

Town of Sterling
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
May 13, 2021
Zoom

Finance Committee meeting called to order by Todd Chapman at 6:00pm

Fincom Attendees: Todd Chapman, Mary Cliett, Chris Paquette, George Handy Ezequiel Ayala
Also Attending: Fred Aponte, Town Accountant, Kellie Hebert, Town Administrator, Valerie Handy, Recording Secretary for Fincom and CBC.

Meeting started with a recap and summary of issues affecting the town. Cherry Sheet State Revenue has increased \$36K. Tax Levy of \$21,135,680 required to be raised by real estate taxes. A discussion followed regarding the definition of Tax Levy and Maximum Tax Levy. George Handy volunteered to send out links to the members from the Division of Local Services and a DLS seminar and workshop of Levy Limits and Proposition of 2 ½.

Todd Chapman shared a document showing how since FY17 average taxes have gone up. In FY19 the average taxes were \$5916. In FY20 taxes increased 3.26% to \$6109. In FY21 they increased 2.16% to \$6241. The estimated increase for FY22 is 3.68% if all spending under consideration is passed, with an estimated average tax bill of \$6,470 for the average single family home.

Discussion then followed on Omnibus Budget. Overall, the Budget increased 2.98% if all spending under consideration is passed (this includes the town operations, schools, land trust and firefighters).

The Committee then reviewed changes to the budget since our last review. Board of Health wages increased \$16,852., increase of 13.47%. This was due to the addition of one-half salaried position, position hours increase from 19 to 32 and COVID reimbursement wages. It was noted that the BOH wages line went from zero in 2020 to \$80K in 2022.

(Pg.2) DPW trash pickup costs decreased \$36k.

(Pg.3) Fire/EMT \$62,286 has been pulled out this part of the budget and added at the end.

(Pg.4) No changes

(Pg.5) Police budget increase is now 1.17%, excluding the new patrol officer position which was moved to the end of the budget. Including this position the Police budget shows a 3.01% increase over the prior year.

Planning Budget wage increase by \$15,250 to \$37,260. Due to part-time 19 hours increasing to 32 hours (Pg.7) Town Administrator- Increase \$7,500 (senior tax work off)

Town Clerk – Decrease \$2,216 since our prior review. Represents 4.5% decrease from prior year.

(Pg.8) No changes

Vote on to Recommend Approval Warrant Article 1 Transfer of Funds to pay Bills of Prior Fiscal Year \$665: Motion by Mary Cliett, 2nd by Chris Paquette. Fincom roll call vote unanimously supported

Vote to Recommend Approval Article 2 – Snow and Ice Deficit; Transfer from Free Cash \$57,892 to Snow and Ice Account. Motion by George Handy, 2nd Chris Paquette. Roll call vote unanimously supported.

Vote to Recommend Approval Warrant Article 3 Compensation for Elected Officers:

Compensation unchanged from last year. Motion made by Ezequiel Ayala, 2nd by Chris Paquette. Fincom roll call vote unanimously supported.

Vote to Recommend Approval Warrant Article 4 Compensation to Municipal Light Board:

Unchanged from last year. Motion by George Handy, 2nd by Chris Paquette. Fincom Roll call vote unanimously supported.

Vote to Recommend Approval Warrant Article 5 Wachusett Greenways Sterling Trust \$2,700:

Annual appropriations. Motion by Chris Paquette, 2nd by George Handy. Fincom roll call vote unanimously supported.

Vote to Recommend Approval Warrant Article 6 East Lake Waushacum Study

Motion by George Handy, 2nd by Chris Paquette. Fincom roll call vote unanimously supported.

Vote to Recommend Approval Treatment & 7A Water Enterprise Transfer from Retained Earnings to General Fund (\$75,430): Motion by George Handy, 2nd by Chris Paquette. Fincom

roll call vote unanimously supported.

Deferred to Next Meeting New Article 7B; MS4 Stormwater Permit Compliance.

Deferred - Vote to Approve Warrant Article 8 Purchase of Water Meters \$350K: Select board has deferred voting on this ongoing project. Fincom will discuss at a future meeting.

Vote to Recommend Approval of Warrant Article 9 Town Operating Budget amount

\$11,455,429: Motion by Chris Paquette, 2nd by Mary Cliett, Fincom roll call vote: Handy- Abstain, Chapman-Aye, Paquette-Aye, Cliett-Aye, Ayala- Abstain

Vote To Recommend Article 10 Wachusett Regional School Board Assessment \$12,341,971,

Article 11 Montachusett Regional School Board Assessment \$939,069. Committee voted unanimously to recommend both school budgets.

Vote to Recommend Article 12 FY22 Water Operating Budget-Water Enterprise Fund

\$1,017,986. Motion to recommend made by George Handy and 2nd by Chris Paquette. Roll call vote unanimously supported.

Deferred - Article 13 Town Common Revitalization Transfers. Discussion deferred.

Vote to Recommend Approval Article 14 Roadway/sidewalk repairs \$283,250. This will not include funds to repair culverts. Vote of 2/3 needed at Town Meeting. Move to approve made by George Handy, 2nd by Mary Cliett, Todd Chapman – Aye, Chris Paquette – Aye, Ezequiel Ayala – Abstain, Handy-Aye, Cliett-Aye.

Vote to Recommend Approval Article 15- Capital Budget Funding from Free Cash \$470,300

Various projects already recommended by Fincom and Capital Budget Committee i.e. Fire, DPW, Butterick, Old Town Hall, Chocksett Cemetery and Sterling School House. Motion to

approve made by George Handy and 2nd by Chris Paquette. Roll call vote unanimously supported.

Vote to Recommend Approval Article 16 Fire Department & DPW Major Equipment Items \$775,062. This will require a 2/3 vote at Town Meeting. Vote to recommend by George Handy, 2nd by Ezequiel Ayala. Roll call vote unanimously supported.

Fincom comment not needed on Article 17 Personnel Bylaws

Vote to Recommend Approval Article 18 Senior Volunteer Tax Work-off Program

Authorization. Money is in budget. Motion to approve made by George Handy and 2nd by Chris Paquette. Roll call vote unanimously supported.

Vote to Recommend Approval Article 19 Stabilization of Budget for Compensated Employee Absences \$50K. Motion to approve made by Chris Paquette and 2nd by George Handy. Fin com roll call vote unanimously supported.

Vote to Recommend Approval Article 20 Centralization of Records, Human Resource

Personnel Records Cloud Based Service \$50K. Motion to approve made by Chris Paquette, 2nd by Ezequiel Ayala. Roll call vote unanimously supported.

Vote to Recommend Approval Article 21 One- time transfer of \$25K for Job Description Classification Study. Needed every few years. Motion made to recommend by George Handy and 2nd by Ezequiel Ayala. Roll call vote unanimously supported.

Vote to Recommend Approval Article 22 – Salary Wage Adjustment Funds to be set aside based on pay equity results \$25K. Motion to recommend made by George Handy and 2nd by Ezequiel Ayala. Roll call vote unanimously supported.

Fincom vote to Recommend Approval Article 23 Hiring of New Police Officer. Motion to recommend made by George Handy and 2nd by Chris Paquette. Roll call vote unanimously supported.

Vote on Article 24 New Firefighter/EMT: Select board does not recommend. Fincom vote to recommend made by Ezequiel Ayala , 2nd by Mary Cliett. Roll call vote: Handy - Nay, Paquette - Nay, Chapman - Aye, Cliett - Aye, Ayala - Aye. Recommended motion carries.

Vote to Recommend Approval Article 25 Transfer from Free Cash to Stabilization Fund \$75K. Motion by Chris Paquette and 2nd by George Handy. Roll call vote unanimously supported.

Vote to Recommend Approval Article 26 Transfer from Free Cash to OPEB Stabilization Fund \$150K. Motion by Chris Paquette, 2nd by Ezequiel Ayala. Roll call vote Handy – Nay, Paquette - Aye, Chapman – Aye, Cliett - Aye, Ayala – Aye.

Recommended that Finance Committee Not Review Articles 27 through Article 46. These articles do not have a direct impact on the town's budget and are historically not subject to Fincom review.

Vote to Approve Article 47 New Playground at Houghton School Funding \$130K from Free Cash. Motion made by George Handy, 2nd by Ezequiel Ayala. Roll Call Vote unanimously supported.

Previously Recommended by Finance Committee Article 48 Citizen Petition to Separate Warrant Articles Out in the Budget.

Previously Not Recommended by Finance Committee Article 49 Citizen Petition to Separate Capital Requests into Discrete (Warrant) Components.

Finance Committee does not take a position on Article 50 Citizens Petition to Eliminate the Public Works Board at this time.

Next Finance Committee Meeting: Thursday May 20, 2021 at 6:00pm

Motion to Adjourn Finance Committee Meeting at 7:41PM. Motion made by George Handy, 2nd by Mary Cliett. Roll call vote unanimously supported.