



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 Date: Thursday, March 25, 2021

Meeting Time: 7:00 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/89099121191?pwd=RE4wR0VWc24wL3EvSXpSM0N2ejdUQT09>

By Phone: +1 929 205 6099

Meeting ID: 890 9912 1191

Passcode: 288103

Meeting Agenda items to be discussed:

1. Review and Approval of Reserve Transfer Request
2. Discussion and Vote on Articles for Special Town Meeting
3. Discussion of 2022 Budget
4. Approval of meeting minutes
5. Review of e-mails 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 agenda. The general public is invited to this and all meetings of the Ware Finance Committee.

Submitted by

Lynn Nenni
Finance Committee Chair

March 25, 2021 Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

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

Guests: Stuart Beckley, Town Manager; Shawn Crevier, Police Chief

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

1) Review and approval of transfer request:

The Police Chief and Town Manger led a discussion of two transfers requests from the Finance Committee reserve account for the following items:

- i. \$5,650 for expenses not budgeted for a Police Department new hire, including academy fees, clothing and equipment and ammunition.

Motion to Approve: Ken Willette

Second: Janice Hills

Unanimously Approved

- ii. \$2,800 to replace the hot water heater in the Police Department

Motion to Approve: Devin Peterson

Second: Lynn Nenni

Unanimously Approved

The available balance in the reserve fund after approval of the Police Department transfers is \$37,821.

2) Discussion and vote on articles for Special Town Meeting:

The committee reviewed the revised warrant for the Special Town Meeting on March 27, noting the changes, including the dismissal of Articles 3,9,15,20,22, which were dismissed, and according to the Town Manager, will be considered as part of the 2022 budget process. The committee also noted that Article 2 had been substantially revised and asked the Town Manager to review the changes. The changes in total additional appropriations for Article 2 was an increase of \$100,000 for shortfalls anticipated in the FY 2021 budget, including \$30,000 for the Water Enterprise Fund, \$15,000 for an audit of town department operations, \$50,000 for legal services and \$26,000 for electrical inspection salaries. An additional appropriation for \$50,000 for the Board of Education was removed due to the unexpected availability of grant funds to cover costs. The Town Manager also pointed out changes in the source of funding for Article 2 from unallocated taxes revenue and free cash to release of overlay funds and free cash. The committee decided to vote again on Article 2, because of the substantial changes.

Motion to Approve: Devin Peterson

Second: Ken Willette

Unanimously Approved

The committee also noted that the additional 2021 budget appropriations as well as the appropriations for capital purchases should have been included in the FY 2021 budget. The Town Manager agreed, and also stated that last June, when the 2021 budget was passed there was a lot of uncertainty regarding state funding and the impact of the pandemic on town operations. He also stated that in the past, the town had waited until free cash was certified to appropriate money for capital spending.

The committee moved on to a discussion of Article 25, which had not been voted on previously, pending further information on the project status. The Town Manager updated the committee with the current status stating the town had received an earmark of \$300,000 towards the estimated \$400,000 cost to demolish 114 Main Street thanks to the efforts of Senator Goby and that \$23,000 will also be available from the Community Development fund. He added that the project was currently at a standstill awaiting either the town or property owner taking action to demolish the building and as a result that the completion of the Main Street redesign project was in jeopardy. Committee members expressed several concerns including worries that the town did not want to set a precedent taking over blighted properties, needed to strengthen code enforcement practices and that the state grant funding could be withdrawn and the project incomplete if the building were to remain in its current condemned condition. The Town Manager also stressed that negotiations with the property owner were still underway and hoped to be concluded soon.

Motion to Approve Article 25: Janice Hills

Second: Ken Willette

For: Janice Hills, Ken Willette, Lynn Nenni

Against: Devin Peterson, Terry Smith

3) Discussion of 2022 Budget

The committee stated they would like to meet with all departments to review their 2022 budget proposals and would also like to include a review the town's capital plan, current and future debt service requirements and forward looking revenue and expense projections as part of their review. The committee also expressed a desire for the Town Manager to arrange a budget presentation with the Board of Selectman, Board of Education and Finance Committee as part of the Finance Committee's final review. It was agreed that the committee would start with a review of the Police and Fire budgets on Thursday April 1st and a tentative date for the budget presentation was set for May 4th.

4) Approval of minutes from March 17th meeting

Motion to Approve: Devin Peterson

Second: Ken Willette

Unanimously Approved

5) Review of e-mails or correspondence

None noted

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Lynn Nenni

Finance Committee Chair