



Ware

MASSACHUSETTS

Finance Committee
126 Main Street
Ware, MA 01082

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Location: Small Conference Room
Ware Town Hall – 126 Main Street

Meeting Date: Wednesday, December 14, 2022; 5:00 pm

Meeting Attendees: Ken Willette, SK Robinson, Devin Peterson, Kelsey Sidur

Additional Guests: Stuart Beckley (Town Manger), Tracy Meehan (Town Accountant), Geoff McAlmond (DPW Director)

Meeting Agenda items to be discussed:

1. Meeting called to order at 5:04pm
2. Updates: Fiscal Year 2023 Tax Rate has been set at \$17.29, which has decreased from Fiscal Year 2022 at \$19.34. However, property values have increased since the prior Fiscal Year. Example: If a home valued at \$216,600 last year is valued at \$250,230 this year – taxes on the home would increase from \$4,189 to \$4,326.
3. Follow up discussion on DPW/Enterprise Activities
 - SEWER: Last time the Sewer Treatment Plant went through a complete overhaul was in the 80's, they typically should be upgraded on a 25-year schedule per Geoff McAlmond. Ours is currently operated manually when most nowadays are automated – so we will need to move to this model.
 - List of approved and recommended upcoming projects provided by Geoff. Individual Street Extensions were crossed off the Rate Study provided by Tighe & Bond, so therefore are not in current rate from them.
 - Geoff McAlmond suggests that Palmer Rd Flat Brook Crossing should be completed in FY24 while the state upgrades the bridge. Project cost is \$250k – funding up for discussion as it is not likely that there will be a reserve available.
 - Devin Peterson raises continued concern about whether we can combine the Water & Sewer Enterprise Funds so that they can work to offset each other.
 - WATER: List of approved and recommended upcoming projects also provided by Geoff and reviewed as a group.
 - Geoff McAlmond raises concerns about PFAS needing to be removed in near future, but iron and manganese will need to be removed first.

- Geoff McAlmond to pull together Highway Dept Equipment needs in the future to provide to Fin Com.
 - Building needs: Geoff McAlmond is okay with DPW office and building location (building in good shape), however Highway Dept could use some upgrades long-term.
 - Staffing updates: Water Dept is staffed appropriately, but Sewer Dept is short staffed resulting in maintenance occurring less often than it should.
4. Fin Com calendar for FY 24 budget review
 - Chapter 70 Education Aide has been increasing and there is concern that it will plateau and begin to come down.
 - Rough budget timeline as follows:
 - January 17th – meet with BOS to have high level conversation regarding future year budget. Tax rate, trend, drivers, concerns etc.
 - Feb 14th, reviewing of department requests should be completed.
 - Once complete, meet with Tracy Meehan to see how things line up.
 - First week of March, Stuart Beckley will present high level overview of budget with supporting documentation (change meetings to every other week)
 - Fin Com will look through Stuart Beckley’s overview and pose any questions or concerns.
 - Begin reviews of Departments – grouped into blocks. Ken Willette suggests rather than bringing them to us, we go to them to discuss budget details and information
 - Schools, Public Safety, Public Works
 - Administrative & Support (IT, HR, Treasure, Accounting and Town Manager)
 - Code Enforcement Planning & Conservation
 - Library, Council on Aging and Grant Management.
 - We will make recommendations on April 14th to prepare for the meeting on the 18th.
 - The above is subject to change and a more precise calendar will be available soon.
 5. Cost estimators report for Town Hall/PD/Water Dept.
 - Needs/problems/deficiencies still exist for these departments.
 - Suggestion to appoint a broad-based committee comprised of both town representatives and community members to help to address these deficiencies to help priorities and vet issues at hand. Potential representatives to include are:
 - Fin Com, Capital, Town Manager, Accountant, Dept Heads (those with needs), BOS Representative, Community Development Auth, Housing Authority, Schools
 - Goal would be to pull together a report and put forth a consolidated proposal of Town needs.
 6. Update on request to have Water/Sewer Capital needs updated
 - Stuart is going to go back to Tighe & Bond to revisit rates study report.
 7. Town 5 Year Forecast
 - Ongoing discussion, some discussed in above agenda items.
 8. Discussion on joint BOS/School/Fin Com Meeting (Ongoing)
 9. Approval of prior meeting’s minutes
 - SK Robinson motions to approve prior meeting minutes, Kelsey Sidur seconds. Passes unanimously.

10. Review of any emails or correspondence since last meeting
 - Stuart Beckley reminds that there are
 - Free Cash \$3.2M, Tracy Meehan recommends discussion on what we will do with those funds. Tracy Meehan to pull a report together with funds and recommended uses by Stuart Beckley. Financial policies in place to restrict percent of free cash that can be used to fund the budget.
 - Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, January 4th at 5pm. Meetings will move to Wednesday's beginning with this meeting moving into budget season.
11. Devin Peterson motions to adjourn at 6:20pm. SK Robinson seconds. Passes unanimously.

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

Ken Willette
Chairman Finance Committee