

ADVISORY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes
February 15, 2023, Hybrid Meeting

PRESENT **13 members of the committee were present:**

Gail Butler, Louis Cabana, Kevin Canty, Brian Dunn, Bruce Howard, , Joe Lalley Timothy Lawlor, Christine Richards, Evelyn Strawn, and Robert Zupperoli. Steve Nearman, Bethany Rogers, Ashley Shaw.

ABSENT **1 member of the committee was absent:** Steven Keith

Call to Order - The meeting was called to order by Chairman Kevin Canty at 7:00 PM.

Announcements

- **Hybrid Meeting:** This meeting is likely to be conducted in a hybrid format, with some participants attending physically and others attending virtually via a video conference application.
- **Ways to Watch:** The meeting will be airing on Comcast 15, Verizon 47, or on PACTV’s YouTube channel which can be viewed at pactv.org/stream.
- **Public Comment:** Any speaker giving public comment is allotted up to 5 minutes in which to speak. Public Comment can be made at the beginning or end of each meeting, or in regard to a particular agenda item the speaker wishes to be heard on
- **Zoom Login Information:** Anyone who wants to attend the meeting virtually, including members of the public who wish to give public comment, can use one of the following methods in which to do so:
 - **Join via Zoom application:** Download the Zoom meeting application on your device, press/click on “Join”, then enter Meeting ID: **995 2986 0638**, and then the Meeting Password: **100131**, or
 - **Join via website** (requires microphone): Go to www.zoom.us, click “Join A Meeting” on the top righthand side, and enter the meeting ID: **995 2986 0638**, and then the meeting password **100131**, or
 - **Join via Telephone (voice only):** Dial **929-205-6099** and Enter Meeting ID: **995 2986 0638** and enter Meeting Password: **100131**

Public Comment Chairman Canty advised that Mr. McGrath has resigned and thanked him for his service on the committee.

Agenda Items

Minutes:

Approve February 8, 2023, meeting minutes: Tabled.

Reserve Fund Transfer Request – Chairman Canty advised that Town Manager Derek Brindisi requested a Reserve Fund Transfer that will be used to supplement the printing and mailing (20,000) of the Proposed New Charter to all Town Meeting Members (TMM). Town Manager Brindisi advised that they thought it would be helpful to TMM’s to have the redline version of the proposed New Charter. He advised that the quote for \$75,000 is quite high, and they will seek another quote before deciding, and they are requesting \$60,000 presently to supplement the remaining balance of \$15,000 in the Charter Commission budget. Mr. Brindisi advised that they would continue to look to reduce the cost. The document will be a 68 page stapled booklet and 28,000 redline versions will be mailed to all households. An additional 1,000, clean version, booklets will also be printed and distributed to the Library, Center for Active Living and Town Hall. Mr. Nearman asked if the Town Manager had considered sending a post card notifying citizens where to access the electronic version. Mr. Brindisi advised that they had but considered this but the Charter Commission didn’t agree with this approach and sought Town Counsels’ opinion. Anderson and Kreiger, Town Counsel used by the Charter

Commission throughout this process, took a hardline interpretation of the State Statute and opined that the document needed to be printed and mailed to all residents. Mr. Dunn said considering the number of pages it isn't as expensive as it sounds. Mr. Kevin Lynch, Precinct 5 Vice Chair, suggested putting this on hold while considering alternatives. He advised that he and his constituents feel that \$50,000 over the original cost of \$25,000 warrants further investigation. He also suggested quotes for newsprint, not high-quality print, since it is just going to be thrown out once read. Mr. Brindisi feels the charter should be in the hands of Town Meeting members before the PACTV forum on March 13 and therefore is requesting a vote tonight. Mr. Alan Costello also requested that Advisory & Finance (A&F) postpone voting until reasonable 3 quotes are secured. Ms. Richards suggested that PACTV postpone the forum, since that time constraint is driving the expediency to get this printed and into the hands of TMM's. Mr. Brindisi stated that was a question for PACTV. Mr. Lalley asked when the publication had to be to TMM, Mr. Brindisi advised 2 weeks prior to the election. Chairman Canty feels that the election is a few months away and the sooner TMM's get the Charter the better. Mr. Zupperoli motioned to approve the request. Ms. Strawn second. Ms. Strawn feels the sooner it gets out to the public the better. Mr. Zupperoli feels that if the second quote comes in lower the Town Manager will only spend what is necessary. Mr. Dunn feels the importance of transparency and TMM's need time to review. Ms. Shaw feels that if this is so important and time sensitive why wasn't a newspaper print quote requested? She isn't in support of rushing. Mr. Lalley feels that newsprint would be in tatters after he got through with it. Ms. Butler also feels that they could have gotten quotes sooner so it wouldn't be such a rush and that most residents aren't going to read it. Ms. Richards feels that with the increase of costs it is reasonable and the assumption that many won't read it is disingenuous to the residents. Ms. Rogers understands that costs have gone up and everyone deserves to receive a copy but a newsprint quote should have been provided and that the most financially responsible way to get this to TMM's would benefit the citizens. Mr. Zupperoli said that the Old Colony Newspaper has already published the Charter and an electronic version may not be feasible to all members. He also feels that it is arrogant to assume that people won't read this. Ms. Butler feels everyone has the right to read and vote on the Charter but the voting numbers are down and she doesn't think this is going to bring out the voters. The motion carried 7-6-0 with Chairman Canty voting to break the tie.

Budget Hearing

Annual Town Meeting

Article 7A - Operating Budgets

For the full report go to:

https://www.plymouth-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf3691/f/uploads/all_fy24_sub-committee_reports.pdf

Sub-Committee Report A

Ms. Butler discussed the Sub-Committee A budget by Department. Mr. Webber asked about the funding for the new Assistant Human Resources Director. Mr. Genao advised that he was proposing a reduction of \$87,625 in primarily the Technical and Medical Services budgets to offset the increase. The Sub-Committee recommends a decrease to the Town Manager budget of \$88,463 to the Select Board voted budget. All other department budgets in Report A were approved consistent with the Select Board recommended budget.

Mr. Cabana motioned to approve the Sub-Committee A recommendations to Town Meeting. Mr. Dunn second. Motion Carried unanimously, (12-0-0)

Sub-Committee Report B

Ms. Richards discussed the Sub-Committee B budgets by Department. The Sub-Committee recommends an increase of to the Finance Dept budget of \$88,463 to the Select Board voted budget. All other department budgets in Report B were approved consistent with the Select Board recommended budget.

Ms. Strawn inquired if the committee should wait to vote since there may be a change to this budget in

another Sub-Committee recommendation. Chairman Canty suggested that the committee vote this recommendation now and if another Sub-Committee change effects this vote the committee can vote to amend a vote previously taken.

Mr. Howard motioned to approve the Sub-Committee B recommendations to Town Meeting. Mr. Lalley second. Motion carried unanimously, (12-0-0).

Sub-Committee Report C

Chairman Canty discussed the Sub-Committee C budgets by Department. All department budgets were approved consistent with the Select Board recommended budget.

Ms. Shaw asked if there would be any impact to those departments that had positions cut, even though the positions cut were vacant, with the expanding community. Chairman Canty advised that both the Police and Fire Chief would prefer to be fully staffed for the long term. Chief Flynn advised that candidates are hard to come by and retention has been a problem but they are still maintaining the same level of service, despite the shortages.

Mr. Cabana asked what impact the budget cut to the White Horse Beach area will have on the Natural Resources operations. Chairman Canty advised that the Natural Resources operations will continue in the area but their ability to assist Parks and Recreation will be impacted under this budget.

Mr. Lawlor motioned to approve the Sub-Committee C recommendations to Town Meeting. Mr. Nearman second. Motion carried unanimous, 11-0-0. Ms. Butler was out of the room.

Sub-Committee Report D

Mr. Lalley discussed the Sub-Committee D budgets by Department. Mr. Lalley advised that the Sub-Committee is recommending a change to the distribution of the DPW Highway budget from what the Select Board recommended but the DPW Highway budget amount remains the same. All other budgets were approved consistent with the Select Board recommended budget.

Mr. Dale Webber, Precinct 3, is opposing adding the Assistant Operations Manager position and would like more boots on the ground and not more management. With the current hiring freeze he would like an explanation on why this was being proposed now and the justification. Mr. Brindisi, Town Manager, advised that the vacant Civil Engineer Tech position is being expanded to handle more areas, such as the 311, and as a support position to the Highway Manager. Mr. Lalley advised that this generated some dialog at the Sub-Committee meeting also and as Mr. Brindisi pointed out this is a support position.

Mr. Dunn recommends the Select Board recommended budget. Ms. Richards second. Motion carried with Chair voting the break the tie 6-5-2, opposed were Mr. Howard, Mr. Lalley, Mr. Lawlor, Ms. Strawn and Mr. Zupperoli. Ms. Butler and Mr. Nearman abstained.

Sub-Committee Report E

Ms. Strawn advised that the Committee is recommending an increase to the Library budget of \$60,000 over the Select Board budget. All other department budgets in Report E are consistent with the Select Board recommended budget. The Committee felt that a town the size of Plymouth needed an outreach program for all citizens and that staff to accomplish this would be necessary so they want to fund the vacant position being cut.

Mr. Steve Lydon noted that the Master Plan is expensive and there should be funding available to go out the bid. Ms. Strawn advised that there isn't a scope yet so they can't go out to bid. The Master Plan Committee has discussed doing the Master Plan in smaller sections to make the amount manageable.

Mr. Brindisi recommended that the \$60,000 increase being proposed for the Library, if recommended, be put in

salary reserve to be consistent with School Education proposal. Chairman Canty asked Mr. Brindisi if this position would be advertised. Mr. Brindisi would like to wait till the fall and see how revenues are before committing. Ms. Shaw asked if this would be a new initiative in the fall because that is what she was trying to avoid. Mr. Brindisi stated that it wouldn't be a new initiative.

Mr. Zupperoli made a motion to amend something that was previously adopted to increase the Salary Reserve account by \$60,000. Mr. Howard second. Motion carried unanimously 12-0-0.

Ms. Strawn made a motion to approve Sub-Committee E Budget consistent with the Select Board recommendation. Ms. Shaw second. Motion carried unanimously, 12-0-0.

Sub-Committee Report F

Mr. Zupperoli discussed the School Committee budget. He discussed the three budget scenarios that the School Committee considered. He discussed the drivers of the budget including transportation, Special Ed and utilities, and further the challenges the school faces. Some of the challenges are the unfunded and underfunded Mandates that the State imposes on schools. He discussed methods of reducing costs. He discussed the impact of Covid and that the education lost to the pandemic could take 3 to 7 seven years to recover from.

Sub-Committee F is recommending a budget consistent with the Select Board budget for all school budgets and to increase the Salary Reserve Fund by \$800,000 to avoid any future (FY24) reduction in force. Mr. Lalley asked if the impact to the overall budget is \$800,000. The answer was yes. Ms. Shaw asked what the public could do to help the school in their quest to make the State accountable. Chairman Canty suggested that getting legislation for larger towns to get funding for transportation would be a good start. Dr. Campbell, Superintendent, advised that transportation is an extraordinary expense as Plymouth is a unique community due to size etc. Mr. Webber, Precinct 3, would like some clarification regarding the school purchasing buses, how that reduces costs and where it is in the budget process. He also inquired whether Plymouth's past separation from the Regional School District is now hurting us.

And lastly, Mr. Webber inquired about using the Cafeteria Revolving Fund to install new floors at PCIS when historically the Cafeteria fund has been used for the benefits of the Nutrition employees. Dr. Campbell advised that the school did purchases buses using ESSER funds at a cost of \$107,000 per bus, so you won't see it in the operating budget, for some of the smaller operation routes, to curb costs, but in the long run they don't want to be in the full transportation business. Dr. Blaisdale, Business Manager, echoed that the purpose of the in-house small scale transportation is to cut down on the expenses of transportation but not take over the operation.

Dr. Blaisdale advised that the Cafeteria fund has always been a self-sufficient fund that paid the salaries and benefits of the employees and the costs of the food. During Covid the Federal and State Government subsidized free lunches for all and when the Federal program reverted back to free and reduced lunch the State stepped in and subsidized the rest of the funds for free lunches for all and that is why the Revolving fund has such a significant balance. Dr. Blaisdale advises that the Revolving fund can be used for Cafeteria related expenses including improvements to the cafeteria floor but they did reach out the State for further confirmation and that is why they used the Cafeteria Revolving fund to replace the floors at the PCIS cafeteria.

Ms. Richards asked why transportation fees haven't increased in the last 20 years yet the cost has increased significantly. Dr. Campbell advised that they reviewed the fees and feel that an increase would be a financial burden to families.

Chairman Canty clarified that the \$800,000 increase would be through the raise and appropriate process and not free cash as the Old Colony Memorial erroneously reported.

Ms. Butler made a motion to amend a vote of a previously adopted item, Sub-Committee B. Mr. Zupperoli Second. Motion carried 9-1-2, Ms. Richards opposed. Mr. Cabana and Mr. Nearman abstained.

Mr. Zupperoli made a motion at the Sub Committee F budget recommendation consistent with the Select Board recommended budget. Ms. Strawn second. Ms. Shaw feels this support will be necessary due to Covid 19 and the rapid expansion rate. Motion carried unanimously 12-0-0.

Article 7B – Water Enterprise Budget - Sub-Committee Report G

Mr. Nearman discussed the Water budget and advised that the revenue is from the rate payers who get Town water. The committee voted to recommend the Sub-Committee G Water Budget consistent with the Select Board budget. Mr. Dunn motioned to approve. Mr. Howard second. Motion carried unanimously 12-0-0

Article 7C - Sewer Enterprise Budget - Sub-Committee Report G

Mr. Nearman discussed the Sewer budget and the committee recommends the Sub-Committee G Sewer Budget consistent with the Select Board budget. Ms. Butler motioned to approve. Mr. Cabana second. Motion carried unanimously 12-0-0

Article 7D - Solid Waste Enterprise Budget - Sub-Committee Report G

Mr. Nearman discussed the Solid Waste budget. The committee voted to recommend the Sub-Committee G Solid Waste Budget consistent with the Select Board budget. Ms. Richards motioned to approve. Ms. Rogers second. Motion carried unanimously 12-0-0

Article 7E - Airport Enterprise Budget - Sub-Committee Report G

Mr. Nearman discussed the Airport budget and the committee voted to recommend the Sub-Committee G Airport Budget consistent with the Select Board budget. Mr. Lalley motioned to approve. Mr. Lawlor second. Motion carried unanimously 12-0-0.

Article 7F - Cable Public Access Enterprise Budget - Sub-Committee Report G

Mr. Nearman discussed the Cable Public Access budget and advised that it acts as a financial pass thru for receipts received from Verizon and Comcast. The receipts are disbursed to PACTV and Plymouth Public Schools for costs associated with governmental and educational programing. The fees are decreasing due to the increase in streaming resulting in a decrease in Cable subscriptions. Mr. Howard asked if we should be considering subsidizing this. Ms. Barrett advised that this is hard to predict but the Town should keep a close eye on this. The committee voted to recommend the Sub-Committee G Cable Budget consistent with the Select Board budget. Ms. Shaw motioned to approve. Ms. Strawn second. Motion carried unanimously 12-0-0.

Old/New/Other Business - None.

Public Comment - None.

Adjournment - Mr. Nearman motioned to adjourn. Mr. Zupperoli second. Motion carried unanimously 12-0-0. The meeting adjourned at 10:42 PM and the Public Hearing is now dissolved.

Submitted by
Jeanette White
Budget Analyst