

**Finance Committee and Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2024
Town Offices
Hybrid Meeting**

The open Hybrid session of the Town of Whately Finance Committee/Selectboard was called to order on March 19, 2024, at 6:00pm by Chairperson Paul Antaya. Present were Committee members Tom Mahar, Jim Kirkendall, Dan Kennedy, Paul Newlin, JD Ross, and Brenda Doherty (Via Zoom). Selectboard members Fred Baron, Julie Waggoner, and Joyce Fortune (Via Zoom) were present. Co-Interim Town Administrator Patricia Vinchesi, Administrative Assistant Jessica Murphy, Highway Superintendent Keith Bardwell, Town Clerk Amy Lavallee, Fire Chief JP Kennedy, SCSC Director Jennifer Remillard, FCTS Superintendent Rick Martin and Tri-Town Beach Commission Representative Kenn Cuddeback.

1. To review and vote to approve the meeting minutes from February 20, 2024

Motion made to accept minutes from February 20, 2024. Motion seconded. All in Favor. Roll Call Vote. Paul-yes, Tom-yes, Brenda-yes, Dan-yes, Jim-yes.

2. To discuss fiscal year 2025 operating budgets

Jennifer Remillard began discussion on personnel expenses, including salary increases and the potential transition of a part-time position to full-time. The concern is raised about the sustainability of positions funded by grants, in which Jennifer expressed no concern on her end, noting that these specific grants have been around for various years. Jennifer discussed transportation services for seniors, a request for funding for a new vehicle to improve accessibility. Jennifer discussed meal services and food support programs, including deliveries and partnerships with organizations like Snap and the Department of Transitional Assistance. Jennifer noted the increasing senior population as a factor which is influencing budgetary needs and service demands.

Rick began discussing that there has been a 3% increase across the board. Rick discussed that Whately has a total of 18 students enrolled, creating a cost of \$17,531 per pupil with the average being \$12,252. Rick shared assessment and enrollment, explaining that the assessment for FY25 is lower than the previous year due to the drop in student enrollment. Rick shared that there are currently 2 applicants from Whately, and 5 that will be graduating, noting that the numbers should be at the same or lower next year, based on what we currently have. Rick discussed that current District Enrollment is 571 with a projection around 593 for next year, noting the large graduating class of 130 and incoming class of about 180.

Rick discussed Debt Services, and a project that took place 8 years ago in which the Town paid \$6,421 for the 15-year bond.

Keith began discussion regarding a significant increase in line painting costs due to factors like contract terms and increased pigment prices. Keith shared that despite fluctuations in the price of salt, the budget seems to be in good shape, with the possibility of returning funds due to effective management of materials. Keith shared that advertising costs related to tree hearings and legal notices were highlighted as particularly expensive but necessary due to regulatory requirements. Keith discussed more about the town's requirement to purchase hybrid or electric vehicles as part of the Green Communities initiative, explaining that there are delays in procuring vehicles, noting the pickup truck regarding gasoline vs. diesel options. Keith discussed need for specialized equipment to maintain guardrails efficiently and reduce labor requirements, especially concerning issues like poison ivy exposure.

Ken began discussion on revenue streams including permits, day passes, seasonal passes, and potential event fees. Ken explained that there is future exploration of potential programs like water aerobics, senior center activities, and kayak rentals. Ken discussed different proposals for dock installations to improve safety and access for lifeguards and visitors, along with discussions on funding and approval processes.

Brant began discussion about labor expenses mainly consisting of clerk work for attending meetings, preparing minutes, and other associated tasks. The speaker estimates these expenses based on approximately 8 hours of clerk work per meeting, at a rate of \$20 per hour. Brant discussed expenses for legal advertisements when holding public hearings on zoning amendments, in which he budgeted for two such hearings, estimating \$600 per hearing for legal advertising. Brant explained that there is additional expenses include postage for mailing notifications to affected parties, a training budget for new members, and collaborative planning training for new board members offered by a local organization in Massachusetts.

JP began discussion regarding a relatively small overall increase of 2%. JP explained that he has done some housekeeping on the budget just from looking at past budgets, sharing that he has dropped postage costs and decreased funds for electricity, communications, pagers and radios. JP noted that he should be receiving pagers from a Grant that was previously applied to. JP explained that he's taken off line items for pre-employment physicals, noting that there are already funds budgeted for the Town. JP stated that he is continuing to pursue whatever grants available, sharing that the Town was awarded an \$8,000 grant from the State, that will cover most of 2 sets of turnout gear. JP also shared of a Federal Grant he recently applied for, which is a highly competitive grant in which the town would be awarded \$174,000 to replace all equipment, making Whately's portion approximately \$8,000, noting that portion could potentially be absorb in the Fire Department budget if needed.

The Committee will plan to meet on April 16, 2024, to further discuss budgets.

3. Items not anticipated

4. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 7:55 pm. Motion Seconded. All in Favor. Roll Call Vote. Paul-yes, Tom-yes, Brenda-yes, Dan-yes, Jim-yes.

Document List

Meeting Minutes from February 20, 2024

Fiscal Year 2025 Comprehensive Budget

Initial Budget Book Inserts, FY25.