

**Finance Oversight Committee Meeting May 18,2021**  
**Minutes**

Present: James Broderick, Chair, Christine Saulnier, Kathleen Hill, Thomas O'Connor, Richard Freccero, Michael Kane (ex-officio).

The meeting was held by virtual participation (Zoom) and was called to order by Jim Broderick at 3:31pm

The first item of business was the approval of minutes. Kathy moved to approve the May 12, 2021 minutes, seconded by Chris. Voting YES were Broderick, Saulnier, Freccero, and O'Connor and Hill. Rich moved to approve the May 13, 2021 minutes, seconded by Tom. Voting YES were Broderick, Saulnier, Freccero, O'Connor and Hill.

Jim began by returning to the matter of whether a Town Council can legally increase any amounts in the Town Manager's Budget.

- Kathy gave an overview of M.G.L. Chapter 44, §32-33.
- Tom referenced Article 2, Section 5 in the Charter authorizing sub-committees.
- Chris noted that Watertown, MA wrote specific language into its Charter giving the Council the ability to increase spending amounts above the manager's recommendation. She suggested our Town Council undertake a review and consider a similar approach. Jim noted that he will forward that suggestion along to the council president.

Jim mentioned that in the Manager's recommended budget the mill rate would be \$21.20. With the FOC's recommended decreases in police, fire, and school department appropriations, the mill rate would stand at \$21.01, five cents less than the current FY21 rate of \$21.06.

Returning to a final review of remaining business in various accounts, the following actions were taken:

- Account 429 Utilities funded as requested at \$1,069,300. Motion by Tom, seconded by Chris, voting YES, Broderick, Saulnier, Freccero, Hill, O'Connor.
- Under Capital Projects
  - Town Hall and Police generators to be grant funded. Motion by Rich, seconded by Chris, voting YES were Broderick, Saulnier, Freccero, O'Connor, Hill.
  - Heritage Park Design- No Recommendation
  - Sidewalks- motion to undertake the larger \$1.2 million projected to be bonded and completed over two years by Tom, seconded by Kathy. Voting YES Broderick, Freccero, Hill, O'Connor. Voting NO, Saulnier.
- Under Other Accounts
  - 910 Payroll Taxes- No action taken, leave as is.
  - 912 Workers' Comp and 914 Health and Life Insurance fund as recommended, motion by Chris, seconded by Rich. Voting YES Hill, Freccero, O'Connor, Broderick, Saulnier.
  - Retirement Assessment-Chris feels this account as well as OPEB, and Stabilization are underfunded, and a recommendation sent to the Manager outlining the FOC's concerns. Rich moved to fund as is for now, seconded by Chris. Voting YES were Saulnier, Freccero, Broderick, O'Connor, and Hill.

Jim gave a brief snapshot of the known Free Cash Account. Current balance is \$1,613,308. He also mentioned that the recent emergency approval by the Council of \$200,000 for an IT system failure (originally planned for FY22 Capital Projects) was likely to be mitigated by end of year turn backs from departments.

Chris stated the FOC's need to be mindful of the levy limit imposed by state law and the importance of being as stringent and conservative as possible to keep the move toward the levy (\$25.00/thousand) a 'slow crawl'. FY23 will bring a full town revaluation that will impact all homeowners. Tom re-iterated the plan to be purposefully conservative. Jim noted that overall Reserve Balances totaled approximately \$4,878,058 and is at 7.6%. This figure is within the recommended 5%-10% range.

Final discussion continued around the format for the FOC presentation to the Council on May 25 that will occur within the public hearing. Another meeting was scheduled for May 24, 2021 at 1:30pm to make any last-minute adjustments to the report. Chris concluded today's discussion by offering some remarks about the budget process; (1) the Charter allows for the appointment of committees, (2) all decisions made by the FOC were calculated against known data, (3) no one on the FOC has used the words '**financial crisis**' in the course of budget development, and (4) the FOC has a responsibility to be cautious when carrying out its charge from the Council.

Chris made a motion to adjourn seconded by Rich. Voting YES to adjourn were Hill, O'Connor, Broderick, Saulnier, and Freccero. The meeting adjourned at 4:43pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathleen Hill,