$158,938, with no change in services or staff. The budget included \$2,000 to fund a new thermostat and energy control system. John also noted that in addition to town funding the Senior Center also received an annual grant from the state and that in the past year the amount received was \$24,000, which was also used to support Senior Center operations. The grant is based on the number of residents over the age of 60, and as of the last census the number was 2066. John reviewed a list of building projects that will be necessary in the next few years including roof replacement, air circulation improvements, repairs to the building foundation, furnace replacement and exterior painting. Finance Committee member Terry Smith offered to assist in the preparation of bid specs and plan reviews when the Town is ready to move forward with the building repairs.

Rebekah Cornell led a discussion of the Planning Department/Community Development budget. The total budget request was nearly the same as FY 2021 at \$63,225. It was noted that 60 % of the director salary and 40% of the administrative assistant salary are funded through the Community Development block grant. The Community Development block grant is managed jointly by the town and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. Historically, the town has received annual grants in the range of \$500,000 to \$800,000. 20% of the grant proceeds have been used to fund social service programs, and the balance has been used to fund housing rehabilitation and road, sewer and street lighting projects. The Community Development Authority. During discussions Rebekah proposed increasing the budget \$23,000 in order to make the current part-time administrative assistant full time. Making the position full time would enable more vigorous pursuit of grant opportunities and enable the director to focus more on town development.

Anna Marques led a discussion of the Building Inspection budget. The department request included an increase of \$18,000 to the total budget. The increase was requested to provide funding for code enforcement costs such as legal and engineering consultations for unsafe buildings. The Town Manager reduced the department request thereby increasing the total budget by \$6,600. Anna also noted she was investigating a new grant opportunities for the purchase of an inspection vehicle. Currently she uses her personal vehicle and receives a mileage reimbursement from the town. Both Stuart and Anna noted that they were in the process of reviewing the grant to determine whether or not the grant could also be used to purchase equipment and vehicles for the police and fire departments.

The committee thanked everyone for their presentation.

The finance committee noted that the unaffiliated staff, including department heads, were flat funded in the Town Manager's budget request. Stuart pointed out that there was \$145,000 in the reserve for salary increase line item that could be discussed at a future date. Discussion ensued as to whether or not the finance committee should weigh in on salary increases for the unaffiliated. No conclusion was reached.

Item 2) Review and vote on articles for April 24th STM

The Town Manager briefly reviewed the articles for the April 24th STM with the committee. The committee noted that no amounts were filled in for the cost of the water treatment plant. There was concern raised that construction costs appear to be escalating quickly and that the amount of contingency budgeted in the project may not be sufficient to cover escalating costs.

No vote was taken. The committee hoped to vote after a planned discussion with the Public Works Director.

Item 3) Review and approval of prior meeting minutes

Move to approve the minutes from the April 1, 2021 meeting: Terry Smith

Second: Devin Peterson

Unanimously approved.

Item 4) Review of emails and correspondence

None noted.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 pm.