

# Town of Mansfield

6 Park Row, Mansfield, Massachusetts 02048



## Finance Committee

### Meeting Minutes 4.13.2023

**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.

**Virtually:** Ms. Greta Thurston

**Guest:** Mr. Barry LaCasse

**Minutes:** Sharon Varricchione

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

2. **Discuss and vote on FY 24 Budget:**

Ms. Walsh stated that there was only one agenda item to discuss and vote on the FY24 Budget. The next regularly meeting was scheduled for April, 27<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. LaCasse stated there were a few budget updates to their previous Tri Board meeting:

- The Town received the Southeastern Regional High School Assessment. They originally budgeted for a 5% increase and it came back with a 13.78% increase which put us back roughly \$119,000 in the budget.
- On the plus side, the MMED Light Commissioners had these two significant votes on April 10<sup>th</sup>:
  - They level funded the piolet, a payment in lieu of taxes that are paid to the Town which increased our revenue by \$132,000. This money helped to offset Southeastern Regional High Schools budget increase.
  - The MMED voted to reduce the FY23-24 rate hikes by 20%, this was important because in our budget we included rate hike increases and this now allowed us to go into those projections and reduce them by 20% for both the Town and the School.
- In addition, the local receipts are being watched as they come in and as we get deeper and deeper into FY23. This helps us project into FY24 and this allowed us to increase the main local receipts revenue by \$134,000 which included revenue from hotel, meals, marijuana and investment.

The good news is that instead of utilizing the \$500,000 Free Cash in FY24, we will only need \$169,000 of Free Cash to cover the electrical increase for the Town and the Schools.

Mr. Wilk asked about the FY25 budget as there was a great deal of work done to budget the FY24 budget and was curious how we can only be off by roughly \$228,000. Mr. LaCasse stated that the FY25 budget is very rudimentary and that it takes certain assumptions into account but not for local receipts. Ms. Walsh said they had to face a lot of things this year: a reduction of Federal Funds, Contract Negotiations, Massive Inflation, Special Education needs on the School side, lots and lots of hits. Fundamentally, we don't know where we are going to end up, we are getting through Covid and not having to take from the stabilization fund, we are taking from a few places and will try to get down from it and we are cutting FTEs. Mr. Wilk asked Mr. LaCasse for FY25, did he assume any cuts and Mr. LaCasse said no in fact he increased the Schools by 3% in salary and 3% for goods and services. Mr. Wilk asked about the Bus Fund and did he plan to use it. Mr. LaCasse said no but it could sustain a \$200-\$300 thousand hit every year.

Ms. Walsh noted that there was just a CIP meeting and what was the rough estimate for FY24 Free Cash, Mr. LaCasse said roughly \$1.3 Million Dollars. There could be a policy discussion regarding bundling items in a three to five year short term borrowing and pay those installments out of Free Cash. You want to be careful of using everything for Free Cash. Mr. Wilk asked if OPEB was included with Free Cash and Mr. LaCasse said yes, until we are out of Covid at least one more year. We want to get back to pre covid levels of revenue.

Mr. Cooney recapped the amount that Town would need \$169,000 in Free Cash. Mr. LaCasse did mention that in the horizon, the House Ways and Means just passed their budget and we do not have the Cherry Sheet yet and they

lowered the unrestricted local aid from what the Governor proposed and that is problematic as we don't know what the amount is. We may need to reach out to our State Delegation once we know as this is a lifeline to cities and towns.

**Questions/Comments:**

Ms. Walsh stated that the Select Board voted and the School Committee voted and we are going to vote tonight and does this require any other votes. Mr. LaCasse said no. Mr. Wilk noted that the School Committee voted 4-1, he asked why the 1 abstained and there was no comment. Ms. Walsh wanted to bring up an important point regarding the discussions about the eleven School FTEs and wanted the public to know that Fin Com has been watching this for a while. School enrollment has gone down which should not impact school services but if it's been miscalculated we it should be reviewed again by Fin Com as we are all supportive of the Schools.

**Motion:** To vote on the FY24 Budget as presented

**Roll Call:** Mr. Flaherty - Yes, Mr. Cooney- Yes, Ms. Walsh- Yes, Mr. Feely - Yes, Mr. Wilk- Yes, Ms. Tarsi – Yes, and Ms. Thurston - Yes

**Passes:** 7:0 (Feely/Flaherty)

Mr. Wilk added that they need to be careful in the future with borrowing, it could take the whole time to pay something back and then they need to start all over with new vehicles for example. Mr. Cooney was thankful for all the transparency regarding the budget process and that transparency is there goal.

**3. Items not known within 48 Hours: None**

**4. Adjournment:**

**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting at 7:59pm.

**Roll Call:** Mr. Flaherty - Yes, Mr. Cooney- Yes, Ms. Walsh- Yes, Mr. Feely - Yes, Mr. Wilk- Yes, Ms. Tarsi – Yes, and Ms. Thurston - Yes

**Passes:** 7:0 (Feely/Flaherty)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Flaherty', written over a horizontal line.

4.27.23

Date