

Lunenburg Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Bilotta Meeting Room
Lunenburg Town Hall
September 12, 2024

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

Absent Members: Committee Member Tom Gray

1. Call to order

The meeting opened at 7:03 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Announcements

Evan Watters states that the Finance Appointing Committee met and re-appointed Tom Gray for another 3 years on the Finance Committee. Tiffany Tavares term expired on June 30th, and she is not seeking reappointment. There is a vacancy on the Committee and an opening for a clerk.

4. Public Comment

There were no comments from the public or the Committee.

5. Interim Town Manager Report

Carter Terenzini states there were 4 applications received for the Sewer Commission and there are 3 vacancies.

Below is the budget concerns identified by Carter Terenzini at his start date:

- Trash Contract- This has been resolved and within the budget. Carter Terenzini did advise that the Select Board over the coming years will need to conduct an in-depth study about how to deliver trash services or whether not to deliver those services.

Evan Watters questions if a new contract was signed. Carter Terenzini confirms the contract hasn't been signed but is under final review. There will be no changes in routes and a postcard will be sent to

residents. The company is GW Shaw and Son. This contract is renewable only by the town.

- The new growth is anticipated to exceed the number in the budgetary projections.
- There is \$100,000 of free cash from this year's budget that needs to be spent.

6. Finance Director Report

There was no report from the Finance Director.

7. New Business

a. Inspector of Weights and Measures Budget Deficit – Interim Town Manager

Carter Terenzini states in Massachusetts there are many functions devolved down to the local level. The salary of the Inspector of Weights and Measures was \$3,000 and they have resigned. One of the options is to hire the State of Massachusetts to complete the inspections. This will cost \$10,000 plus or minus depending on the number of services to be inspected. Carter Terenzini would like to defer this discussion for 2 weeks to get a better understanding on the number of inspections.

Evan Watters will add this to the agenda for the next scheduled meeting.

b. MART Taxi & Livery Grant budget Deficit – Interim Town Manager & the Director at the Lunenburg Counsel on Aging, Sue Doherty

The current MART grant expires at the end of September. Carter Terenzini will be requesting \$20,000 at the fall Town Meeting to continue the program. There are about 400 rides a month given to Lunenburg residents. There will be a gap between September 30th and November 30th that is estimated to cost \$5,000.

Sue Doherty states that this program is for everybody in the town including kids and the elderly. To date the ages of the riders have not been tracked.

The MART will go 20 miles out of town in any direction of a client's home and runs 5 days a week from 6:30AM to 10PM.

Sue Doherty has contacted the Executive Office of Elder Affairs about a formula grant where some of that money can be used.

Dave Passios asks where this grant funded program will fall as a line-item next year. Carter Terenzini states it is currently not in the budget, but this may become a warrant under capital and special articles.

Chris Menard questions if people were using this service to get to Nashoba Valley Hospital and inquires with it now being closed are they able to get to Emerson Hospital. Sue Doherty states they will only travel 20 miles from pickup to drop off. Carter Terenzini will reach out to MART and discuss with them since for most residents Emerson Hospital is not within 20 miles.

There was a motion to authorize the transfer of \$5,000 from the reserve fund to the Council on Aging to cover the October and November MART transportation by Dave Passios, seconded by Jean Russell. Roll call vote. Chris Menard aye, Dave Passios aye, Jean Russell aye, Jay Simeone aye, Evan Watters aye.

c. Future Capital Projects w/wo Borrowing

Carter Terenzini will review the Charter in the next couple of weeks and review history and trend lines. He will then discuss with his counterparts to produce a 5-year financial forecast.

Chris Menard questions if there is an estimate on each of the capital funding projects and whether there funded properly. Carter Terenzini believes it's likely that every account is underfunded. Once projects go out to bid there will be a better idea of the accounts.

Evan Watters says a historical forecast for this fiscal year has not been received. The Town Manager was unable to get one completed prior to her departure.

Evan Watters asks what the Committee can do to help with the process. Carter Terenzini spoke to Peter Beardmore and there was a desire to have a better tailored presentation.

Evan Watters provided an anticipated list with deadline dates for capital projects.

d. Review Budget Process/Suggestions for Improvement – Interim Town Manager

Carter Terenzini needs a minimum of 23 days to have a final warrant and report together. The document will need to get printed and be out in the mail 17 days prior to the town meeting.

If the school budget isn't present until sometime in March Carter Terenzini will be unable to present the Committee with a balanced budget.

Currently there are 11 warrant articles:

1. The state has sent \$31,882 in Chapter 70 funding. Schools has requested to receive that funding. The Select Board has asked that it be added as a warrant article and a supplemental appropriation.
2. Prudent investment warrant
3. The State has passed a law about accessory dwelling units. An Amendment needs to be completed to comport with the new state law. This is a zoning amendment from the Planning Board.
4. There is a Zoning amendment related to water protection district work.
5. There is a proposal for a revolving fund for the meal program. This will bring the program in line with the state standards.
6. There is a proposal by the Parks Department for a revolving fund. This would convert 53d to 53e1/2.
7. The Board of Assessors have a warrant article relating to veteran exemptions 17d.
8. There is an additional article from the Board of Assessor's relating to the elderly exemption 41c.
9. Personnel bylaws warrant from the School
10. Salary Administration Plan from the School
11. The Parks Commission requested an article to borrow a sum of money for the purposes of funding all remaining costs of design and construction of Marshall Park.

i. Budget Presentation Template

Evan Watters sent a template to the Committee for the budget presentation. A decision needs to be provided to Carter Terenzini by October 1st to be given to department heads.

The template is as follows:

Slide 1: Title slide

Slide 2: Department overview including mission statement, key services provided, staffing overview, and organizational chart

Slide 3: Summary of the previous year's budget

Slide 4 & 5: Proposed target budget for upcoming year

Slide 6 & 7: Proposed level services and needs based budget for the upcoming year

Slide 8: Personnel costs

Slide 9: Operating expenses

Slide 10: Capital expenses

Slide 11: Justification for cost increases

Slide 12: Budget efficiencies

Slide 13: Impact of not fully funding the level service/needs-based budget

Slide 14: Revenue sources

Slide 15: Department goals for the coming year

Slide 16: Challenges in the upcoming year

8. Prudent Investment Warrant Article Discussion – Town Finance Director

Ezequiel Ayala confirms he is planning on putting this article forward. He states this will not affect the stabilization funds and will only affect the trust funds.

9. Split Tax Rate Presentation/Discussion

Evan Watters provided a presentation and comparison study with the town of Maynard. There were a lot of similarities in trends, averages, and value. The major difference was in the tax levy and capacity. Evan Watters is planning to provide the Budget Task Force with the presentation within the next week. The Task Force will determine whether or not a split tax rate is reasonably prudent to discuss with the Select Board.

g. DLS Financial Policy Manual Draft

Evan Watters plans to review and compare our current manual and see if there are any recommendations. Carter Terenzini would like the Committees comments.

8. Old Business

a. Town Manager Search Committee – Update

Chris Menard states that there is a group that the Committee interviewed that is now under contract. Currently, they are interviewing a bunch of people in town to get an idea of the character of the town. This will be used as an assessment for potential candidates. The next meeting is scheduled for the first Monday in October. There will be an executive session held to narrow down candidates, followed by interviews. There will be a final round of interviews with 2-4 candidates. A recommendation for salary will be set in the next coming weeks.

b. Budget Task Force – Update

There were no updates provided.

c. Grant Writing Services – Update

There were no updates provided.

d. Consolidation of Services/Departments

There were no discussions related to this topic.

9. Minutes

The approval of minutes were postponed.

10. Committee Reports

This topic was skipped for this meeting

11. Topics for Future Meetings

There are no additional topics to add to future agendas.

12. Important Dates

a. 9/16/24 – Special Town Meeting Warrant Closes @ 5p

b. 9/20/24 – MMA Capital Planning Webinar, 12p-1:15p

c. 11/2/24 – MMA ATFC Annual Meeting, 9a-2:15p @ Sharon Community Center

d. 11/12/24 – Special Town Meeting, 5p @ LMHS

13. Upcoming Meetings:

a. 9/26/24

b. 10/10/24

14. Public Comment

Public Comment- There were no comments from the public.

Board Comment- Dave Passios states that Green Communities met, and they are actively pursuing the mini split phase 2. The Committee anticipates this grant being submitted for the October grant round.

15. Adjourn

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

The meeting closed at 10:31 PM.