

**Finance Committee Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 31, 2025, at 5:00 pm
Bellingham Municipal Center
Arcand Meeting Room**

Finance Committee Members Present: J. Allam (Chairman), J. Collamati (Vice-Chairman), K. Keppler, J. Kuzmeskas, B. Boyd

Finance Committee Members Absent: All Members Present

Meeting Commenced: J. Allam called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm

J. Collamati made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 20, 2024, Finance Committee Meeting, as submitted. K. Keppler seconded. Approved 4/0.

Public Hearing: Chief Miller and Deputy Provost from the Fire Department were present to give a brief summary on the FY26 Fire Department Budget.

The Fire Department has a 2.07% increase in the Salary portion of the Budget, and a 2.39% increase in the total Fire Department Budget for FY26. The number of employees is not increasing.

Dues and Memberships funds are used to cover multiple items, which includes all payments to the Fire Chief's Association, Fire Prevention Association, Norfolk County dues, radio dues, the defib monitoring company that has to come into maintenance, conventions, as well as covering a lot of contractual items from outside vendors.

Motor Vehicle Maintenance expenses have gone down due to some of the older equipment being replaced. This anticipates the newer equipment won't need to be repaired as much and would decrease some of the maintenance needs.

J. Collamati made a motion to recommend the Fire Department FY26 Accounts, in the amount of \$5,110,058, as presented. J. Kuzmeskas seconded. Recommended 5/0.

A-1 Ambulance Replacement:

Chief Miller provided information regarding the request to secure funding for the purchase of an A-1 Ambulance replacement. This request is for a stock ambulance with a 24-30 month build time. Without proper planning and ordering, the department will be operating an emergency vehicle with over 100,000 miles on it, and the potential for not having a primary ambulance due to the lengthy build times.

J. Kuzmeskas made a motion to recommend \$503,000 from Borrowing, for the replacement of Ambulance 1. J. Collamati seconded. Recommended 5/0.

Public Hearing: Chief Fitzgerald and Lieutenant Daigle from the Police Department were present to discuss the FY26 Police Department Budget. Chief shared a Budget Request PowerPoint with members present.

A FY26 Financial Presentation was provided for members to review the increasing service demands, balance of operational needs, compliance, and future planning, while maintaining fiscal responsibilities.

The Police Department has a 9.01% increase in the Salary portion of the Budget, and an 8.05% increase in the total Police Department Budget for FY26. The number of employees is not increasing.

There has been an increase in service regarding calls and arrests, as well as a 65% increase in citations. Staffing & Contractual obligations, step raises, and unfunded mandatory training has also had some impact on the current FY Budget. Shift coverage challenges also take place due to FMLA, IOD, and unplanned incidents.

K. Keppler made a motion to recommend the Police Department FY26 Accounts, in the amount of \$5,356,645, as presented. Seconded by J. Kuzmeskas. Recommended 5/0.

Car Replacement:

Chief Fitzgerald provided information on the request of replacing 2 marked, and 1 unmarked vehicles. The marked cars will move to the Detail fleet, and the existing Detail cars with over 100,000 miles will be repurposed or disposed of. The current unmarked car will be kept as a spare.

K. Keppler made a motion to recommend \$203,000 from Free Cash for the purchase of 3 replacement cars. B. Boyd seconded. Recommended 5/0.

Dispatch Console:

A joint request for the Police & Fire dispatch console replacement was presented to members for review. The existing system is no longer maintained by Motorola, and parts are no longer available, due to the age of the system.

B. Boyd made a motion to recommend the Dispatch Console Radio Replacement, in the amount of \$200,000 from Available Funds. K. Keppler seconded. Recommended 5/0.

Public Hearing: DPW Director, Jesse Riedle gave a brief summary on each of the of the Department Accounts listed below for the FY26 Operating Expenses and Salaries.

FY26 Cemetery Budget doesn't have any major changes for FY26. A replacement columbarium was funded during Town Meeting, as a Capital Request, and is currently out to bid.

FY26 Fuel (Vehicles) Budget has an overall decrease due to the reduction of gas and diesel prices. Reflecting the current gas rate of \$2.98 per gallon and diesel rate of \$2.64 per gallon.

FY26 Highway Budget has increased due to the need for increased road projects. The increase also includes Professional Services, incorporating annual engineering assistance for the Transportation Advisory Committee with minor roadway modifications, in the amount of \$20k.

FY26 Parks and Recreation Department Budget has an overall decrease that is attributed to a \$50k subsidy in November of FY25.

FY26 Sewer Budget has a decrease in salaries, and operations. In addition, the new DPW office building was partially incorporated in the FY25 submittal, in which the building is now fully occupied.

FY26 Snow & Ice Budget – Snow has been limited this winter and had a lesser need to call in plow vendors for large storms. There were no major changes for the Snow & Ice Budget.

FY26 Stormwater Budget has an increase in Salaries, and a decrease in the Operations Budget. The subsidy of \$250k at November Town Meeting for the removal of catch basin cleanings and street sweepings had been stockpiled over a number of years. The reduction reflects this item not being requested as part of the annual budget. All catch basins cleanings are now removed as part of the annual bid, and street sweepings are removed annually.

FY26 Trash Budget has a small increase for FY26, due to the cost of recycling now being similar to the cost of trash disposal.

FY26 Tree Warden Budget is a continuation of dead tree removal, similar to recent years. This is in addition to the regularly scheduled tree projects that take place through the Tree Warden.

FY26 Water Budget has an increase in Salaries and a decrease in Operations, which creates an overall decrease of \$117k for the Water Budget.

ACCOUNT	FY26 AMOUNT
Cemetery	\$9,451
Gas for Vehicles	\$217,950
Highway	\$1,386,605
Parks & Recreation	\$206,799
Sewer	\$1,785,132
Snow & Ice	\$283,000
Stormwater	\$917,880
Trash	\$2,250,601
Tree Warden	\$49,615
Water	\$3,947,685

K. Keppler made a motion to recommend the DPW FY26 Department Accounts, as listed. B. Boyd seconded. Recommended 5/0.

Green Acres Flood Study:

The Green Acres neighborhood routinely experiences storm drainage flooding. This request is for a watershed-level flood study of the Arnold Brook watershed, within the neighborhood from Gail Drive, heading south, to Pulaski Boulevard. The neighborhood has experienced extreme flooding in the lower half of the neighborhood for several years and has adversely affected abutting residents.

J. Collamati made a motion to recommend \$77,000 from Stormwater Retained Earnings, for the Green Acres Flood Study. K. Keppler seconded. Recommended 5/0.

Wrentham Road Culvert Replacement Study (Phase I of II):

Phase I of II for Engineering Services for replacement of the Wrentham Road culvert. A Grant application for engineering services has been submitted. If successful, the Grant may cover up to \$100k of the effort. Results are expected in April/May 2025.

K. Keppler made a motion to recommend \$137,105 from Retained Earnings for Phase I of II of the Wrentham Road Culvert Replacement Study. B. Boyd seconded. Recommended 5/0.

Wrentham Road Culvert Replacement Construction (Phase II of II):

Phase II of II would require funding for the Wrentham Road culvert replacement construction.

J. Collamati made a motion to recommend \$500,000 from Borrowing for Phase II of II of the Wrentham Road Culvert Replacement Construction. J. Kuzmeskas seconded. Recommended 5/0.

Lakeshore Drive Water Main Replacement Design:

Phase I of II for this project is for the design & engineering services for the Water Main replacement on Lakeshore Drive. The existing water main has a history of breaks, extensive repairs, and interruptions to water service. Lakeshore Drive is on the Road Committee's list of streets to be paved. An ongoing drainage design is underway to address stormwater runoff issues. This effort would be ahead of a future paving request.

B. Boyd made a motion to recommend \$152,000 from Retained Earnings, for the Water Main Replacement Design Phase of Lakeshore Drive. J. Collamati seconded. Recommended 5/0.

Well 11 Replacement (Phase II of II):

Request is based on the Engineer's opinion of Probable Construction Costs, with an anticipated bidding timeframe of June 2025. Phase II of this project includes construction, development, and project oversight. With the upcoming PFAS Treatment Facility on Hartford Avenue, combined with the high-demand season, makes the need for ample water supply from the southern Wrentham facility crucial.

J. Kuzmeskas made a motion to recommend \$1,191,000 from Borrowing, for the Well 11 Replacement. B. Boyd seconded. Recommended 5/0.

Well 3 Replacement Engineering Services (Phase I of II):

This request is for hydrogeologic, design, permitting, and bidding services for the replacement of Well 3. Historically, Well 3 serviced Bellingham with a significant source of water. Recent redevelopment was unsuccessful, causing the need to replace the failing well.

J. Kuzmeskas made a motion to recommend \$257,500 from Retained Earnings, for Phase I of the Well 3 Replacement Engineering Services. K. Keppler seconded. Recommended 5/0.

Chestnut Standpipe Rehab Engineering (Phase I of II):

Engineering services for the overcoat rehabilitation of the Chestnut Street standpipe is the cost-effective approach to prolonging the life of the standpipe for an additional 7 to 10 years. The previous adhesion testing specialist confirmed the Chestnut Street standpipe to be a good candidate for the overcoat option.

J. Collamati made a motion to recommend \$43,000 from Retained Earnings for Phase I of the Chestnut Standpipe Rehab Engineering project. K. Keppler seconded. Recommended 4/0.

Public Hearing: Ms. Chuckran and Mr. Fraine were present to answer questions that members had regarding the current FY26 Budget and also discuss departments that would need to attend a future Finance Committee Meeting.

New Business, Emails, Correspondence, Bills:

The next Finance Committee Meeting will take place on Monday, April 7, 2025, at 5:00 pm, in the Arcand Meeting Room.

K. Keppler made a motion to adjourn at 6:53 pm. Seconded by B. Boyd. Approved 4/0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tina M. Griffin
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