

# Town of Mansfield

6 Park Row, Mansfield, Massachusetts 02048

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**Finance Committee**

2022 NOV 18 A 8: 28



## Meeting Minutes 10.20.2022

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

Present Virtually: None

Not present: None

Arrived late: None

Guests: 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. **Approval of Minutes: 8/18/2022**  
**Motion:** To adopt the meeting minutes of 8/18/2022  
**Passes 7:0** (Cooney/Wilk)

### Approval of Minutes: 9/15/2022

**Motion:** To adopt the meeting minutes of 9/15/22

**Passes 6:1** (Cooney/Wilk) (Mr. Flaherty abstained as he was not at the meeting)

3. **Financial Report Update/Review**

Mr. LaCasse shared the FY23 Munis reports with the Finance Committee that covered the last three months, July, August and September. Both the Revenue and Expenses are tracking in accordance with where we are in the budget process which is about 25% through the fiscal year which is good news and there was not anything new to point out.

Mr. Eagle asked if we were going after any additional sources of revenue to help offset the cost for Cyber Security and is there an opportunity to come in and discuss the policy from a value stand point. Mr. LaCasse answered that they will be coming to Fin Com to ask for an appropriation from the Fin Com reserve for covering the full cost of the fiscal year for Cyber Security policy. Mr. LaCasse continued to state that the Town Manager had previously explained he was very happy with the policy and he was able to have Mr. Wilk view it as well but that it was more money then what was appropriated so we plan to come before Fin Com to sure up that account. Mr. Eagle inquired about the Town being able to find money/grants to help pay for this and Mr. LaCasse said yes.

4. **Budget Process Update:**

Ms. Walsh stated they had a budget meeting last week and the Town and Schools have launched their budget process. Mr. LaCasse stated the FY24 process really started back in April, 2023 and that they recently had new department head meetings to discuss the new money that was coming in and the FY24 budget challenges they are going to be facing as they wanted to be as open, honest and transparent with them. This way when the department heads go back to work on their FY24 budgets, they have an idea of what we are all facing so we can make FY24 work. He then mentioned it's going to be a heavy lift and a collaborative effort to really pull it together and that it was possible.

Ms. Walsh stated there were no issues regarding the PowerPoint part of the process. Regarding the data requests, the Schools did most of their requests and they were sent around. She then stated she had a good discussion with Mr. Dumas and Mr. LaCasse and their requests were fine and inline. In addition, the comparison to other towns via apples to apples is a Finance Committee project that can be talked about at the next meeting. Regarding the communication process, doing a Town/School joint article in January with the Sun Chronicle where we can talk about the process may be a good idea.

Mr. Eagle asked on the communication piece, is it the Town and the School together talking about the process and here's how we do it, like an educational piece or, here's how we do it and this is why this year is unique and troubling.

Ms. Walsh stated she thought the Town Manager and the Superintendent would explain where they are in the budget process, so a good message from the Town and the Schools. Mr. Wilk added it would also be good to call out inflation, contracts, and the issues that the Schools and Town are facing. Mr. LaCasse agreed and mentioned that one Town one budget approach would work with a joint statement to the citizens and letting the obstacles and challenges we have to face. Mr. Eagle then said there's value in adding in Fin Comm and to show we are a unified front and that we will do this together. He then stated trying to get it out as early as possible. He mentioned that there is a lot of anger from residents due to the increases in electrical costs that came out of nowhere, so the more we can prepare residents the more Fin Com can say they did their part to inform them.

Mr. Cooney asked Mr. LaCasse regarding his Dept Head meeting, it sounded like you delivered the message and they received it well, but did you walk through the budget like you did with the Budget Sub-Committee? Mr. LaCasse said the approach they took was to lay their cards on the table and show this is the new money we can expect for FY24 roughly 2.6 million dollars and then from there we identified five-six pretty significant challenges and showed how those challenges subtracted from the 2.6 million dollars which will show them what we are facing and how we need to work on this together. It was a daunting message but the parting message was we can all get through this if we all pull in the same direction. Mr. Eagle then asked with all the budget discussions, does that have an impact on Special Town Meeting and the spending of free cash? Mr. LaCasse answered that it absolutely does and it will change.

Ms. Walsh stated that would be something they could bring up in the Fall Town Meeting, is a little preview of what's coming in January and talk about how the approach to free cash has changed. That will show how we are being proactive. Mr. Wilk asked when the Fall Town Meeting was and Mr. LaCasse then stated it is scheduled for December 1<sup>st</sup>, and that it also ties into CIP on October 26<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Eagle asked Mr. Feely the CIP chair, is CIP thinking differently and he said yes. Mr. LaCasse stated after the Dept Head meeting you could see the paradigm shifted within moments and they began to think about what they could do without which was good for him to see as it shows that we all are pulling in the same direction. Mr. LaCasse also explained that the October 26<sup>th</sup> CIP meeting was just a refresher as the CIP Committee already approved the FY23 plan. However, Mr. LaCasse asked the Department Heads to review their requests and to see if the prices have changed possibly due to inflation and if there are any emergency items they didn't previously get approved. We received about fifteen new green sheets, nine were price changes and six were new items that needed to be accelerated. Ms. Walsh stated that the Schools are also taking the CIP requests very seriously as well as they always do.

Ms. Walsh asked Mr. LaCasse to confirm that the Chief Assessor shared information about the tax rate. Mr. LaCasse stated the Chief Assessor shared a presentation with the Select Board at their meeting and that he would share it with the Finance Committee.

Mr. Eagle then brought up the need for greater communication and if the Town Managers office could start to think about that and if there was a way to simplify the reporting as the survey conveyed that there's too much information and that you lose people. Ms. Walsh stated that she thought the new reporting with the schools would help in addition to the simplified metrics that the Select Board is working on which will help with getting snippets of information out to people so they understand it a little more and start to digest it. Mr. LaCasse agreed and said that's why the presentations are similar and that is one way of keeping it similar.

Mr. Feely said communication has always been a challenge and that the information is out there but then folks are surprised when they see rate increases for example. Mr. Wilk stated we do our job of getting the message out via public meetings, Facebook, articles in the Sun Chronicle and that it's the responsibility of the people too although they may want it in a different format. The Committee agreed that they would do their best to share any information like rate increases as they could so there would not be any surprises at Town Meeting.

Mr. LaCasse left the meeting at 7:58PM

##### **5. Discussion of Potential Fee and Comparison Project:**

Ms. Walsh stated that they had previously discussed looking into fees compared to other towns and where we left with Budget Sub-Committee. In addition, there was a need for the Budget Sub-Committee to partner with the Finance Committee on a project to create the metric/template given the various tools we have and to agree on the

right towns they want to compare too. Mr. Wilk stated we are trying to get apples to apples comparison but it will be hard as the metrics don't always show everything that happens like when the electricity is out etc. So, we just need to be careful. Ms. Walsh stated we just need a methodology to all of this and to identify what we want to compare and who we want to compare it to. The committee discussed different ideas of what they wanted to see. They also discussed having service fees reviewed so we can make sure we are charging for the correct amount for the services our Town provides. Mr. Feely offered that you can find out the last time the fee was approved via the year and Mr. Eagle added that this is something the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager were going to look into. Ms. Walsh mentioned that the Schools look at the fees as a part of their budget process and that the Town Manager, Mr. Dumas and Assistant Town Manager, Mr. LaCasse review the major revenue driver fees. Ms. Walsh stated that they need to work on this and define the process a bit more along with the Select Board and School Committee. Ms. Walsh asked for a volunteer to work on this process and Mr. Eagle agreed to do it.

**6. Town Department Head Initiation to Meetings:**

Ms. Walsh stated we wanted to have departments come in and visit to create a relationship with them, and to familiarize ourselves with their current issues. Mr. Dumas and Mr. LaCasse are very comfortable with this but we would like to have a schedule created. She then asked the Committee who would we like to invite, Mr. Wilk suggested the biggest departments: DPW, Police and Fire. Mr. Feely offered that on October 26<sup>th</sup>, CIP would be meeting to discuss any updates to FY23 or any new entries and invited everyone to attend if they were interested.

**7. Committee Updates:**

Mr. Cooney spoke about the success of the Fall Festival and how they are already talking about it for next year and how the sponsorships helped with paying for it. Mr. Feely said it started out drizzly but there were long lines for things like the Paddle Boats and the people really seemed to enjoy the event. Mr. Cooney stated that it was a big decision to keep the Festival on Saturday as the Town was going to lose a lot of vendors if they moved it to Sunday.

Mr. Eagle stated that they would be meeting with the schools in three weeks around November 17<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Walsh asked if anyone had any questions before they adjourn. Mr. Eagle asked about the upcoming schedule/dates. Ms. Walsh stated that they have their next Fin Com meeting on November 17<sup>th</sup> and then at some point the Town will need a Budget Line Transfer of funds. Ms. Walsh then mentioned the upcoming dates, January 1<sup>st</sup> 2023, the budget will be posted., January 10<sup>th</sup> is the School Committee budget presentation, January 11<sup>th</sup> the Budget Sub-Committee will be meeting to review the high-level stats preview of the version of the presentation and on February 8<sup>th</sup> is an all Board budget consensus meeting where they will start to talk about where they are. She also mentioned that there is a potential for the state to be delayed due to new administration so that might impact our process. Mr. Eagle then asked if it was safe to say that they possibly may need to vote on articles during their November 17<sup>th</sup> meeting and Ms. Walsh said she would find out.

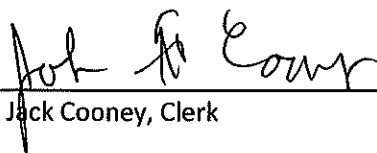
**8. Questions from Community: None**

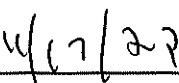
**9. Items not known within 48 Hours: None**

**10. Adjournment:**

**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting at 8:59pm.

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

  
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Mr. Jack Cooney, Clerk

  
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Date

