



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: Wednesday, March 2, 2022

Meeting Time: 6:30 pm

Meeting Agenda items to be discussed:

1. Review of FY 2023 Budget
2. Approval of prior meeting's minutes
3. Review of any emails or correspondence since last meeting

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 agenda. The general public is invited to this and all meetings of the Ware Finance Committee. **THERE'S AN OPENING FOR ONE (1) NEW MEMBER; APPLY ON TOWN WEBSITE (WWW.TOWNOFWARE.COM) OR WITH TOWN MANAGER.**

Submitted by

Lynn Nenni
Chairman Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes: March 2, 2022

Members Present: Lynn Nenni, Devin Peterson, Ken Willette, Terry Smith

Special Guests: Stuart Beckley, Town Manager; Tom Barnes, Selectman; Heidi Reed, Ware Library Association; Rob Watchilla, Director of Planning and Community Development

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 pm

Item 1) Review of 2023 Budget

The Town Manger distributed the 2023 budget package to the committee.

Heidi Reed, Ware Library Director, reviewed the Library's 2023 proposed budget with the committee. She provided a copy of the regulations and standards for state aid to libraries that all libraries in the state need to abide by in order to be certified and benefit by participation in the state library system. The regulations require that municipalities fund libraries an average of the last three years municipal appropriation increased by 2.5%. For FY 2023 this amount is calculated at \$262,458. The amount in the proposed budget is \$277,530. Heidi stated that this was the first time in several years that the appropriation from the town met or exceeded the required level and that she had recently received a warning from the state that the town needed to meet the required contributions to maintain their certification.

The 2023 proposed budget is an increase of 22% or \$50,085 over the current year. \$18,500 of the increase was due to needed building repairs. There was also a \$21,000 increase to the salaries line item which included staff increases for salaries, health insurance and retirement benefits. There was a \$4,600 increase in supplies for the purchase of books.

Heidi also said that due to the recent increase in the town's population to over 10,000, the state required the library to increase the number of hours they are open from a minimum of 25 hours per week to 40 hours in the next three years.

The committee discussed whether it would be beneficial to move the \$20,000 budgeted for building repairs to the town's budget thereby reducing the appropriation for the library to \$257,530 and slightly below the state required floor of \$262,458. The intention was to reduce the funding floor for the three year average. Heidi thought the state would be satisfied, for now, with the increase in the appropriation compared to prior years.

The committee thanked Heidi for her presentation.

Rob Watchilla, the Director of Planning and Community Development, reviewed the budget and projects his department anticipated working on in FY 2023. Projects included updating the town's master plan, researching the town's by-laws, undertaking a cannabis impact study, updating the town's demographic profile, cataloging vacant parcels to help evaluate their best use and reviewing the subdivision regulations. The FY 2023 proposed budget increased 15.8% or \$10,015 over the current year. The largest increases were to cover the cost of an intern and the administrative assistant position transitioning from

part-time to full time. He also noted that 40% of his salary and 60% of the administrative assistant salary were covered by Community Development Block Grant funds, and therefore not included in the general fund budget.

The committee had few questions on the budget and thanked Rob for his presentation.

The committee discussed the FY 2023 budget with Town Manager. Stuart noted that the Town was in a better position than prior years, using only \$152,000 from free cash to pay for small capital purchases. The proposed budget was an overall increase of 4.1% over the prior year and included 3 new full time positions, 2 part time positions and 2 new interns.

The committee noted they had received the Town Accountant's updated revenue and expenditure projection that included capital purchase recommendations. The projections showed possible deficits in the sewer and general funds over the next two to three years if town services remained the same and there was no significant increase to the tax base. The committee also expressed concern over the current economic conditions possible impact on future budgets.

Item 2) Approval of prior meeting's minutes

Ken Willette: Motion to approve minutes of the Feb 18th meeting
Devin Peterson: Second

Item 3) Review of any emails or correspondence since last meeting

None noted

The next meeting was set for March 10th at 5:00pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35.

Respectfully Submitted

Lynn Nenni