

Lunenburg Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Bilotta Meeting Room
Lunenburg Town Hall
September 26, 2024

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

Absent Members: Vice Chair Chris Menard, Committee Member Tom Gray

1. Call to Order

The meeting opened at 7:20 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Announcements

Dave Passios states this will be his last Finance Committee meeting for the Town of Lunenburg as he will no longer be a Lunenburg resident. He will remain on the Green Communities through the next grant round as the Charter and Massachusetts General law allows. Evan Watters and Jay Simeone thanked Dave Passios for his contributions to the town.

Evan Watters states with Dave Passios leaving and Tiffaney Tavares leaving after her term the committee is down to 5 members. The Committee generally is a board of 7 members and there needs to be 4 members present to have a quorum. If there is any interest volunteer forms will be on the website.

Evan Watters shared that the food pantry had a ribbon cutting ceremony today for their new space. They have moved out of the kitchen and into the full cafeteria.

The second annual Town Official Meet and Greet is currently underway and will conclude in about an hour.

The PTO reached out to share that they have updated their products for the coming year and removed a portion of the sports aspect.

4. Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

5. Finance Director Report

Ezequiel Ayala wasn't available for the meeting.

6. New Business

a. Special Town Meeting Warrant Summary

Evan Watters, the town moderator, the interim town manager Carter Terenzini, and occasionally the Select Board have had discussion about the formalities of the warrant articles. Carter Terenzini sent over some options that other towns have used to review. They anticipate having the usual verbiage of the actual article, legal ease, and a bolded summary. Additionally, the votes from the Select Board and the Finance Committee will be displayed. There will be a new option to add an additional comment.

Jay Simeone suggests adding a summary of what a “no” vote and “yes” vote would mean consequence wise.

The drafted warrants were sent off to Town Council yesterday and anticipate having them back by October 1st. The draft warrants will go to the Select Board on October 4th. The Finance Committees final report is due October 17th. The documents need to go to the printer by October 18th and be mailed out by October 25th.

b. DLS Financial Policy Manual Draft

Evan Watters will reach out to Carter Terenzini, Ezequiel Ayala and Caesar Nuzzolo to see where they stand on this topic.

The Interim Town Manager has confirmed that he would appreciate the Finance Committee’s opinion.

7. Old Business

a. Budget Presentation Template

Dave Passios suggests showing a recommended department budget or dollar amount developed by department heads based on what the town manager suggests is the budget. Then they are to present what they were strongly pushing for above the Town Managers targeted budget.

The Finance Committee is requesting all spreadsheets, and anything budget related be provided the Committee at least 7 days in advance of their scheduled presentation. Also, the Committee is requesting 5 to 7 years of detailed budgeting documents.

There was a motion to approve the edited budget presentation template by Dave Passios, seconded by Jean Russell. Roll call vote. Jay Simeone aye, Dave Passios aye, Jean Russell aye, Evan Watters aye.

Evan Watters will provide the interim town manager a copy to review.

b. MART Taxi & Livery Grant Update

There was a question at a prior meeting about whether a Lunenburg resident would be allowed to be transported to Emerson hospital as it is outside of the

20-mile radius. Evan Watters confirmed this has been approved. MART is currently unsure of what the cost would be but anticipate having an estimate by Special Town Meeting.

c. Split Tax Rate Presentation/Discussion

If the commercial industrial and personal property percentage (CIP) is too low it will drive businesses out of town. There aren't many communities in Massachusetts that have a split tax rate with CIP value percentage under 15%. The comparison between Lunenburg and Maynard and the CIP rates over 20 years has been similar.

d. Town Manager Search Committee – Update

There were no updates from the Committee.

e. Budget Task Force – Update

Evan Watters provided his presentation to the Budget Task Force.

f. Grant Writing Services – Update

Evan Watters is very worried that by annual town meeting there will still be \$50,000 appropriated for grant writing services and not a single person has inquired. The issue seems to be that there are no templates, list of service providers, or contact information.

Dave Passios questions if Evan Watters would be able to execute the first phase to get this started. Evan Watters has reached out to a grant writing service company in Massachusetts with no response. He will reach out again and see if they would be willing to come in and sit down with department heads and the Finance Committee for a discussion.

g. Consolidation of Services/Departments

Dave Passios believes this would be a consolidation and not a money saver. There are other towns in this state that do it will no problem and function well.

The consensus is that there are staffing issues and problems keeping up with the needs.

8. Minutes

There were no minutes to review and approve.

9. Committee Reports

Dave Passios states that Green Communities and the schools are pushing forward with submitting a grant application in the next couple of weeks. This grant is in regards to the mini split phase 2 project for the primary school. Their next scheduled meeting is the first week in October.

10. Topics for Future Meetings

There are no additional topics to be added to future agendas.

11. Important Dates

- a. 11/2/24 – MMA ATFC Annual Meeting, 9a-2:15p @ Sharon Community Center
- b. 11/12/24 – Special Town Meeting, 5p @LMHS

12. Upcoming Meetings:

- a. 10/10/24
- b. 10/24/24
- c. 11/7/24

13. Public Comment

Dave Passios shares that the Lunenburg High School Alumni Association is sponsoring the annual alumni lunch on October 20th at the Bull Run Restaurant. If anyone is interested in obtaining tickets they can reach out to the Alumni Association.

14. Adjourn

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

The meeting closed at 10:25 PM.