

Lunenburg Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Bilotta Meeting Room
Lunenburg Town Hall
January 18, 2024

Members Present: Chair Evan Watters, Vice Chair Chris Menard, Clerk Tiffaney Tavares, Board Member Tom Gray, Board Member Dave Passios, Board Member Jean Russell, Board Member Jay Simeone

1. Call to Order

The meeting opened at 7:01 PM

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Announcements

a. Plan Lunenburg Survey: available until January 21st

i. PlanLunenburg.org

ii. Public Meeting 1/24 @ Adult Activity Center- This meeting will review the results of the survey and include a public discussion.

1. Session 1: 4p-6p

2. Session 2: 6:30p-8:30p

4. Comment

a. Public Comment

Anna Lockwood- 91 Main Street – states that she appreciates the Committees efforts and looks forward to the Committee continuing their work.

b. Committee Comment

Dave Passios watched a pre-recorded interview related to the state budget cuts and human resource services being affected by the cuts. During the meeting, it was said that there weren't actual cuts happening, but portions were being paid to department heads or whoever oversaw the budget line items. There is also a claim that states a good portion of the money being spent wouldn't be consumed within that fiscal year anyways. Dave Passios will request additional information at the upcoming MMA meeting.

5. Town Manager Report

Heather Lemieux discussed the 9C cut decision that included a detailed list of cuts. Most of the cuts were ear marks that were cut by 50%. Another portion of money was put towards MassHealth.

At the past Select Board meeting, a bid went out for the generator project. It came in at \$99,940. Once this is ordered it will take 16-18 weeks for delivery. The public safety carpet project came in slightly under what was anticipated and is expected to be finished in March.

A Finance Director was hired and is starting on February 5th.

The 3rd quarter estimated tax bills went out and the re-evaluation project for assessments is on schedule.

The town is awaiting an announcement from the state in regard to the storm flood costs incurred in the fall. There may be appropriated funding available. In the fall, part of a supplemental budget bill appropriated 5 million dollars to be put toward the September storms. Lunenburg did submit the paperwork for reimbursement. All the expenses were tracked and totaled over \$100,000 dollars. Currently the town is waiting for FEMA allocation before the amount will be known.

Tiffany Tavares questions what gaps there are in staffing positions. Heather Lemieux states there has been no finance director since July, principal assessor position since June, and no land use director since October. Those are the 3 main positions that need to be filled. Tiffany Tavares asks how the town is marketing for those positions. Heather Lemieux confirms they are using multiple resources including job fairs, temporary staffing agencies, social media, association websites.

6. Old Business

There is no old business to discuss.

7. New Business

a. TM Capital Plan Recommendations

Heather Lemieux provided a presentation to the Committee prior to the meeting relating to the Capital Plan recommendations. The departments heads submitted their requests thru the ClearGov platform, and the Capital Planning Committee prioritized those 35 requests. Those 35 requests totaled over 3 million dollars.

Below are the top 10 projects for FY 25 totaling over a million dollars:

1. Public Safety Radio System Phase 2: \$315,263
2. Townwide Keying, Card Access, and Alarm System Upgrade for Town Buildings: \$185,000

3. Northfield Culvert Construction at Kellys Pond: \$200,000
4. ADA Study for Renovations and Schematic Design for Turkey Hill Elementary School: \$275,000
5. Marked Replacement of K9 Cruiser: \$92, 211
6. Library Security Camera Phase 1: \$36,000
7. Marked Replacement for the Traffic Cruiser: \$73,627
8. Installation of 3M Window Safety Film for Turkey Hill: \$33,569
9. Security Camera Upgrade at Town Building: \$36,450
10. Wallace Park Basketball and Tennis Court: \$70,000

For this budget year the Town Manager recommends using free cash and unexpected capital. The next steps include revisiting funding.

Dave Passios questions where the funding for the school entrance came from. Heather Lemieux confirms the security was funded and the projects are to be completed by the end of the fiscal year.

Dave Passios states he has reservations about repairing the basketball court at Wallace Park. He doesn't believe that a band aid patch is worth the money and suggests a complete project to get a better understanding. Heather Lemieux will inquire into what was previously spent to repair the courts.

Tiffany Tavares requested a further breakdown about the cost of the ADA study of Turkey Hill Elementary. Heather Lemieux will check for further information. Brian Lehtinen from the School Committee stated the ADA compliance was a big concern being triggered with renovations. Dave Passios believes the scenario the School Committee was hoping for was to get the potential total dollar amount to renovate the school with a single project with the MSBA. Dave Passios requests a complete evaluation of the building including ADA design.

Chris Menard believes in relation to fleet management that the front-end loader was bumped up higher than recommended. The Capital Planning committee generally didn't believe that we were ready for that. Dave Passios states that the town has been growing thus requiring more equipment and personnel. Dave Passios also doesn't understand how the town doesn't own something as simple as a jack hammer and an air compressor and why these weren't a priority.

Chris Menard questions if the town could hire someone to write grants that the town could benefit from. Heather Lemieux agrees. Dave Passios questions if there is a municipal grant process that allows administration costs.

Chris Menard asks if there is a grant for the bridge culvert project and the estimated costs.

Evan Watters wants to know if these requests follow the fiscal year or the calendar year. Heather Lemieux confirms they follow the calendar year.

b. Committee Reorganization

There are 3 positions available to be filled: Chair, Vice Chair, and Clerk.
Tiffany Tavares expresses her interest in being the Clerk.

Motion by Dave Passios to nominate Tiffany Tavares for the clerk position, seconded by Chris Menard.

Motion by Dave Passios for Evan Watters to remain as Chair, seconded by Tiffany Tavares.

Motion by Dave Passios for Chris Menard to remain as Vice chair, seconded by Jay Simeone.

Evan Watters expressed interest to re-assess committee positions on a yearly basis.

c. Committee Liaisons

Evan Watters created and shared a document with a list of liaisons.

Below are the assigned liaisons per board member:

- Evan Watters: Board of Health, Master Plan Steering Committee, co-liaison for the School Committee
- Chris Menard: Parks Commission, Capital Planning Committee
- Tiffany Tavares: Facilities, co-liaison for the School Committee
- Dave Passios: Green Communities, DPW, co-liaisons for the Sewer Commission
- Evan Watters: Board of Health, Master Plan Steering Committee, co-liaison for the School Committee
- Tom Gray: Lunenburg Municipal Building Design Committee, Select Board
- Jay Simeone: Council on Aging, Library, co-liaison for the Sewer Commission, Personnel Committee
- Jean Russell: Police and Fire Departments

8. Minutes

There was a recommendation to add the location of the meeting and which members are absent for each meeting.

Motion to approve minutes with amendments by Dave Passios, seconded by Tiffany Tavares. Vote of 6 to 1 for approval.

9. Committee Reports

Dave Passios shares there is an upcoming Green Communities meeting scheduled for January 29 at 6:30 PM.

10. Topics for Future Meetings

- Grant Writing

Evan Watters requests the potential amount of time and cost for a grant writer as this is not a 40-hour position. Tiffaney Tavares suggests opening some sort of budget for a grant writer. Dave Passios asks if a contracted service would be an option.

- School Committee Documents

Tiffaney Tavares wants to follow up with the School Committee about getting financial documents and data in advance of the School Committee presentation.

11. Upcoming Meetings

- a. Jan 25th – tentative meeting
- b. Feb 8th – 5 yr Financial Forecast
- c. Feb 15th – TM's Preliminary Budget Presentation
- d. Feb 22nd – Land Use, Council on Aging, & Library
- e. Feb 29th – Information Technology & Police
- f. Mar 7th – DPW & Facilities
- g. Mar 14th – Fire
- h. Mar 20th – Monty Tech & Administration, Unclassified, & Debt Services
- i. Mar 21st – Public Access Committee, Sewer, & Other Monied Articles, Lunenburg Public Schools

12. Important Dates

- a. Jan 19th-20th (MMA Annual Meeting)
- b. Jan 9th-Mar 18th – Town Meeting Warrant
- c. Apr 2nd – FinCom Report for Warrant
- d. Mar 28th – FinCom Public Hearing
- e. May 4th – Annual Town Meeting
- f. May 18th – Annual Town Election

13. Comment

There was a brief discussion about spousal conflicts relative to liaison positions. The Committee agrees that there are no conflicts.

14. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Chris Menard, seconded by Jay Simeone.
The meeting closed at 9:41 PM.