

TOWN OF BEDFORD FINANCE COMMITTEE

September 14, 2023

Minutes

Finance Committee Members in attendance: Ben Thomas, Chair, Abigail Seibert, Vice Chair, Karen Dunn, Clerk, Tom Rowan, Mark Bailey, George Lee, and Philip Prince

Others in attendance: David Castellarin, (Finance Director),

Chair Thomas calls the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Calls the Roll of Committee Members in attendance.

I. REGULAR BUSINESS

1. Public Comment

None.

2. Review/Approve Minutes

Chair Thomas asks for any comments on the Minutes for September 7, 2023.

Motion to approve the Minutes for September 7, 2023 by Member Bailey.

Second by Member Dunn

Roll call of members in attendance.

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion carries

3. FY25 Model and Guideline Letter Vote

Mr. Castellarin notes the FY25 Model 09-14-23(2) and the copy of the FY24 Guideline Letter as provided in the Dropbox.

Chair Thomas opens a general discussion on how to proceed to decide what the percentage number should be on the FY25 Guideline Letter. Provides discussion of various possible percentages to be used. Also discusses various means to use to reach a consensus for the Guideline Letter.

Chair Thomas suggests starting with discussing the unused tax levy. Provides discussion of what makes up the unused tax levy and what the term actually means.

Mr. Castellarin provides discussion of how the unused tax levy is determined.

Member Dunn suggests that the Guideline discussion should not start with discussing unused tax levy.

Chair Thomas discusses why he feels that it would be more advantageous to begin Guideline discussion with a discussion of the unused tax levy.

Member Prince discusses the new growth number and suggests it seems conservative.

Mr. Castellarin discusses what goes into the new growth number and how that number is eventually determined.

Chair Thomas notes that the number on the present Model is only a rough estimate at this time. Also notes that at this point generally all the numbers used will be conservative.

Mr. Castellarin agrees on the need to be conservative. The final numbers for the preceding year are no guaranty that the following year will meet or exceed those numbers.

Member Seibert asks Mr. Castellarin for his opinion on how this process should be done.

Mr. Castellarin discusses various methods for doing this.

Member Bailey provides his thoughts on the process and notes his agreement on the need to be conservative.

Mr. Castellarin provides a discussion of various numbers in the Model at this point and how they were determined at this early stage in the process. Also discusses various unusual expenses which would involve the tax levy adjustment.

Chair Thomas provides a historical summary of past years for use as a lesson.

Member Bailey asks if we set the Schools and Town Guideline increase to 3.5, where does that take us with respect to the Net Available.

Chair Thomas provides a historical discussion of the schools' numbers in prior years

Member Prince discusses the potential for setting Schools to 3.5% and providing all other Departments and Boards also with 3.5%.

Chair Thomas also discusses this approach. Also notes that he believes that most of the Boards and Departments currently believe that the Guideline Letter numbers will be 3.5 and 3.5.

Chair Thomas discusses why he believes that 3.5 and 3.5 is the right way to go. He notes that total number is about what the Town will take in for income. He also notes it will keep unused tax levy where it should be.

Chair Thomas also notes that he believes that many of the Department and Board budgets will come in right at 3.5% if that is our number for the Guideline Letter.

Member Bailey States that he is satisfied with the discussion and suggests a vote.

Member Bailey moves to approve 3.5% for the Schools and 3.5% for all other Departments and Boards with budgets for the Guideline Letter.

Second by Member Dunn

Member Seibert discusses this decision and agrees it should work well.

Roll call of members in attendance.

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion carries.

Mr. Castellarin notes that he will now be able to begin scheduling the various presentations.

Mr. Castellarin also states he will prepare a draft of the Guideline Letter and circulate it.

4. STM Draft Warrant Review/Votes

Chair Thomas moves to a discussion of the Draft Special Town Meeting Articles. Discusses the usual process for the Finance Committee to review each Article and to vote on each.

Article 1 Debate

Chair Thomas notes this is a standard initial Article and usually requires no discussion.

Motion to Approve by Member Prince

Second by Member Bailey

Roll call of Members in attendance

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion carries

Article 2 Community Preservation Surcharge

General discussion by Members who agree to invite someone from Community Preservation to provide a presentation to this Committee. No vote.

Article 3 Supplemental FY2024 Appropriation

General discussion by Members. Same decision as for Article 2.

Article 4 Appropriate Funds for Bedford Police Officers Association Collective Bargaining Agreement FY2024-FY2026

No decision needed at this time.

Article 5 Civil Service Changes= =Removing Patrol Officers From Civil Service System

No decision needed at this time.

Article 6 Civil Service Changes – Age Limits

No decision needed at this time.

Article 7 Acceptance – Accessible Parking Tickets

General discussion of handicapped parking violation fines.

Motion to Approve by Member Prince

Second by Member Bailey

Roll call of Members in attendance

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion carries

Article 8 Property Tax Reduction for Elderly and Veteran Volunteers

Motion to Approve by Member Prince

Second by Member Bailey

Roll call of Members in attendance

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion carries

Article 9 Transfer and Appropriation of Sewer Special Revenue Fund Balance

Motion to Approve by Member Prince

Second by Member Bailey

Roll call of Members in attendance

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion carries

Article 10 General Bylaw Amendment – Article 64 – Tree Protection and Preservation Bylaw

General discussion. No action taken at this time.

Article 11 General Bylaw Amendment – Article 46 – Streets, Sidewalks and Public Property

General discussion. There will be someone coming in to make a presentation to the Committee.

No action taken

Article 12 General Bylaw Amendment – Article 52 – Large Meter Replacements

General discussion. There will be someone coming in to make a presentation to the Committee.

No action taken

Article 13 Appropriation of Opioid Settlement Funds Received from the State Settlement Fund

Motion to Approve by Member Prince

Second by Member Bailey

Roll call of Members in attendance

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion carries

Article 14 General Bylaw Amendment – Municipal Opt-in Specialized Energy Code

General discussion. There will be someone coming in to make a presentation to the Committee.

No action taken

5. Future Meetings

Chair Thomas reviews the listing of future Committee Meetings. Also discusses need for Committee meeting next week, September 21.

Members agree to September 21 meeting.

II. RECURRING BUSINESS

1. Meetings Attended

Member Seibert discusses attendance at School Committee meeting. General discussion of enrollment issues, new teachers for migrant families, state subsidy for this.

Member Lee discusses attendance at Library Trustees meeting. General discussion of HVAC issues and needed additional funds with expected timing.

Chair Thomas discusses attendance at Select Board meeting. General discussion of Special Town Meeting Warrant.

Chair Thomas expresses his thanks to all that participated here tonight.

Chair Thomas notes the potential for members to attend the Massachusetts Municipal Association meeting. Suggests MMA.org for further information.

Chair Thomas calls for a motion to adjourn.

Member Bailey moves to adjourn.

Second by Member Prince

Roll call of Members in attendance.

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion carries

Time: 9:15 pm

John B. Connarton
Recording Secretary

DOCUMENT LIST

Agenda for September 14, 2023 Meeting

Minutes for September 7, 2023 Meeting

Finance Committee 2023-2024 Meeting Schedule

Finance Committee Members List 2023

FY25 Model – 09-14-23(2)

Draft Special Town Meeting Warrant

December 2, 2022 Budget Guideline Letter

