

Town of Longmeadow  
Minutes of the Finance Committee  
March 22, 2023 – Longmeadow High School-room A15

Finance Committee Members present: Nora MacKay-Chair, William Welch-Vice Chair, Erica Weida-Clerk, Mauri Garrett Jr, Andrew Lam, John Dineen

Visitors: Paul Pasterczyk-Interim Finance Director, Jason DuCharme-Town Accountant, Michael Barbieri-Select Board Administrative Assistant, Mark Gold-Select Board Vice Chair, Thomas Lachiusa-Select Board, Walter Gunn-Planning Board, Steve Weiss-CPC Chair, David Marinelli-CPC Committee, John Dearborn-Fire Chief, Nick Georgantas-Facilities Director, Lisa Okscin-DPW Business Manger

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm for a public hearing on the FY24 Budget.

The public hearing was closed at 7:09pm (all in favor 6-0)

**Visitor comments:**

Select Board member Thomas Lachiusa commented on the warrant article pertaining to the Opioid settlement money that was removed from the warrant. The warrant article would have allowed for the creation of a special stabilization fund allowing funds to be moved into verses leaving it as a budget line item in the General Fund. Mr. Lachiusa would like to ensure that the funds are spent on the intended purpose for use toward Opioid prevention, and programs.

Interim Finance director Paul Pasterczyk provided clarification that the reason the article was removed by the Select Board was in order to wait and see if the state would create special legislations allowing for the funds to be placed in a special revenue fund.

Mark Gold commented that the FY24 Budget meets expectations based on modest increases and that cuts to the electricity budget as well as the shifting of expenses within the DPW to the Stormwater fund along with only a 2% increase in medical benefits allowed for a level service budget to be achieved.

**Town Meeting:**

The Finance Committee voting on the following warrant articles for the upcoming annual Town Meeting:

<b>ARTICLE 2.</b>	<p>To see if the Town will transfer the sum of \$15,602.12, or a greater or lesser sum, from available funds in the Treasury, \$161.00, or greater or lesser sum from Sewer Retained Earnings, \$161.00, or greater or lesser sum from Water Retained Earnings, and \$160.99, or greater or lesser sum from Stormwater Retained Earnings, for the purpose of paying prior year's bills, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><b>Four-fifths vote required.</b></p> <p><i>It was discovered after the Town closed its FY 2022 financial records that certain commitments involving DPW expenses related to elevator maintenance, police road detail, autoperparts,</i></p>
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	<p><i>timeclock system and electrical supplies remained outstanding. This appropriation will allow the Town to make good on those commitments.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b><i>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</i></b></p>
<p><b>ARTICLE 3.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to transfer from available funds in the Treasury, \$115,000.00, or a greater or lesser sum for the purpose of implementing recommendations of a soon to be completed town-wide IT study, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>An IT study is in process and this warrant article will provide some funding to carry out recommendations in the study. The study includes inventory review, staffing structure and overall operation of the IT department and services provided to the Longmeadow Public Schools and Town Departments.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b><i>Not recommended by Finance Committee 4-2</i></b></p> <p>Notes on Discussion:</p> <p>A majority of the committee did not feel like there was enough information on what was being recommended, and therefore what the money was to be spent on, to support this warrant.</p>
<p><b>ARTICLE 4.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to transfer from available funds in the Treasury, the sum of \$200,000.00 or a greater or lesser sum, to add a pool liner to the Greenwood pool, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>This article is to pay, out of current year reserves, the cost of the Greenwood Pool liner originally appropriated through a bond authorization in Article #5 of the May 2022 Annual Town Meeting. The liner was ordered and installation is scheduled for late Spring prior to opening for the 2023 season.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b><i>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</i></b></p>

<b>ARTICLE 5.</b>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to rescind the \$200,000.00 borrowing authorization for adding a pool liner to Greenwood pool, as voted in Article #5 of the May 10, 2022 Annual Town Meeting, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>Should Article #5 be approved at Town Meeting, the bond authorization for the Greenwood Pool liner is no longer needed. Approval of this article will delete the bond authorization from the Town's financial records.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</b></p>
<b>ARTICLE 6.</b>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to transfer from available funds in the Treasury the sum of \$169,397.00, or greater or lesser sum, to the Operating Stabilization Fund, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>Per policy of the Select Board, all Free Cash remaining at the end of the fiscal year shall be transferred to the Operational Stabilization Fund established by vote of Town Meeting on November 18, 2003 pursuant to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40, Section 5B. This will help improve future credit rating opinions. Our most recent one from Standard and Poor's states our rating could be raised if "budgetary flexibility were to materially increase, including growth in reserve levels, along with making meaningful progress in mitigating its debt, OPEB, and pension liabilities." This article would help increase our reserve levels. The balance of the Operating Stabilization Fund as of January 31, 2023 is \$7,926,645. The June 8, 2021 Standard and Poor's Global Rating Opinion can be read on the Finance Department's web page on the Town website.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</b></p>

**ARTICLE 7.**

To see if the Town will vote to fix the Fiscal Year 2024 salary and compensation of the Moderator at \$1,000.00 and the Select Persons at \$2,000.00 each, to provide for a reserve fund, and to approve the Fiscal Year 2024 operating budget totaling \$80,802,613.00, or a greater or lesser sum, and itemized as follows:

General Government	\$2,019,590.00
Public Safety	\$6,140,695.00
Planning & Community Development	\$357,088.00
Schools	\$38,896,746.00
Department of Public Works (General Fund)	\$5,474,330.00
Community and Cultural Services	\$1,931,005.00
<u>Debt Service &amp; Town/School Employee/Retire Benefits</u>	<u>\$19,164,126.00</u>
<b>Subtotal General Fund</b>	<b>\$73,983,580.00</b>
Water Enterprise	\$3,324,712.00
Sewer Enterprise	\$2,252,011.00
<u>StormwaterEnterprise</u>	<u>\$1,242,310.00</u>
	<b>Total</b>
	<b>\$80,802,613.00</b>

\*\*And to fund the General Fund \$73,983,580.00 be raised and appropriated as follows: \$73,983,580.00 from general taxation; and to fund the Water Enterprise Fund \$3,324,712.00 be raised and appropriated as follows: \$3,324,712.00 from Water receipts; and to fund the Sewer Enterprise Fund \$2,252,011.00 be raised and appropriated as follows: \$2,252,011.00 from Sewer receipts; and to fund the Stormwater Enterprise, \$1,242,310.00 be raised and appropriated as follows: \$681,158.00 from Stormwater receipts and \$562,152.00 from general taxation, or take any other action relative thereto.

*An annual operating budget must be adopted and funded for Fiscal Year 2024 that begins on July 1, 2023. The Select Board's budget was reviewed by the Finance Committee, as required by the Town Charter. The Select Board's budget, as printed, is a balanced budget as required by Massachusetts General Laws and the Charter. The Select Board's FY 2023 recommended budget only utilized 1.75% of the allowable 2.50% increase authorized by Proposition 2 1/2, which creates an estimated \$396,769 in unused tax levy capacity. The Select Board's proposed budget is \$80,802,613.00. This budget achieves the goal of limiting FY 2023's tax increase to no greater than 1.75% of the allowable 2.50%, in accordance with the Finance Committee's firm recommendation that tax rate growth be constrained in order to delay an intersection with the looming \$25/\$1,000 mil rate tax ceiling.*

**Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0**

**ARTICLE 8.**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the following amounts, or a greater or lesser sum, for capital projects and that any remaining amounts from the capital projects be returned to the Capital Stabilization Fund:

**From Raise and Appropriate (FY 2024)**

Project Development	\$125,000.00
Project Reserve	\$25,000.00
Fire Truck Replacement Reserve	\$100,000.00
ADA Upgrades - Playground Replacements	\$555,000.00
Entry Vestibule (Wolf Swamp Road School)	\$185,000.00
School Lock and Access Control Upgrades (District Wide)	\$25,000.00
Grounds - Truck Replacement	\$80,000.00
Highway - Foreman Truck Replacement	\$70,000.00
Electric Vehicle - Code Enforcement	\$50,000.00
Road Paving / Guardrail Replacements	\$581,000.00
Sidewalk Reconstruction	\$425,000.00
<b>Sub Total From Raise and Appropriate</b>	<b>\$2,121,000.00</b>

**From Capital Stabilization Fund**

Road Paving / Guardrail Replacements	\$ 219,000.00
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$2,340,000.00</b>

*Annually the Town appropriates funds for capital expenditures. The FY2024 Capital Plan is funded at 3.00% of the estimated General Fund revenues less Debt Exclusion taxation as allotted for in their Capital Funding Policy.*

***Not Recommended by Finance Committee 4-2***

Notes from Discussion:

Committee member discussion focused on the ADA Upgrades - Playground Replacements portion of this warrant. The committee asked Nick Georgantas-Facilities Director if the full playground replacement was necessary to meet ADA compliance and if other options had been looked at if the goal was only to do ADA upgrades. No other options were provided. Reasons given for the full replacement were the equipment was at the end of life, the town was having difficulty getting replacement parts, and it would be could to get all three playgrounds rebuilt at the same time and not have to worry about them. Steve Weiss-CPC Chair also spoke regarding the CPC monies allocated in warrant 17, stating that they had written the warrant in such a way that the CPC money allocated could be used to address ADA upgrades if the amount of money for full replacement was not approved. After this discussion plan, a majority of the finance committee did not support this expenditure in the warrant. The full warrant was not recommended because of this.

Committee members did agree on the rest of the items in the warrant and discussed proposing an amendment to strip that item from the warrant at the town meeting.

<p><b>ARTICLE 9.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$46,000.00, or a greater or lesser sum, to the Town's Wage Settlement account for the purposes of funding non-union positions cost of living increases, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>This article funds cost of living increases in FY2024 for non-union positions.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b><i>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</i></b></p>
<p><b>ARTICLE 10.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$175,775.00, or a greater or lesser sum for the purposes of paying the FY 2024 District Improvement Financing (DIF) Debt Service, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>The District Improvement Financing (DIF) statute, M.G.L. Ch. 40Q requires the Town to annually budget for the debt service related to the Dwight Road / Maple Street DIF Program. At the 2017 ATM, the Dwight Rd Improvement District was created and a \$2.5 million bond was issued in August of 2018 for infrastructure improvements within the improvement district. Each year, the debt payment needs to be appropriated. The FY 2024 debt payment for the Dwight Road Improvement District is \$175,775. In FY 2023 the total estimated real estate taxes due are \$244,000.00 resulting in an increase of \$65,000.00 to the Town General fund along</i></p>

	<p><i>with an additional \$20,000.00 given to the Town by East Longmeadow as agreed upon in a twenty year DIF Inter Municipal Agreement.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b><i>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</i></b></p>
<p><b>ARTICLE 11.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$477,450.29 or a greater or lesser sum, from the state for highway improvements under the authority of M.G.L Chapter 90 including funds to be received in FY 2024, or any applicable laws, and to authorize the Select Board, if necessary, to apply for, accept, borrow in anticipation of state aid and expend such funds, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>The state annually allocates to the Town a sum of money to be spent on Town roads. This amount must be appropriated by town meeting. The Town spends the money first and is reimbursed by the state upon completion of the project.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b><i>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</i></b></p>
<p><b>ARTICLE 12.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to appropriate, the of sum of \$450,000.00, or a greater or lesser sum, to purchase a Fire Department ambulance, and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the Select Board, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to G.L. c. 44, §7(1), or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the Town, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>The purpose of this article is to allow the Fire Department to order and enter into a build contract for an ambulance. These vehicles have very long lead times (ambulance 25 months). Approving this article will allow the fire department to place this order and enter into a build contract to stay on our vehicle replacement schedule. Although we will be under contract and have this vehicle ordered, we do not pay for the vehicles until they are delivered. It is anticipated that prior to this vehicle's arrival, the ambulance fund will have sufficient funds to pay for the ambulance. The intention would be to appropriate the funds from the ambulance fund and to rescind this request due to having the funding available from the ambulance fund. This article simply allows orders to be placed knowing that a funding source has been clearly identified.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b><i>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</i></b></p>
<p><b>ARTICLE 13.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to appropriate, the of sum of \$525,000.00, or a greater or lesser sum, to purchase a fire engine for the Fire Department, or take any other action relative thereto, and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the Select Board, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to G.L. c. 44, §7(1), or pursuant to any</p>

	<p>other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the Town, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>The purpose of this article is to allow the Fire Department to order and enter into a build contract for a fire truck. This vehicle has a very long lead time (Fire truck 36 to 40 months). Approving this article will allow the fire department to place this order and enter into a build contract to stay on our vehicle replacement schedule. Although we will be under contract and have this vehicle ordered, we do not pay for the vehicle until it is delivered. It is anticipated that when this vehicle finally arrives, the fire truck fund will have sufficient funds to pay for the fire truck. The balance of the fire truck fund is anticipated to be \$ 557,584.00 as of July 2023. The remaining balance of this purchase is programmed in the capital plan. Providing that we continue on the annual investment plan as outlined in the capital plan, this fund will have enough funding for this purchase. The intention would be to appropriate the funding from the fire truck fund and rescind this request due to having the funding available from the fire truck fund. This article simply allows orders to be placed knowing that a funding source has been clearly identified.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b><i>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</i></b></p>
<p><b>ARTICLE 14.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Treasurer to borrow the sum of \$550,000.00, or a greater or lesser sum, for the purpose of purchasing a new Sewer Jet, and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the Select Board, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to G.L. c. 44, §7(1), or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the Town, and to be repaid in the first instance, from sewer system rates and charges, or to take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>This article is the pay for a new jet truck. The current jet truck was purchased in 2009 and has 60,000 miles. It is used 6 hours daily to clean out the sewer and stormwater systems in order to maintain the systems in working order. Continuous repairs have been made to this vehicle, including a septage holding tank, these repairs have cost \$11,000 in the past year. The estimated useful life of a jet truck is 10 years, the current vehicle is 14 years old and no longer reliable. Daily operation of the jet truck is essential to prevent backups into private properties as well keep us compliant with the MS4 permit. The lead time to get a new truck is currently about 2-3 years.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b><i>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</i></b></p>



<p><b>ARTICLE 15.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$8,000.00, or a greater or lesser sum, from the FY24 Community Preservation local surcharge and trust fund for administrative costs for the Community Preservation Committee, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>These funds are for any expenses incurred by the Community Preservation Committee. In FY 2022 the Committee spent approximately \$3,071.43 for annual dues for the state organization, and administrative matters. Any funds not used during the year are returned to the Community Preservation Undesignated Fund Balance account.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-</b></p> <p><b>0</b></p>
<p><b>ARTICLE 16.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to fund the Community Preservation Project to replenish the residential home modification fund in the amount of \$125,000.00, or a greater or lesser sum, funded from the Community Preservation Community Housing Fund balance, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>The Longmeadow Adult Center provides social services for many low-income residents in the community; some of these people are living in homes which need repair or modification for safe occupancy. This fund provides grants of up to \$10,000 to eligible residents for qualifying repairs and modifications. This will be the fifth such application funded by the CPC.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-</b></p> <p><b>0</b></p>
<p><b>ARTICLE 17.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to fund the Community Preservation project for replacing, repairing or augmenting the playgrounds at Blueberry Hill School, Wolf Swamp Road School, and Center School, consistent with achieving ADA accessibility standards, in the amount of \$125,000.00, or a greater or lesser sum, from the Community Preservation Open Space and Recreation Fund, and \$430,000.00, or a greater or lesser sum from the Community Preservation Undesignated Fund, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>The goal of the project is to provide some of the funding to modernize the elementary school playgrounds to meet safety and ADA accessibility standards, consistent with an active recreation area conditions assessment study commissioned by the Town. The total project cost for all three playgrounds is anticipated at \$1,900,000 +/-, with other funding coming from the FY2024 Capital Improvement Program and potentially the Town's American Rescue Plan allocation.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-</b></p> <p><b>0</b></p>

<p><b>ARTICLE 18.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to fund the Community Preservation project for renovating the fields at Glenbrook Middle School in the amount of \$50,000.00, or a greater or lesser sum, from the Community Preservation Undesignated Fund, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>The little league and softball fields at the school are overgrown and uneven, and in need of long overdue upgrades. This project will provide funding to obtain the engineering/specification studies to renovate the fields, and the funds to level and add clay to the fields.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</b></p>
<p><b>ARTICLE 19.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to fund the Community Preservation project to retain qualified trail contractors to execute a mapping and conditions assessment of Longmeadow’s public trails, in the amount of \$11,360.00, or a greater or lesser sum, from the Community Preservation Undesignated Fund, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>This project will provide funding to use GPS technology to provide GPS mapping of the trails in Laurel Park, Bliss Park, Turner Park and the Fannie Stebbins Memorial/Silvio Conte Wildlife Refuge, and to provide an assessment of trail conditions and recommendations for repair and maintenance of the trails.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</b></p>
<p><b>ARTICLE 20.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to fund the Community Preservation project for installing interior storm windows at the Storrs House Museum in the amount of \$18,530.00, or a greater or lesser sum, from the Community Preservation Historical Preservation Fund, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>The Storrs House is owned by the Library, but maintained by the Longmeadow Historical Society. The windows appear to have been installed in the 1930’s. This project will provide interior storm windows with UV filtering to help preserve the museum’s collections from the elements, as well as increase energy efficiency.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</b></p>
<p><b>ARTICLE 21.</b></p>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to fund the Community Preservation project for painting the exterior walls of the Storrs House Museum in the amount of \$18,530.00, or a greater or lesser sum, from the Community Preservation Historical Preservation Fund, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>The Storrs House is owned by the Library, but maintained by the Longmeadow Historical Society. The exterior walls of the museum need scraping and painting. This project will help preserve the building itself and the collections inside from the elements.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</b></p>

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<b>ARTICLE 22.</b>	<p>To see if the Town will vote to fund the Community Preservation project for increasing public awareness of Longmeadow’s remaining wild American Chestnut trees in the amount of \$1,955.00, or a greater or lesser sum, from the Community Preservation Undesignated Fund, or take any other action relative thereto.</p> <p><i>There are several surviving American Chestnut trees growing in Laurel, Bliss and Turner Parks. The goal of this project is to tell the story of the American Chestnut Trees growing in Longmeadow, by installing two informational kiosks adjacent to the existing trees.</i></p> <p><b>Recommended by Finance Committee 6-0</b></p>

Other:

Members of the committee would like to have the Town Manager provide additional information concerning articles 3 and 8 of the warrant, specifically the ADA upgrades for the school playground equipment mentioned in article 8.

Motion to adjourn at 8:52pm (Approved 6-0)