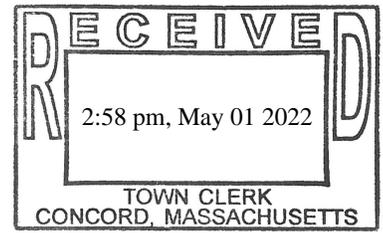


Town of Concord
Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes – February 24, 2022



Present: Chris Reynolds (Chair), John Hickling, Dee Ortner, Amrith Kumar, Mary Hartman, Peggy Briggs, Ray Andrews, Eric Dahlberg, Lois Wasoff, Brian Taylor, Dean Banfield, Kathy Cuocolo, Don Kupka, Parashar Patel

Absent: Greg Guarriello

Others Present: Kerry Lafleur

Open Meeting:

1. Minutes. Ms. Reynolds called the meeting to order at 7:07pm with a roll call vote. The meeting was held via Zoom using the Webinar format, and broadcast via MMN. The Chair noted that the meeting was being recorded via MMN and will be available through YouTube.

Motion to approve minutes April 22, 2021.

VOTE:

Affirmative: Chris Reynolds, John Hickling, Amrith Kumar, Mary Hartman, Peggy Briggs, Ray Andrews, Lois Wasoff, Greg Guarriello, Brian Taylor, Dean Banfield, Kathy Cuocolo, Parashar Patel

Abstain: Dee Ortner, Eric Dahlberg, Don Kupka

2. Chair's Comments and Correspondence. The Chair introduced new member, Don Kupka. Other topics to be discussed at this meeting were described and will be reviewed in detail. Correspondence was received from the author of Article 46 and will be discussed later in the evening with the author, Philip Posner. Chair of the CPC, Diane Proctor, will be available for questions pertaining to Article 26 later in the evening.

3. Update: FY23 Guidelines. The guidelines from last Fall as well as preliminary budget submissions from the Town and the schools were presented. Proposed final guidelines as of December 15, 2021 were then presented with the Town showing a 3.56% increase, CPS with a 2.70% increase, and CCHS with a 3.25% increase.

Next, the proposed spending by the Town and schools were presented as they relate to current F2023 guidelines. The Town came in above the final guideline due to increased spending to meet contractual obligations and reinvigorated Tier 1 Capital spending budget of \$1.509 million. However, the Town will meet its guideline due to a transfer from the current year's budget surplus of \$600,000, which reflects an underspending in personnel vacancies in the FY22 budget.

The CPS budget shows a gap, or overage, of \$312,000 (down from \$468,000) and the administration is still working on lowering its costs. The CCHS came in approximately \$173,000 below the final guideline primarily due to increased revenue from the State and other sources.

The proposed budget spending based on currently revised numbers indicates the following increases between FY22 and FY23: a 6.66% increase by the Town; 3.45% for CPS; and, 3.06% for CCHS that represents a combined total increase of 4.38%.

4. Update: ARPA. Ms. Lafleur updated the Committee with the following information. The Select Board held two meetings regarding ARPA during which suggested projects for funding were defined. Concord has been allocated \$5.6 million in ARPA funding, half of which the Town has received, and the remaining half will be received in the next fiscal year. Due to Concord's small size and the amount of funding received, the ARPA funds can be called "Lost Revenue", to aid in the recovery of the Town, its businesses, etc. This will allow the funding to be spent without restriction, similar to money spent from the Town's free cash account. The Select Board decided to spend 25% over the four fiscal years starting with FY22. The Select Board asked staff to review proposals discussed during their January and February meetings and submit findings for further consideration to the Select Board at future meetings. Example suggestions going forward may include the funding for a full-time transportation planner as well as assistance for Concord's business community. Funding of premium pay for police and fire protection also is being considered. While it is too late to vet proposals for FY22 and FY23 through the budget process, ARPA project spending for FY24 and FY25 will have greater visibility and access as projects will flow through the annual budget planning process. All funding must be legally obligated by December 31, 2024 and spent by December 31, 2026. The Affordable Housing Trust has asked for \$500,000 from ARPA this year rather than from free cash.

Committee members expressed concerns about spending funds for personnel (a recurring cost) rather than for one-time projects. A regulatory means exists for the Town to request support for fulfilling reporting requirements, should the need occur. Ms. Lafleur mentioned that numerous regional towns are focusing on one major infrastructure project. The use of funds for new school construction, existing capital planning projects and similar Town needs were discussed.

5. Public Meeting Hearing Calendar/Review of Process. The calendar and dates for Finance Committee Hearings were reviewed. Meetings will be in-person (preferred) and zoom. After each Hearing, the Finance Committee will conduct its deliberations and recommendations.

6. Discussion: ATM Warrant Articles, 9-14, 24-29, 46; other articles with financial impact. Article 26 was taken out of order for discussion. Item G, Junction Village Open Space was discussed with Diane Proctor, CPC Chair. The costs and need for this project were examined. Ms. Proctor explained the historical significance of the land as well as timing and access to equipment use. Other questions focused on the timing of this project and disruption if the building project lagged behind the landscaping project. Item J, Recreation Facilities Strategic Plan, will look only at land use and not buildings. Item F, Assabet River Bluff Preservation Project, was appraised at \$3.2 million, and does not include support for the construction of affordable housing. Questions about the number of affordable housing units, density and impacts to the environment were discussed. Discussion of Article 25 focused on the addition of \$500,000 for funding the purchase of the land for the Assabet River Bluff Preservation Project, if needed.

Article 46: Mr. Posner spoke about the need of funds for a feasibility study of the Reformatory Branch Trail. Mr. Posner outlined the need for this project, improvements required for the trail, and the need for a public study to improve conditions. Accessibility was emphasized. The State-funded construction of this trail in Bedford will begin within two years and end at the town line with Concord. Ms. Lafleur stated that a \$75,000 appropriation for trail usage currently exists, has not been expended, but is not currently available for this project. Mr. Posner has requested that his initiative be funded through his article at Town Meeting. The amount of funding stated in the Article was described as a minimum for this feasibility study. If the Article is not approved, If Article 46 does not pass, Mr. Posner stated that he would return next year and try to have the project folded into the Town budget

Article 10: The Capital Improvement and Debt Plan was described. This year pavement improvements will amount to \$2 million in the Tier 2 (borrowed funds) list. The Keyes Road roof unexpectedly needed replacement and funding was advanced to FY23. Tier 1 funding totals slightly more than \$1.5 million. Funding for park projects at \$350,000 will be winding down after the FY23 year. A bathroom project at Rideout is scheduled for FY24. Additional funding beyond these park projects will wait until the Parks Master Plan has been completed. The need for increased spending for road infrastructure will be focused on next year. Questions about capital items will be further detailed at the Hearing.

Articles 11 & 12: no questions

Articles 13 & 14: The addition of an advisor under Article 14 is a new request.

Article 15: Waived.

Article 24: To be funded through ARPA.

Article 27: Request for establishing a revolving fund for the Visitor Center. The estimate is \$70,000. This must be approved at Town Meeting before an appropriation can be funded. Funding for economic vitality personnel runs through the general fund.

Article 28: The appropriation for all revolving funds is in this Article.

Article 29: Parking meter appropriation of not to exceed \$400,000 from parking meter receipts. Funds can be used fairly broadly for transportation or parking meters.

7. Preparation for the 2022 Finance Committee Report. Lois Wasoff presented an outline for the revamped report. Any issues with the format should be directed to Chair Reynolds or Ms. Wasoff. Specific topics, such as the stabilization fund, will be highlighted in the Report. Ms. Lafleur will be the Town contact for developing the report. The Finance Committee members responsible for certain portions or write-ups will be notified. The report will be sent out in mid-April. Any input should be sent to Lois Wasoff.

8. Observer Reports. None.

9. Public Comment. Ellen Quackenbush commented on the approach being recommended by Mr. Posner, author of Article 46. Rather than a feasibility study, Ms. Quackenbush suggested a needs assessment to establish a current picture of the trail instead of the feasibility study that presupposes a solution.

Ned Perry strongly suggested that the members of the Finance Committee vigorously insert themselves in the discussions on ARPA-funded projects, and not to restrict themselves to the

second half (FY24 & FY25) of the project funding process. Mr. Perry complimented the members for their robust due diligence and positive attitude in conducting the work of the Committee.

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:20pm.

VOTE:

Affirmative: All members voted in the affirmative.