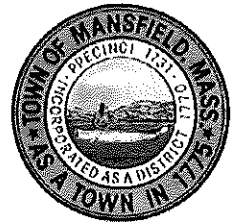


# Town of Mansfield

6 Park Row, Mansfield, Massachusetts 02048

## Finance Committee

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### Meeting Minutes 3.16.2023

**Present:** Ms. Sara Walsh, Chair, Mr. Scott Feely, Vice Chair, Ms. Greta Thurston, Clerk, Mr. Walter Wilk, Mr. Michael Flaherty, Mr. Jack Cooney, and Ms. Melinda Tarsi.

**Guest:** Mr. Barry LaCasse

**Minutes:** Sharon Varricchione

0. **Call the Meeting to order:** Ms. Sara Walsh, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

1. **Approval of Minutes: 2/8/2023 and 2/16/2023**

2. **Motion:** To adopt the meeting minutes **2/16/2023**

**Passes:** 7:0 (Wilk/Cooney) with one spelling adjustment to Mr. Lacasse's last name.

**Motion:** To adopt the meeting minutes **2/8/2023**

**Passes:** 6:0:1 (Cooney/Feely) one abstention, Mr. Flaherty was not present

3. **FY 23 Financial Update:**

Mr. LaCasse spoke about the period eight financials report and mentioned that they were two thirds through the fiscal year.

**General Government Revenue:** We are about 75% collected which is good news.

- Motor vehicle excise tax is tracking on budget.
- Earnings on investments is tracking overbudget.
- Police Department Revenue is tracking nicely – we have been able to collect for Police details.
- Ambulance Revenue is tracking nicely.

Mr. LaCasse projected that we will be at least a couple hundred thousand overbudget for revenue.

**General Government Expense:** We are about 60% expended, about 67% through the fiscal year and is tracking on budget as well.

**Enterprise Revenue:** Sewer we are tracking about 72% collected, Water about 77%, Parking we already made our revenue number at 101% collected, and Airport we are 76% collected. Mr. LaCasse predicted an uptick for Sewer and Water during the next few warmer months.

**Enterprise Expenses:** Sewer is 62% expended, Water is 59% expended, Parking is 63% expended and Airport 26%.

The Enterprises are tracking well in revenue and expenses.

Questions:

Mr. Wilk asked if we were burning hot on the expense side and Mr. LaCasse stated not really which is good. Mr. Feely asked if the trajectory on the local receipts was still holding up? Mr. LaCasse stated that he thought it was due to hotel and meal taxes. Ms. Walsh asked about Utilities and Mr. LaCasse stated that he needed to circle back on that for her. Mr. Cooney asked about the stabilization fund and Mr. LaCasse stated that they have not touched it and it has roughly \$5.2 million dollars, the Special Ed stabilization fund is at \$50,000 and the Employee Healthcare is still at \$1.7 million. These funds collect interest and the interest rates are rising which is very helpful it will go towards the \$5.2 million. The funds are in safe money market accounts

Mr. LaCasse mentioned that we are still in the positive for snow and ice around \$80,000 so he's hoping that stays.

4. **FY 24 Budget Update:**

Ms. Walsh stated the next Budget Subcommittee meeting would be March 22 and the Tri Board Consensus meeting is on March 29<sup>th</sup>. Mr. LaCasse added that they are about \$1.5 million dollars short and we were \$1.8 million short but we received the Governments Cherry sheets which gave us \$343,000 and our goal is to reach a balanced budget by the end of the month.

Ms. Walsh asked about the current use and planned use of Free Cash in the current iteration. Mr. LaCasse stated that right now the one time we would be hitting the Free Cash would be the influx of Free Cash to offset the spike in electrical budgeting that we did for FY24. Ms. Walsh asked if we would also be using Free Cash for the OPEB funding. Mr. LaCasse stated yes, as we have done in the past couple of years since Covid we are planning on using free cash in the Fall to make our \$400,000 OPEB contribution. He then stated that this maybe a good year to talk about whether the \$400,000 OPEB belongs in the operating budget or does it belong as a Free Cash. The OPEB policy doesn't specify and it's an interesting discussion. Mr. Wilk stated his concern that if it went into Free Cash that it wouldn't go to CIP projects like roofs and roads. He also stated that he's worried about a cliff and wants to know what is being pulled out. He thinks OPEB will be a cliff, the Health money will be a cliff and where ever else we are using Free Cash. He would like to see a sheet that details all of this. His concern is that we are pulling the money out and then it will sit on the outside then it's going to eat away at our Capitol projects and then we are going to have to end up borrowing in order to do the projects or have bad roads if we can't do the projects. He would rather make a hard decision today as to where the money should go, should we cut staff, should we not cut staff, or maybe we go a different way and address Capitol with bonds but that's just taxing people a different way. Mr. LaCasse stated that this year and last year this forced us to take a hard look at our CIP process and really nail down what the CIP needs are with the department heads and to also determine if they are really needed or if they can be deferred. He agreed it should be a discussion regarding whether or not they should be using Free Cash for larger ticket items like Police Cruisers or Dump Trucks which eats up a lot of money or is it better to do a short-term borrowing. Mr. Cooney asked once we get the budget down to \$0 is there any Free Cash items that we can pull back on? Mr. LaCasse said they will continue to look at that.

**5. Federal funds use slide (town and school) and planned wind-down of the funding:**

Ms. Walsh then asked Mr. LaCasse for an update on our Federal Funds and can we get a slide for the budget presentation or that we can put up on the Finance Committee website of all the Federal Covid Funds that we have been receiving where has it gone, what's the balance and where is it going back on the budget for Town and School. Mr. LaCasse talked about the buckets of Funds we have:

- Cares Act: Focused on expenditures related to the pandemic. We received \$2.2 Million and the larger expenses were: cleaning and disinfecting of public buildings \$373,000, accelerated telework capacity \$258,000, (PPE) Personal Protection Equipment \$252,000, school distant learning \$389,000, Signage \$62,000, Social distance and measures in public buildings \$356,000.
- ARPA: Federal Money used for revenue replacement for two years.
- Bristol County ARPA: Money used for PFAS

**6. Trash Continued Conversation:**

Ms. Walsh stated that at one time we discussed having to look at other revenue sources and Trash Fees were bought up. When do we want to have a report to share with the Select Board aiming towards the Summer or Fall. Do we want to discuss our questions now? Mansfield is one of the only Towns that does not have a Trash Fee and does that make sense. The Committee discussed in addition to the Trash Fees to also look at all the waste areas including the stickers pricing around getting rid of large bulky items. Ms. Walsh asked the Committee to give her a list of questions and she will start to compile them and then invite DPW to discuss these questions with them. Mr. Feely added that the conversation should also include recycling costs too. Mr. Cooney and Mr. Feely offered to volunteer to work on this as a subset to the Finance Committee.

**7. COLA for Pensions Conversation:**

Ms. Walsh stated from the last meeting discussion, the State gave four potential paths for the Bristol County Retirement System and the Select Board asked us to make a recommendation to them. Mr. LaCasse ran through the options.

Option 1: Do nothing

Option 2: Additional 2% Cost of Living for the first \$18,000

Option 3: To increase the \$18,000 minimum to \$20,000

Option 4: to do both

Mr. LaCasse then stated that he gets it, it's tough times, Social Security had a COLA so why shouldn't pensions but the trouble he's having is that it will cost money later in the future. Ms. Walsh asked if they wanted to make a recommendation or if they wanted to wait a month or so. Mr. LaCasse stated that it needs to be voted

by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. LaCasse left the meeting at 8:13pm.

#### **8. Goals Conversation:**

Ms. Thurston stated that they spoke about what they want the goals to look like going forward and that they did not actually set any goals yet. They also looked at the goals from last year to see if they were in line or if they wanted to strike or amend them. Some of the main points they wanted to hit on was education and communication to the public and to also make understandable information readily available to the public. Also to increase participation to the public in an informed way. We want to keep: working to understand revenue projections and to understand expenses and how this will affect the long-term budget planning, making recommendations to the Select Board regarding the right metrics to measure Economic Development to aid and growth in determining Mansfield's Economic Strength, and to see how other Towns were using their budgets or if there were any common issues and how they solved for them. Mr. Flaherty, Mr. Cooney and Ms. Thurston agreed to come back to the next meeting with goals for the Committee to review.

#### **9. Survey Conversation:**

Ms. Tarsi looked at the 2022 Survey questions as a starting point to see what was previously asked, to refine them and then they can build any additional questions that they would like to have asked. She asked what information do we want? The last survey looked like it was trying to measure people's perception of concerning financial issues on the municipal side and what changes they were willing to make. What other things do we want to know, when do we want it, before Town Meeting or after and who do we want it from. If we don't collect demographics it's hard to know who we are hearing from, are they residents or small business owners? One of the questions she has asked in previous surveys in other Towns was if the person attended the Town Meeting. The response was up to 75% that the person had not attended the Town Meeting which seems negative however we can tap into the people and this may be a positive way they can get their voice heard since they were not at the meeting. Ms. Tari offered to either take notes on the questions that they would like asked and then have them drafted for the next meeting. She mentioned that she has students that need volunteer hours and could help draft the questions and BETA test the survey. The Committee agreed that a great job was done last year, they were just trying to get it off the ground and that there is also a scientific method to do the survey. Ms. Tarsi added that we want to know what it's going to look like on the back end as we are the ones that are going to go back and look at the results. We want questions that we can easily analyze and accurately represent to the public. Ms. Tarsi offered a survey platform called Qualtrics that they can use to save time and that can help with reports and graphics they want to use. The Committee talked about getting the message out that there is a survey and putting the message in the electric bill with a QR code which could be an avenue. They discussed having printed copies at the Town Hall for those without computers. Ms. Tarsi suggested that her students come up with drafted questions for the Committee to review. Mr. Feely asked if the students could come and present to them at the next Finance Committee meeting and she said she would ask.

#### **10. Committee Reports:**

Mr. Feely mentioned that CIP will be meeting on April 13<sup>th</sup>, April 27<sup>th</sup>, and if they need it, May 4<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Thurston met with Mr. LaCasse and there was not a new Audit update but he did share past Audit information with her. Ms. Thurston said there are no outstanding items from last year's Audit and that she would get the report and share it with the group.

Mr. Cooney discussed the Downtown Committee and they talked about wrapping the light boxes with art. They discussed the Fall Festival and the idea of having attendees pay for it but the Town didn't want to go down that road and wanted to keep it to Sponsorships. Mr. Feely added his concern regarding the traffic light boxes art and would it fade like the postal box that was painted and how will it be maintained. So, if there is maintenance who is going to own that?

Closing remarks:

- Mr. Cooney stated they spoke about a lot of things during the meeting and it was good.
- Mr. Flaherty said Happy St. Patrick's Day to everyone and that a lot of hard work has transpired since Covid.

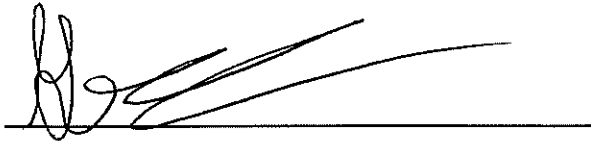
- Ms. Thurston said shes happy regarding all the progress they have made in the three meetings she's been able to attend.
- Ms. Walsh mentioned the Town Managers office will be having a monthly Newsletter which you can subscribe to and it will also give the Finance Committee a chance to participate and give updates with a few lines in it as well.
- Mr. Feely thought the Newsletter was great and another way to get information out to the public.
- Ms. Tarsi has a little plug for the Association of Town Finance Committees (AFTC), they are having a Spring Conference April 29<sup>th</sup> for all ATFC members, which we are all members. This conference is in Stowe and the November meeting will be at the Sharon Community Center. The idea is to network and share with other Finance Committee members during these conferences. Mr. Wilk suggested that the new members Ms. Tari and Ms. Thurston go to these meetings and Mr. Feely said he thought they should have money in their budget for them to go.

11. Public Questions: none

12. Adjournment:

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 8:51pm.

Passes: 7:0 (Feely/Wilk)



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4. 27. 23

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Date