

Lunenburg Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Bilotta Meeting Room
Lunenburg Town Hall
July 11, 2024

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

Absent Member: Clerk Tiffaney Tavares

1. Call to Order

The meeting opened at 7 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Announcements

There were no announcements.

4. Public Comment

Evan Watters states Dave Passios will be attending tonight's meeting via Zoom. Thus, any votes that are made need to be a roll call vote.

5. Town Manager Report

a. Last meeting with TM

Heather Lemieux states that was a meeting on June 18th that started the kickoff process for the Flat Hill Culvert Project. There was discussion with the contractor and was informed that the bridge will be closed starting in October. This bridge is estimated to be closed for 2 months. A small bridge grant was received for this project.

The police department received a \$206,000 grant for a mental health co-response clinician that will be shared with the town of Lancaster. An additional grant from the option stabilization account totaling \$40,000 will be put towards the total costs. These grants will cover the cost of the program and the equipment.

A bid was received and awarded to Lake View Landscaping on June 11th that will cover facilities and park grounds.

One bid was received for hazardous materials clean up at the woodruff property. The appropriated amount was \$100,000 and the full scope was \$185,000.

The library solar shade project is currently out to bid and is due July 31st.

The trash and recycling services are currently out to bid and were initially due July 17th. This will be extended to July 24th due to an addendum of questions.

The Assessors office sent out a letter to property owners that had exemptions on their fiscal 24 4th quarter tax bill to address an error.

The value Q1 and Q2 tax bills were sent out.

Heather Lemieux sent an updated draft of a budget calendar to all the Boards.

Notification was received from the State regarding the Network Gap Program funding. A letter of support was put in for both Verizon and Comcast. Verizon was picked for our community and that is intended to close the gap for internet connectivity for areas that are deficient.

Chris Menard questions if any documentation has been put together relating to the grant writing services. Tiffaney Tavares reached out to Heather Lemieux, but they haven't had a chance to brainstorm.

6. New Business

a. Financial Policy Manual Draft Discussion

Heather Lemieux applied for and received a Community Compact Grant with the Division of Local Services.

A 90-page document was provided including policies and roles. This document was presented to the Select Board on June 18th.

Heather Lemieux wants the Finance Committee to review and provide comments or corrections

b. Grant Writing Services Discussion

Chris Menard questions what the best approach will be to discuss services.

Heather Lemieux states the service is not to be used as a replacement for grant writing that's already been taking place on a regular basis. Heather Lemieux suggests submitting a survey to all town departments, Boards, and Committee to see if they need grant writing services.

The Town has a budget of \$50,000 for the year. There was discussion about looking into on call grant services.

7. Old Business

a. Town Manager Search Committee Update

Chris Menard states there have been a couple of meetings. There has been a lot of discussion about whether to hire a consultant to help with the process.

The Committee has requested the salary range from the Select Board.

b. Budget Task Force Discussion

The Budget Task Force consists of the Chair, Anthony Sculimbrene, Vice Chair, Ezequiel Ayala, and Clerk, Renee Emkey.

These meetings will take place bi-weekly with a hard stop after 1 hour. The next meeting is Monday the 22nd from 6-7 PM.

The Task Force anticipates presenting a document to be considered for the FY 26 budget season.

The Select Board did vote to allow secondaries for anyone that can't make a meeting. Jean Russell volunteers to be a backup.

There was a motion to nominate Jean Russell as a backup to Evan Watters on the Budget Committee by Chris Menard, seconded by Evan Watters. Roll call vote. Dave Passios aye, Jean Russell aye, Tom Gray aye, Jay Simeone aye, Chris Menard aye, Evan Watters aye. The vote was 6-0 to approve.

c. Meeting with Rep Scarsdale, 1st Middlesex District, and DESE to Discuss School Budget Issues

This will be a 2-hour long meeting to review formulas, Chapter 70, foundation budget, Student Opportunity Act, Chapter 71 regional school transportation, and circuit breaker. There will be discussion about problem areas including inflation with Student Opportunity Act, Prop 2 1/2, unrestricted governmental aid, and out of district placements.

Mrs. Gilman put together a letter to send to Representation Scarsdale. The Committee reviewed and provided edits. There was a motion to approve sending the letter by Chris Menard, seconded by Jean Russell. Roll call vote. Dave Passios aye, Jean Russell aye, Tom Gray aye, Jay Simeone aye, Chris Menard aye, Evan Watters aye. The vote was 6-0 to approve.

d. Consolidation of Services/Departments.

Dave Passios questions Evan Watters if the Finance Committee intends to give a recommended outline for consolidation to present to the Select Board. Evan Watters states there are several possibilities that include: a presentation to the Select Board, a budget task force report, next year's Finance Committee report. Currently, there is no specific plan.

Chris Menard suggests an organizational effectiveness study be completed. Heather Lemieux states that DLS does an organizational review based on financial departments. Evan Watters will reach out to Senator Cronin to inquire what the process is and how to start.

Evan Watters is going to do a cost analysis and comparison of town and school health insurance. Evan Watters is inquiring to see if money is being given equally to the departments and every department is being given an increase.

e. Review Budget Process/Suggestions for Improvement

Heather Lemieux provided a suggested calendar for next year's budget season.

Chris Menard advocates for financial tools versus spreadsheets for budgets.

Chris Menard suggested that every department use the same template, format, and tables for presentations.

There is a consensus that the schedule needs to be moved up to create more room for deliberation and thorough review.

8. Minutes

a. 6/27/2024

There was a motion by Dave Passios to approve the June 27th minutes as presented, seconded by Chris Menard. Roll call vote. Dave Passios aye, Jean Russell aye, Tom Gray aye, Jay Simeone abstain, Chris Menard aye, Evan Watters aye. The vote was 4-0-1 to approve.

9. Committee Reports

Jay Simeone states at the past planning board meeting there was discussion about the MBTA communities' presentation. There have been a lot of changes and is still an unfunded mandate.

Dave Passios states that the Green Communities Committee didn't meet but is scheduled for July 15th.

10. Topics for Future Meetings

Dave Passios would like an unverified copy of the reserve accounts and trust funds before the next meeting.

The financial director, Ezequiel Ayala, will provide the Q3 report at the next meeting.

The Treasurer, Myleen Mallari, is finalizing the FY 24 numbers.

11. Important Dates:

- a. 7/19 – Meeting with Rep Scarsdale, 1st Middlesex District, and DESE to Discuss School Budget Issues (Groton Senior Center)

12. Upcoming Meetings:

- a. 7/25/2024
- b. 8/8/2024 – Meeting with Cemetery Commission
- c. 8/22/2024

13. Public Comment

Chris Menard questions when the Chapter 90 presentation will take place. Evan Watters states either the 25th of July or the 22nd of August.

Evan Watters spoke with the IT Administrative Assistant, Kara McCarthy, and was provided information about notifications. There is a function to sign up for notification for all Committees and Boards on their cell phone or email.

14. Adjourn

There was a motion to adjourn by Chris Menard, seconded by Jay Simeone. Roll call vote. Dave Passios aye, Tom Gray aye, Jay Simeone aye, Chris Menard aye, Evan Watters aye.

The meeting closed at 9:39 PM.