

Lunenburg Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Bilotta Meeting Room
Lunenburg Town Hall
July 25, 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 7PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Announcements

There were no announcements.

4. Public Comment

There were no public or Committee comments.

5. Finance Director Report

Ezequiel Ayala provided the report under 6e.

6. New Business

- a. Parks Request for Recreation Director Increase in Hours – Possible Vote
Evan Watters says the proposed increase is from 19 hours to 28 hours and will include benefits. This requires approval from the Select Board and the Finance Committee. This would be effective for the remainder of this fiscal year. There will be a discussion with the Interim Town Manager to determine if this will continue into FY 26.

Karin Menard wants to have this increase paid out of the revolving account. The budgeted cost for the increased salary is \$13,338, benefits cost is \$24,424.30, totaling \$37,759.30.

Dave Passios states the Parks Commission realized that the revolving fund that was created by the town meeting for this purpose was not the appropriate revolving fund. Mass General Law Chapter 44 Section 53E ½ was the revolving fund that should have been used. Currently, there is too much money in that account under Mass General Law.

Karin Menard states the revolving account is currently 53D and that allows for the payment of part time salaries. Karin Menard met with Ezequiel Ayala, and they anticipate putting in a warrant article for the

November Town Meeting to move the money from 53D to 53E ½ as this will allow a balance to be carried over.

Dave Passios also has an issue with the job description that includes processing contractor invoices for the construction of Marshall Park. Jay Simeone agrees this is beyond the scope of a recreation director.

There was a motion to approve the increase in hours for the Recreation Director from 19 hours to 28 hours for the remainder of the fiscal year and funding will come from the parks revolving account by Chris Menard, seconded by Jay Simeone. The vote failed 3-3.

Tom Gray and Dave Passios are not in favor and believe this should be completed by the Special Town Meeting to have this done correctly.

- b. Select Board Request for Use of Reserve Funds for Town Manager Search Consultant (\$15,000) – Possible Vote

The Reserve account fund has a total of \$200,000.

The Town Manager has been in contact with Community Paradigm. The estimated cost for a consultant is between 12 to 14 thousand and an additional 1 thousand for advertising. This includes a 14-to-16-week structured process, including vetting and workshops.

There was a motion to approve the request for \$15,000 from the reserve account for the purpose of hiring a consultant for the Town Manager Search Committee by Dave Passios, seconded by Tom Gray. The vote was approved 4-2.

- c. Discussion on New Select Board Policy: “Section 2.13 Public Communications Policy: All written public statements and press releases, unrelated to emergency situations, community events, and community services, must be approved by the Select Board prior to its issuance.”

Chris Menard believes this does not apply across the board or any other elected board. Tom Gray requests the Committee ask for clarification.

- d. Financial Policy “Homework” Designation

The Financial Policy Designation consists of a 100-page document.

Dave Passios questions if this policy being reviewed is going to replace the existing policy and the answer was yes.

Chris Menard briefly reviewed the document and believes this new policy includes a lot more than the current policy.

Evan Watters suggests reaching out to DLS and the Select Board with their inquiries.

Ezequiel Ayala hasn't seen any major changes or additions that would be catastrophic to the department or the town so far.

Evan Watters will reach out to the Town Manager to see if there is anything specific the Finance Committee should key in on.

Evan Watters will add this to the agenda for the next meeting on August 5th to continue the discussion.

e. FY24 Q3 Quarterly Financial Report

Total revenue collected through March 31st was \$43,055,868.80.

The total estimated tax levy for FY 24, net of the overlay, is \$31,493,890.49. This is consistent with previous years and suggests we are on track to meet our annual tax levy projections.

The performance of local receipts has exceeded the annual estimate at \$6,660,338.42.

The total state aid collected is \$8,421,899.78.

Total expenditures through March 31st are \$32,241,213.71.

Chris Menard requests the reports be augmented in the future.

f. FY24 Q3 Summary Trial balance for Special Revenue Funds

Chris Menard questions if there is anything that could be done to positively affect the town's budget situation by funding factors in another way. Ezequiel Ayala stated there are factors such as grants that are not guaranteed every year.

Evan Watters questions why the ARPA funding line is listed as having 3.3 million as a balance. Ezequiel Ayala states there hasn't been much activity for spendings, and funds have been allocated to departments. The funds must be obligated by the end of December, but the town has until 2026 to spend it down.

7. Old Business

a. Town Manager Search Committee – Update

Chris Menard states that the Town Manager Search Committee held a vote to recommend hiring a consultant. A drafted job requisition has been put together. At the next meeting, the Committee will hear from the Town Manager about her thoughts and what should be highlighted in the recruitment process. Additionally, the Committee will be meeting with the potential consulting company, Community Paradigm.

Evan Watters has circulated a YouTube video with the Select Boards interview of Carter Terenzini who may be a candidate for the Interim Town Manager position.

b. Budget Task Force – Update

The Budget Task Force Committee met and identified many towns to be used as comparisons. They will need to be narrowed down in order to start building tables.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 5th at 5 PM.

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

The DESE presentation explained the history of Chapter 70. Many towns shared the same concerns as Lunenburg. Chris Menard pointed out there is a lack of predictability regarding funding.

There was a consensus that the towns need to be more proactive. There is a suggestion for creating a document that reiterates that we are all facing the same challenges. This could be sent to the Finance Committees, School Committees, and Select Boards. Evan Watters states Representative Scarsdale intends to pull all the towns and districts together and expand the conversation.

d. Grant Writing Services – Update – Postponed

e. Consolidation of Services/Departments

i. Cost Analysis Comparison: Town v. School– Postponed

f. Review Budget Process/Suggestions for Improvement– Postponed

8. Minutes

a. 7/11/2024

There was a motion to accept the minute from July 11 by Chris Menard, seconded by Dave Passios. The vote was 4-0-1.

9. Committee Reports

Chris Menard shares that the Capital Planning and the Town Manager Screening Committee will both be meeting on July 31st.

Chris Menard states at the last Capital Planning meeting there was a new member added, Rob Bowen.

10. Topics for Future Meetings

There are no additional topics to add to upcoming agendas.

11. Important Dates

There are no upcoming important dates.

12. Upcoming Meetings:

- a. 8/8/24 – Meeting with CemCom
- b. 8/22/24
- c. 9/12/24

13. Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

Chris Menard states that the last Select Board meeting was contentious. He hopes the members of the Select Board will be able to continue working together.

14. Adjourn

There was a motion to adjourn by Chris Menard, seconded by Jay Simeone.

The meeting closed at 9:30 PM.