

## **Weare Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, January 4, 2023**

Present at meeting:

- Town Administrator: Naomi Bolton
- Finance Committee: Janice Mathews, Maria Fossiano, Tom Clow, John Merva, Tom Flaherty, Gary Evans, Bill Anderson, Elizabeth Evans, James Drury
- Guest Speakers: Dr. Jacqueline Coe, SAU 24 Superintendent

Chair Tom Clow (TC) called the meeting to order at 7:04pm. He indicated the need to review and approve DRAFT minutes from all prior meetings.

- Oct 19, 2022 minutes had one small change. TC motioned to approve minutes from Oct 19, 2022 as amended, second by Tom Flaherty. Motioned carried unanimously.
- Nov 22, 2022 minutes had no changes. TC motioned to approve minutes from Nov 22, 2022 as written, second by John Merva. Motioned carried unanimously.
- Dec 7, 2022 had a few changes. TC motioned to approve minutes from Dec 7, 2022 as amended, second by Maria Fossiano. Motioned carried unanimously.
- Dec 21, 2022 minutes has one small change. TC motioned to approve minutes from Dec 21, 2022 as amended, second by Gary Evans. Motioned carried with Janice Mathews abstaining due to her absence from that meeting.

TC mentioned that Moderator John Morton sent an email asking the committee to remove Leah Borla from the committee for non-attendance. TC mentioned that Leah had informed the chair that she would not be attending.

Tom Flaherty (TF) asked if someone removes themselves would they be entitled to return and complete their term. TC said that if she wanted to be appointed next year she would have to re-approach the Moderator.

Janice Mathews (JM) asked if we need to officially appoint Tom Flaherty as committee Secretary. JM motioned, second by John Merva. Motioned carried unanimously.

TC asked at what point we include a minority opinion in recommendation writeups, suggesting that a 5-4 split is truly a minority but questioned whether a 6-3 warranted one. TC wanted to avoid a debate on having a minority report on each article. TC suggested that the minority wording should go deeper than a simple statement. Discussion yielded a general feeling that minority opinions would be valuable and could be included on any article.

TC indicated that the focus tonight would be on schools, asking for input from the school sub-groups.

TC handed out some sheets with school data on them that came from Bill Anderson (BA).

BA mentioned that the board should be sensitive to the total cost, compared to years before and with respect to the amount returned, and that the amount returned in 2021-2022 was higher than normal due to COVID funds. He expects that there could be a “dark cloud” as things go back to normal.

TC explained how the schools give back funds compared to the Town. Discussion took part about this topic. TC also mentioned that this might be the time were the committee asks the boards to make changes or express how the committee feels.

BA suggested that the school get their outstanding 2-year contract approved as soon as possible, so those costs are settled, suggesting we support it on the warrant once it is approved by the school board. He also mentioned that he supports the Weare District default budget, due to the unknowns before us and that the school has passed their proposed budgets over the past few years.

Elizabeth Evans (EE) was concerned that the default budget would not provide the resources.

Tom Flaherty (TF) asked the SAU-24 Superintendent if we have a projection on how much might be returned at the end of this year. She replied that they were tracking for a high return (more than pre-COVID).

Janice Mathews (JM) asked about the cause of Special Education increases. Multiple members replied with the reasons.

TF asked about money spent by the school (parking lot) at the end of the budget year a few years ago. Dr. Coe replied that there was a transfer of funds between lines, requested by the school board, and it was no longer on the bottom line as of June 30 (no longer in the budget).

TF mentioned that the committee should also consider all articles as a package, rather than vote to recommend on each, before having information on all articles available.

JM and others mentioned that they would like to see the newly approved school support staff contract. The Superintendent mentioned that it would be posted to the website this evening.

TC mentioned that we need to have decisions made by the Town Deliberative session on Feb 4<sup>th</sup>, suggesting we need to schedule another meeting. The meeting was scheduled for January 18, 2023.

Discussion took place about the John Stark budget. Maria Fossiano asked if students were able to go to Concord Technical school full time. Response was no.

Elizabeth Evans asked if Solar Energy has been considered at the John Stark school. Dr. Coe said that a CIP plan has been the priority and that overall needs for Center Woods were being looked into for next year.

Janice Mathews asked for clarification on some budget items. Dr. Coe explained that budget line consolidation is the reason.

Bill Anderson (BA) mentioned that the Weare school budget has increased 10% over two years and John Stark has increased 1.1% over the same period.

John Merva asked BA about Town default versus proposed budgets passed over time. Discussion took place about the fact that the Town proposed budgets have not passed for a few year and the costs are increasing over time.

Elizabeth Evans (EE) asked about the Town Master Plan. BA mentioned that funding for a Master Plan failed in 2022.

Maria Fossiano asked about the ability to participate in future meetings via phone. Discussion took place. Naomi Bolton mentioned that a quorum must be physically present in the room. Discussion yielded that participating in the meeting via phone would be permissible under reasonable circumstances.

Janice Mathews motioned to adjourn at 8:18pm, second by Elizabeth Evans and the motion passed.

Minutes Submitted by Tom Flaherty (Secretary) 1/11/23