

**Finance Committee Meeting  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, March 7, 2022 at 5:00 pm  
Bellingham Municipal Center  
Arcand Meeting Room**

1. Finance Committee Members Present: J. Allam (Chairman), J. Collamati, K. Keppler, J. Flannery, A. Thorell, J. Kuzmeskas
2. Finance Committee Members Absent: All members present
3. Meeting Commenced: J. Collamati called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm.

Committee Members discussed nominating a new Vice-Chairperson, as one has not been added since the last Vice-Chairperson had resigned from the Committee. J. Kuzmeskas made a motion to nominate J. Collamati as Vice-Chairman. K. Keppler seconded. J. Collamati accepted the position and the motion was Recommended 5/0. J. Allam was not present for this vote.

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4. J. Collamati made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 30, 2021 Finance Committee meeting, as presented. Seconded by K. Keppler. Recommended 5/0. J. Kuzmeskas was not present for this meeting and abstained from the motion.

K. Keppler made a motion to approve the approve the minutes from the November 17, 2021 Finance Committee meeting, as presented. Seconded by J. Collamati. Recommended 4/0. J. Flannery and A. Thorell were not present for this meeting and abstained from the motion.

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5. **Public Hearing:** Ms. Dutil, Director of the Senior Center was present for tonight's meeting to give a brief summary of the FY23 Senior Center Budget.

Ms. Dutil told Finance Committee members that there have not been many changes in her budget, with the exception of a part-time position, they would like to offer for a Mental Health Social Worker to work with the elders in town. Currently, there is one Mental Health Counselor that services 6 Towns and goes to homes of people that might not have insurance or can't leave their homes. The Senior Center would like to hire a part-time Social Worker to help the elders with Mental Health issues and not have them be on a waiting list to try to be seen by the current Counselor that is servicing so many Towns.

Finance Committee Members told Ms. Dutil that they don't have any further questions about her current budget and will take her request into consideration. Recommendations from Finance Committee Members will be made at a later date, after all of tonight's Department Budgets are presented and discussed.

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6. **Public Hearing:** Chief Daigle and Lieutenant Russell from the Police Department were present to discuss their FY23 Police Department Budget.

Mr. Daigle told Finance Committee Members that they are still short staffed on Officers at the Police Department. Mr. Daigle said that the increase of \$106,171 in the Officer Salaries budget is for the training of 3 new Officer Recruits.

Mr. Daigle also told Finance Committee members that they are currently under Collective Bargaining negotiations and salaries may change a little when negotiations are completed. If negotiations are settled before May Town Meeting, there might be some minor adjustments to the salaries budget amount.

Some other small increases for the Police Department were discussed for the Lease of a Police Motorcycle, shortage of ammunition and increase of ammunition pricing, increase in gas prices, etc.

Chief Daigle and Lieutenant Russell's requests will be taken into consideration. Recommendations from Finance Committee Members will be made at a later date, after all of tonight's Department Budgets are presented and discussed.

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7. **Public Hearing:** Chief Gentile and Deputy Milot from the Fire Department were present to give a brief summary on the FY23 Fire Department Budget.

Mr. Gentile told Finance Committee members that the Fire Departments Salaries have been level funded since last year because they are also currently under Collective Bargaining negotiations and the salaries budget might have some adjustments when negotiations are complete.

There has been an increase in the budget for vehicle repairs because Barrett's Truck Repair is no longer in business and the vehicles now have to be taken back to the dealer for repairs and the dealer is more costly for the hourly labor rate.

Also, there's a small increase of the cost of medication, as the hospitals no longer has a 1-for-1 exchange program, so the Department is now required to purchase the drugs/medications needed on hand for the paramedics to administer to patients.

Mr. Gentile discussed additional personnel that are needed for the Fire Department. The Department is still short on manpower and requires a fair number of calls to be placed to neighboring Towns if multiple calls come in around the same time. Mr. Gentile is asking the Committee to consider 8 new personnel so that he can basically split the Town equally with a crew stationed for the North and South ends of Town. This will help the Department get to incidents quicker and also be able to handle multiple calls at the same time if more personnel were available.

Mr. Gentile told Committee members that with all the new housing being proposed and built in Town, an increase in manpower for a Department that is already understaffed will be required.

Chief Gentile and Deputy Milot's requests will be taken into consideration. Recommendations from Finance Committee Members will be made at a later date, after all of tonight's Department Budgets are presented and discussed.

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8. **Public Hearing:** Bernadette Rivard, Library Director and Trustees were present to discuss their FY23 Department Budget.

The Library Department is requesting an increase in the budget to help meet with State's requirements, as the last 2 years they have been in the waiver process with the state of Massachusetts regarding Library Funding. The State requires that the Library spend 2.5% more than the average of the 3 previous years budgets to meet the State Requirement to get State Aid. The maximum amount of State Aid that the Department can receive is \$30,000 and is based on population and some other items within the Town.

The Library has now fully reopened and is only operating 4 hours less than before Covid and closing at 7:00 pm instead of 8:00 pm as of this time. They are no longer under Covid Restrictions and will most likely be back to closing at 8:00 pm soon.

Ms. Rivard's requests will be taken into consideration. Recommendations from Finance Committee Members will be made at a later date, after all of tonight's Department Budgets are presented and discussed.

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9. **Public Hearing:** Ms. MacKinnon was present to answer any questions that members have regarding the current FY23 Budget that is being prepared and discussed.

Ms. MacKinnon provided members with an updated copy of the budget summary and a copy of the power point presentation that was displayed and discussed at the Selectboard Workshop that took place on February 26, 2022. Members did not have any additional questions regarding this information that was provided.

Ms. MacKinnon told Finance Committee members that the School Department will not have their Budget finalized until the end of the month. Committee Members will have to meet with the School Department and the Department of Public Works at some time in April.

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10. New Business, Emails, Correspondence, Bills:

J. Flannery made a motion to approve the invoices from Finance Committee Clerk, Tina Griffin, for the month of December 2021, January 2022, and February 2022 in the amount of \$318.32 each. Seconded by J. Kuzmeskas. Recommended 6/0.

The next Finance Committee Meeting will take place on Monday, March 21, 2022, at 5:30 pm, in the Arcand Meeting Room. This meeting will be to discuss and vote on Budget Line items for various Departments.

A meeting for Monday, April 11, 2022, will take place at 5:30 pm in the Arcand Meeting Room for the DPW and School Department to present their FY23 Budgets.

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J. Flannery made a motion to adjourn at 6:48 pm. Seconded by A. Thorell. Recommended 6/0.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Tina M. Griffin*  
Tina M. Griffin