

Minutes of the

Weare Finance Committee

Wednesday, 4 December 2019

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7pm.

In attendance were (from right to left as seen by the audience): Nicole Herbst, Matt Whitlock (secretary), Christine Hague, Megan Thellen, Tammi Hagman, Tom Clow, Lori Davis (chair), James Drury, Tom Downing, Keith Erf. Dennis Aubin and Gary Evans were absent. Neal Kurk was seated in the audience as a member of the public.

Tom Clow moved that all Finance Committee members should be seated at the table in order to participate in the meeting. Tom Downing seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Eileen Meaney, the town moderator, read a letter from Christine Heath, addressed to the chair of the Board of Selectmen, regarding public comment at Finance Committee meetings. Lori reaffirmed the committee's decision to disallow public comment at committee meetings in the interest of avoiding lobbying and platforming by members of the public. Tom Clow added that venues, such as Selectmen's meetings, budget hearings, and deliberative sessions, already exist for the public to raise questions and issues. Tom Downing added that members of the public may write to the committee. Megan pointed out that the committee, at its first meeting of the season, invited feedback from the public in writing via Naomi Bolton, the town administrator. Christine emphasized that the Finance Committee does not have decision-making authority, so public comment would not necessarily be appropriate.

Benji Knapp presented changes in the Department of Public Works' proposed budget line by line.

Bob Vezina presented changes in the Fire Department's proposed budget line by line.

Chris Moore presented changes in the Police Department's proposed budget line by line.

Naomi presented a review of the tax impact of the approved 2019 warrant articles. She requested a sense of what the committee would like to see from the town budget. Lori responded that the committee is not ready to comment. Tom Clow remarked that he would like to see the complete package first to weigh the needs of the town versus the affordability of all proposed spending.

Christine asked whether a contingency fund exists to pay for unforeseen catastrophes such as a great flood. Naomi replied that no such fund exists.

Tom Downing gave a report from the town subcommittee. His generalization was that most increases were a direct result of measures approved by the voters. He pointed out his one concern was the proposed raise for the librarian of 40%. (Naomi confirmed that this proposed raise of \$20,000 is in the proposed budget and will not be presented to voters as a separate warrant article.) Other than that, Tom was pleasantly surprised to find that all requests seemed sensible. Tom Clow praised the department heads for planning ahead to build for the future of the town. Christine requested that the proposed library budget be provided to the Finance Committee. Nicole praised the department heads for their efforts toward better

lifecycle management of the town's assets. Tom Clow reminded the committee that the presentations given at this meeting were only for proposed operating budgets and did not include special warrant articles voted separately.

Christine, Matt, and Nicole reported from the John Stark school district. Christine expressed a desire to know the current balances in the district's expendable trust funds. The state will be providing a one-time \$161k in aid. School enrollment is down to 617 from 651.

Megan reported from the Weare school district. The state will be providing a one-time \$390k in aid. The district would need to add \$67k to switch to full-day kindergarten, but this has not been decided yet. The next Weare school board meeting is scheduled on December 17th at 4:15pm.

According to Naomi, the collective bargaining agreements for town employees must be finalized by January 14. The public hearing for the budget will be on Monday, January 20. A rough draft of the town's warrant articles should be ready by Monday, December 16.

The next meeting of the Finance Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, December 18, at 6:30pm. Department heads will present their warrant articles.

Matt accepted two revisions to the minutes from the last meeting. Tom Clow moved to approve those minutes as amended. Christine seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Tom Clow shared that he will be allowed to sit in on the CBA negotiations. Tom Downing moved to allow Tom Clow to attend the PD's contract negotiations, noting that Tom would not have any power to negotiate. Nicole seconded. The motion passed unanimously, with Tom Clow recusing himself.

The issue of Neal's intentional nonparticipation in the committee was taken up again. Eileen will speak to him privately and return at the beginning of the committee's next meeting with her findings.

Lori adjourned the meeting at 10:29pm.