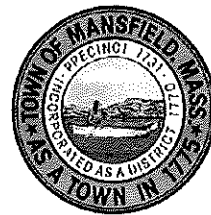


Town of Mansfield

6 Park Row, Mansfield, Massachusetts 02048

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Finance Committee

NOV 18 A 8:28

Meeting Minutes 8.18.2022

Present: Ms. Sara Walsh, Chair, Mr. Jack Cooney, Clerk, Mr. Walter Wilk, Mr. Scott Feely, Vice Chair, Mr. Michael DeSantis, Mr. Brian Eagle and Mr. Michael Flaherty

Present Virtually: None

Not present: None

Guests: Mr. Barry LaCasse, Christopher McDermott, and Kevin Dumas

Minutes: Nancy Griffin

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

2. **Approval of Minutes: 6/16/2022**

Motion: To adopt the meeting minutes of 6/16/2022

Passes 7:0 (Feeley/Eagle)

3. **Economic Development Update from Christopher McDermott**

Chris McDermott started his overview of Economic Development with his professional background on his credentials and experience, which included his Master's Degree in Economic Development. Then he talked about the recent announcement that Amazon will be closing the Mansfield location as of October 2022. He added that Mansfield is one of five facilities closing in Massachusetts. In addition to the Mansfield location, those sites include Milford, Randolph, Dedham, and Everett. He stated that the Mansfield employees are being offered transfers to other facilities. Notable, Amazon will be maintaining its nine-year lease at the Mansfield site, but at this point there is no clear determination on how the site will be utilized. The Town's contact at Amazon will be speaking with their real estate team to gauge interest in subleasing the property to interested companies when and if Amazon determines they have no internal use.

Mr. Feeley commented that this will not affect the real estate tax, but we will be losing the personal property tax. Mr. McDermott confirmed that this is correct. Mr. LaCasse was asked for an update on the impact of this personal property tax change. He confirmed that the personal property evaluations were about \$6 million dollars and the tax on that is approximately \$190,000. He summarized that although this is not great news, the hope is that either one of Amazon's other division will take over or it could be subleased to another business. The Committee asked several questions about options to reduce the possible impact from personal property tax reduction should Amazon not sublease quickly.

Mr. McDermott then went on to give an overview of the Economic Development rollout in Mansfield which included a review of Phase I – the Launch of the Discover Mansfield Initiative, Phase II – the Establishment of Key Partnerships such as Tri-Town Chamber of Commerce, MassEcon, MassBio once Mr. McDermott was fully onboarded and up-to-speed on the objectives. Phase III - The roles and responsibilities of Mansfield Economic Development program, which include maintaining relationships with the existing business community, working as staff liaison with the Industrial Development Committee, the Downtown Committee, outreach in the community through canvassing downtown businesses, the Cabot Business Park, and doing site visits to several local businesses. Mr. McDermott touched on the MansfieldWorks Program and how it has supported local business like AmerisourceBergen, Xfinity Center, Lactera, Integra Life Sciences, Rolf C. Hagen, and American Health Associates while at the same time maintaining relationships with local partners such as Wheaton Collect and the Bio-Incubator to build a pipeline between the two to create some possible internships. He also highlighted that he has worked to raise the community's profile and attract additional investment in the community through several means including the upcoming Fall Festival sponsorships, tracking available commercial and industrial space using monthly reports from CoStar, the Discover Mansfield initiatives like website, social media, and Pod costs with local businesses and officials. And, he has established relationships with external partners such as MassEcon and with MassBio to help Mansfield

rise from its current BioReady Gold status to Platinum.

Mr. McDermott is holding monthly Economic Development meetings with the Town Manager, the Finance Director, the Planning Director, the Building Inspector, and the Town's Chief Assessor. He reported that he has also been providing liaison services to several new local businesses to help make their move to Mansfield go smoothly. He did so by several means including working with site leads, helping to connect the businesses with the resources of the Mass Office of Business Development, bridging parties on utilities shutoffs, and helped to coordinate inspections with Town departments.

Mr. McDermott discussed the Planning and Zoning efforts he has been involved with since his arrival, which included the Downtown Transit Oriented Development planning with BETA for zoning reforms to bring it in line with the MBTA guidelines. He has assisted the Town Manager with the submission of the preliminary MBTA Community form. He has also worked to renew and secure site-specific pouring licenses that were expiring to bring those back online for availability to potential businesses.

Mr. McDermott discussed the ways Economic Development is being measured in Mansfield by direct impact indicators such as filled square footage, invested funds, jobs created, new businesses in Town, and Tax Revenue created. He noted he is also measuring with some tangential signifiers such as business inquiries he is fielding calls from, the number of meetings and business visits, social media indicators such as followers, posts, engagement, and clicks. These along with website visitors, page views, and podcast and blogs published tell us who is engaging and how much. Mr. Eagle asked Mr. McDermott if it was his plan to develop a Town Economic scorecard. Mr. Eagle noted, there are opportunities out there, but you can tell the Town is in a good position just by driving through the Cabot Business Park. Mr. Feely asked if there is a way to get everyone on the same page so when they talk about Economic Development so they are speaking the same language. Mr. McDermott replied that with his quarterly reports to the Select Board that will become more standardized and will be tweaked to ensure everyone has the same information.

Mr. Wilk asked if Mr. McDermott is part of downtown development and grant opportunities. Mr. McDermott replied that he is working with Downtown Businesses and has contributed to some grant opportunities. Mr. Feely commented that by participating at the State level Mr. McDermott might be exposed to new opportunities for Mansfield that we would otherwise not be aware of. Mr. Eagle asked if Mr. McDermott would be responsible for matching grant opportunities to departments. Mr. McDermott replied that being a clearinghouse for grants for all departments would be outside of his scope, but when he sees opportunities he certainly tries to move them forward when appropriate. Mr. Eagle asked if there are plans to centralize grant processing. Mr. LaCasse replied that each department head has their contact at the State and Federal level and the departments work with administration to determine which grants move forward. Most grants come to the Town via notification to the individual departments. Mr. Feely asked if grants are tracked. Mr. Cooney asked what is one thing that you would like to see done better in Mansfield from your experience. Mr. McDermott said in Framingham they had more Federal relations and that was long-standing and expected given the size of that community. Mr. DeSantis commented that the Committee is happy to have someone in the ED seat finally. He would like to see some dashboards to see the success of the ED position. He feels it is important for the residents to see the impact of this position. Mr. DeSantis also commented that it is important to demonstrate how the residents are benefited from this position and the work done by Mr. McDermott. Mr. Wilk stated that the Committee is also sensitive to economic downturns and Mr. McDermott can expect them to understand these effects, and added that he (Mr. McDermott) shouldn't feel that he cannot demonstrate how ED is affected by these factors.

Finally, Mr. McDermott shared his view of Mansfield's ED focus and objectives as follows. Mansfield is a community to discover offerings of tremendous opportunities for commercial, life science, retail and industrial development enabling both businesses and residents to benefit from its diversified and dynamic economy, strong work force, and unparalleled living and working environment.

The goal is to raise the Town's profile and ensure it's prepared to facilitate development when opportunities arise; while supporting and cultivating growth within the existing business community. Doing so bolsters the Town's reputation as a place that is great to do business.

Mr. McDermott left at 8:15 pm.

Chairperson, Ms. Walsh added Agenda Item #6 to Agenda Item #4.

**4. Review of year-end results and update from Finance Director
Discussion of Budget Process from Budget Subcommittee**

Mr. LaCasse reminded that since the last Finance Committee meeting he has sent out two versions of his monthly reports. The first of the two reports were for year-end FY22 and the most recent report was for the first month of FY23. Mr. LaCasse responded to the question "how did we end the year-end" by saying he felt it was safe to say we ended strong in both general government and in the enterprises. Although he could not give the Committee an exact number for free cash, which is an indicator of how strong we finished, he did say that it will be in the area of what the five-year average has been, which is about \$2.6M. This is a good thing because it will show that our estimate of receipts came in higher than budget, which we budgeted conservatively, and it shows that money fell out of the general government budget because money wasn't spent. This is a result of administration making department heads aware that if they didn't have to spend this year they shouldn't to give ourselves a little breathing room. The free cash will come into play at the upcoming Special Town Meeting because it will be at that meeting that we live up to our promises with things like our OPEB obligation. And, to put money into our stabilization fund, which stands at roughly \$5.1M, and we want to put money funds in there because it is tied to the scorecard that the Finance Committee keeps on how the Town is doing financially. Mr. LaCasse also commented that free cash is also a good source to buy one-time items from our CIP list.

Mr. Wilk asked how much we were going to have any hold-back for free cash. Mr. LaCasse responded that we would not be spending all of free cash at the fall town meeting as we would want to hold back something for items such as snow deficit, electric costs, and increase gas costs. He let the Committee know that he had communicated with the department heads regarding supplemental CIP items for FY23 as we plan for the upcoming Fall Town Meeting so we can chisel away at the CIP items that we can.

Mr. LaCasse stated that probably within the next month or two Free Cash will be certified along with retained earnings for the enterprises. He noted that the enterprises, water, sewer, parking and airport, all finished in the positive as well.

Mr. DeSantis asked if there is anything in this IRA bill that would give tax incentive that could help the Town to get any money back for some of the CIP projects. He noted that things like windows and heating are eligible. Mr. Feely commented that there is still infrastructure money coming down as it takes a while for these things to go through the pike. Mr. LaCasse replied there are a couple of open projects that may qualify. He also mentioned that Mansfield is being considered for federal earmark funding of \$2M for PFAS removal as a result of efforts by our office in conjunction with Congressman Auchincloss' office. Mr. Eagle stated that, although it will take a long time for federal grants to reach the local level, and most are directed at the States, we should still be aware of them. He offered to share a copy of the bill summary with the group. Mr. Feely stated even if it takes a long time for any funding to reach the local level, it would be good to be aware of it so it can be taken into consideration as possible opportunities, especially given the challenges ahead with the FY24 budget. Mr. LaCasse also told the committee that Mansfield is now a Green Community and is now eligible to participate in the Green Community grant opportunities. Mr. LaCasse summarized that this is where we are at with the year-end and that he will have a better number for the Committee in the coming weeks.

Mr. LaCasse reminded that the first of the FY24 Budget Sub meetings is coming up at the end of this month, and that

there is an early start to budgeting this year because everyone realizes the challenges ahead that FY24 is going to present. He noted, that one of the things that will be important to talk about is what new money is available for FY24. The premise is that if everyone, school and general government, already are aware of what pot of money are we likely to share we can all go back to our departments to create a more reasonable budget that fits into that pot of money. He stated that he feels that communication will be very helpful in preparing for the FY24 budget process.

Ms. Walsh noted that the August 31st meeting is a consensus meeting and all four boards will be invited, so everyone can hear the same message. It is also an opportunity to agree on what data analysis should be presented for the next consensus meeting. Mr. Eagle commented that there is a split in the calendar, school vs. town, and it is frustrating to committee members and miscommunications because the calendars don't align until late in the process. Ms. Walsh noted that it was members of the School Committee who had asked for more consensus meetings and hopefully that will help. Mr. Eagle noted that when Mr. Wilk and Mr. Stanbrook were doing this process they started out with a percentage goal and asked if that would be the case this year. Mr. LaCasse clarified that the goal for this year will be an actual dollar amount, and every department will know exactly how much the FY24 new money will be. This will put a dollar figure on the available new dollars we have to distribute to the departments. Mr. Wilk noted his concerns that there are several unions negotiating new contracts next year and most unions are known to be asking for much higher percentages in bargaining due to inflation and this will need to be considered.

5. Review of Finance Committee's Survey Results

Ms. Walsh summarized that after the Town meeting the Finance Committee conducted a survey and that Mr. Eagle had completed a poll of the data, and she added that she felt the data was very rough. Ms. Walsh opened up to discussion and stated that the plan is share with the information with the Select Board and the School Committee. Mr. Eagle stated that when it is shared they should pull out some of the data. Ms. Walsh mentioned that there were some issues with the original posting. Mr. Eagle noted that this was a first attempt to do some active public outreach and he said some people had thanked the Committee for offering the survey. Mr. Eagle said there will probably be approximately two hundred responses when all is done. He said it gives the Committee info to have some more informed conversations. Mike Flaherty stated the Committee may need more of a social media presence.

The Committee members agreed that most people who responded to the survey don't want to give up any services, but they also want to see taxes cut. The overwhelming response (68%) was "I don't want to give up anything." Many responses were about "No excessive spending." Mr. Cooney stated we didn't capture any demographics such as age. There was a brief discussion about the presentation of budget and Town Meeting information and how more emphasis should be placed on getting this information out to the residents. Ms. Walsh felt the survey showed that people want the budget process to start earlier and that it's too confusing. Town Manager needs to find a better way to present the budget information. We need to start a conversation about how we can communicate better. Mr. Flaherty stated that he felt Town Meeting information presentation is excellent in Mansfield. You see everyone's perspective as to what the thought process was behind the budget development. Mr. Feeley said, if people don't understand the process the numbers don't mean anything to them. He reasoned that we should have resources available to send to people so they can gain a better understanding.

Ms. Walsh felt that the next steps should be to take down the survey, share the results with the Select Board and School Committee so they are aware, and to also post results on the Finance Committee's webpage. Mr. Feeley felt that if they keep doing the survey, people will get used to it and will participate more. Mr. DeSantis asked if the Town should put this information in the tax bills. Mr. Eagle said he thought it was too unscientific.

6. Discussion of Budget Process from Budget Subcommittee

Discussed with Agenda Item #4

7. Reorganization of appointees to other committees

Mr. Feeley asked why the Committee was considering reorganizing at this time of year and noted that most committees reorg in January, except for the Select Board and School Committee who reorg after election. Mr. Eagle recommended appointing the Budget Sub appointee now and doing everything else in January. The Committee

discussed the pros and cons of when the best month of year would be to do their reorganization. The consensus was to do a reorganization in January.

8. Questions from Community: None

Committee Comments

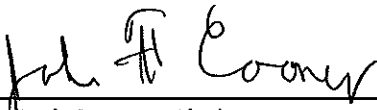
Mr. Eagle stated, "I think it's important that we continue to do our job as financial oversight of any issues financially related that we tie to and that we stay aggressive. We report as much to the residents as we do to the Select Board and we can't let that be forgotten, so we do have certain obligations. They may be tough. They may be uncomfortable, they make others feel uncomfortable, but we do have an important oversight role and we have to stay on top of that. I think it proved its effectiveness in the past. I just don't want to see us get caught like past Fin Com's did with mistakes or just being told "hey things will be fine" and they go OK and things are not fine. So I think we just have to keep that in mind as we move forward with the role we play general."

9. Items not known within 48 Hours: None

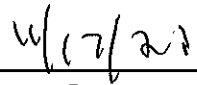
10. Adjournment:

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 9:01pm.

Passes 6:0 (Feely/Cooney)



Mr. Jack Cooney, Clerk



Date

