

Town of Longmeadow
Minutes of the Finance Committee
April 26, 2023 – Longmeadow Adult Center Conference Room

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

Members Absent: Andrew Lam

Visitors: Lyn Simmons-Town Manager, Sean Van Deusen-DPW Director, Jason DuCharme-Town Accountant, Mike Barbieri-Select Board Administrative Assistant, Stephen Metz-Capital Planning Committee Chair, Dan Murphy-Resident

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Visitor comments: There were no visitor comments.

Approval of Minutes:

The committee voted on the following meeting minutes:

A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of the 2/8/2023 meeting as presented. (Approved 4-0) Maury Garrett Jr. was absent at the time of the vote.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of the 3/23/2023 meeting as presented. (Approved 4-0) Maury Garrett Jr. was absent at the time of the vote.

Town Meeting Warrant Article Discussion:

The Finance Committee met to further discuss warrant articles number three and eight for the upcoming Town Meeting in May. The committee had requested additional information from Town Manger Lyn Simmons. The additional information provided on this day was needed in order to determine if the committee would change its original “No” vote from the 3/23/2023 meeting.

Article 3:

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. *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.*

Not recommended by Finance Committee 4-2

Notes on Discussion from 3/23/2023 Finance Committee Meeting:

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.

Discussion from 4/26/2023 Finance Committee Meeting:

Town Manager Lyn Simmons provided the committee with the following reasons for the warrant article: The town was awarded a grant from the state, which was used to hire a consulting firm to perform an analysis of both the town and school's shared technology department. The study provided the town with both hardware and software recommendations. As well as proper allocations of staffing and their use of time, a PC replacement schedule, and an analysis of the town's Munis software system. In order to implement the suggested recommendations additional funding is needed. Due to the timing of the study, being completed there was not sufficient enough time for the additional funding to be added to the school's FY24 IT operating budget line items for computer hardware and software. The alternative was to create a separate warrant article from available funds in the treasury in-order for the work to commence. A presentation concerning the IT study will be made available. Ms. Simmons also provided clarification to Finance Committee member John Dineen that the work will not be completed by June 30th, 2023.

A motion was made to amend the vote on article 3 from a no vote to approved

(All in favor 4-0) Maury Garrett Jr. was absent at the time the vote was taken.

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 |
| <u>Sub Total From Raise and Appropriate</u> | <u>\$2,121,000.00</u> |
| <u>From Capital Stabilization Fund</u> | |
| Road Paving / Guardrail Replacements | \$ 219,000.00 |
| <u>Grand Total</u> | <u>\$2,340,000.00</u> |

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 on Discussion from 3/23/2023 Finance Committee Meeting:

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.

Discussion from 4/26/2023 Finance Committee Meeting:

Town Manager Lyn Simmons provided the Finance Committee with additional information that pertains to this project. According to Ms. Simmons, all three-playground structures for the three elementary schools are in need of replacement and have long since passed their useful life of 8-10 years. Blueberry Hill and Wolf Swamp elementary school's equipment was last replaced in 2002, while Center school's equipment was last replaced in 1992. Ms. Simmons also explained that while the equipment has been well maintained and served its purpose over the years it is in need of upgrading and these upgrades are needed to make these playgrounds ADA compliant. It was noted that the prior leadership of the Town Manager and DPW did attempt to upgrade the equipment, but were unsuccessful. Moving forward a five-year plan to upgrade and maintain the equipment will be put into place with the upgrades being staggered. The total anticipated cost of the project is \$1.9M, which also includes replacing the woodchips surface with a rubber padding along with better drainage. Additional funding is being provided by Community Preservation article #17 for \$555,000. The additional funds needed to support the project will potentially come from a portion of the American Rescue Plan funds received (ARPA).

Capital Planning Chairman Stephen Metz also joined the meeting and mentioned that the Capital Planning Committee was not in support of the use of this money for this project. The Committee would

have preferred to see the funds used to upgrade roads and sidewalks and that it would have been more equitable to divide the funding up for this project over a period of two years.

A motion was made by John Dineen for the committee to enter into further discussion on warrant article number 8. Approved (5-0) William Welch absent via zoom during vote

Finance Committee member John Dineen questioned why the funds were not reallocated to cover roads and sidewalks before the amounts were finalized and allocated to each project. DPW director Sean Van Deusen responded to the question by discussing the capital asset management analysis that is on-going concerning these projects. He also explained that when the analysis is completed the additional funding needed for those projects would be revisited again in the near future. Finance Committee member Maury Garrett Jr. commented that the repairing of roads and sidewalks is an on-going process verses the upgrading of playground equipment. Upgrades to equipment is not done on an annual basis compared to funds that will continually need to be allocated toward roads and sidewalks on an annual basis. Lastly funding for projects such as playground equipment should not be in competition with funding for roads and sidewalks. Mr. Garrett also commented that the Finance Committee has a responsibility to vote on this article based on the committee's assessment of the information provided; recommendations need to be made based on the committee's opinion of the warrant article not based on the perception of what is expected. Finance Committee member Erica Weida commented that there will also be additional costs needed to maintain the additional equipment as well as questioned what will the future replacements costs be. Ms. Weida also reiterated that this is not just a one-time cost for the town and that no other options have been presented just one large replacement plan. She then questioned what upgrades will be needed to the other playgrounds in the town. Town Manger Lyn Simmons stated that the need is greater for school playgrounds verses the public playgrounds as the school playgrounds are required verses the town's public parks which are considered accessories, or amenities.

A motion was made by Erica Weida to rescind the vote from the March 23, 2023 meeting to amend article 8 removing the amount of \$555,000 from the article.

Not recommended by Finance Committee (5-0)

Discussion on amendment:

Lyn Simmons suggested the finance committee tour two similar parks in Springfield that look very similar to the plans for the elementary schools.

Maury Garrett Jr. commented that not recommending this amendment would result in a non-recommendation of the entire article.

John Dineen commented that he was not in favor of the approach to not recommend the entire article.

The recommendation will remain as is.

William Welch would like to review the materials that will be distributed by the Town Manger and discuss again at the next meeting.

Finance Committee Chair Nora Mackay suggested meeting again the day of Town meeting to discuss this matter again. The committee would possibly vote on another amendment to article eight. Select Board Administrative Assistant Mike Barbieri commented that if the committee were to vote to amend the warrant article again that the new amendment be provided to the moderator in advance of the meeting. Maury Garrett Jr. commented that it is not required but, a courtesy that the committee provide the amendment in advance to the moderator.

Other:

Next meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 9th at 6pm

Motion to adjourn at 8:02pm (Approved 6-0)