



Board/Committee Name: Finance Board  
Date: February 15, 2023  
Time: 5:00 p.m.  
Location: Town Hall – Main Meeting Room  
183 Main Street, Groveland, MA 01834

**Present:**

Board Members: Ruth Rivard, Sarah McGrath, Melissa Baker, Jim Scanlon, Alexander Woods,

Absent Members: Bill O’Neil

Other Attendees: Rebecca Oldham, Town Administrator, Robert Valentine, Fire Chief, Mike Dempsey, Conservation Commission and Community Preservation Committee, Ellen Petrillo, Town Accountant and Michele Beegan, Treasurer/Tax Collector

**Opening:**

The regular meeting of the Finance Board was called to order at 5:02 p.m. on February 15, 2023 by Ruth.

**Department Budget Reviews – Fire Department:**

Chief Valentine joined the meeting to present his budget request. He noted that his budget request included a 2% increase in call wages. This increase is due to the overall increase in the number of calls being responded to as well as trying to build up the per diem amount over time to cover vacations for the full-time firefighters and create EMS coverage to reduce the amount call firefighters are called. He noted that both his fuel and association dues budgets have also increased due to the rising cost of fuel and increases in the dues, respectively.

Chief Valentine also noted that the grant that has been funding the salaries for the full-time firefighters ends on December 31<sup>st</sup> and as such one-half of their salary will need to be funded during this fiscal year. He noted that these firefighters are a necessity as they allow for better responses times to calls, can complete necessary inspections timely and are both certified for car seat installation/inspection. One of firefighters is a CPR instructor and has done public safety trainings within the community.

A discussion ensued regarding the increase volume of calls, which is expected to reach 1,000 calls this year. Chief Valentine said the increase is partially attributed to more people working from home due to pandemic related changes and people being more cautious with odors that smell like

gas after the incident that happened in a neighboring community. When there were no further questions, Chief Valentine excused himself from the meeting.

### **Department Budget Reviews – Conservation Commission, Community Preservation:**

Mike Dempsey joined the meeting to present his budget request. Mike reviewed several of the expense line items noting that they are not significant and cover multiple aspects (signage, education), the commissioners' stipends, and the salary of the Environmental Program Coordinator/Agent staff. Mike noted that the staff person takes the load off the volunteer commissioners and requires a lot of expertise to understand bylaws and other regulations.

Mike noted that their goal is to protect the wetlands and natural resources. As a result of the pandemic, some of the projects as it pertained to town forests and town land are behind. Mike reviewed the Community Preservation Act ('CPA') funds, which are derived by a 3% tax included as part of the property taxes and receive a match from the state. He then reviewed each of the proposed projects noting that the money must be spent within specific guidelines on Open Space, Community Housing, Historic Preservation or Recreation:

- 1) All-Terrain Vehicle & Trailer (Recreation: approximately \$11,000) – This purchase would allow the Police and Fire Departments to access the Community Rail Trail in the event of an emergency as their vehicles cannot access the trail. It is dependent on the receipt of grant monies of approximately \$43,000.
- 2) Rehabilitation of Lucile's Cottage Phase II (Historic Preservation/Recreation: approximately \$19,000) – This is a multi-phase analysis on how to better utilize the cottage at Veasey Memorial Park as an art studio.
- 3) Feasibility Study for Veasey Memorial Park (Historic Preservation: approximately \$20,000) – This is to hire a consultant to identify options for sustainability of the park on a long-term basis.
- 4) Washington Hall Paving/Hydroseeding (Historic Preservation: approximately \$22,000) – This is to complete the final paving and landscaping due to the original project running out of funds due to increasing prices.
- 5) Cemetery Monument Restoration (Historic Preservation: approximately \$32,000) – This is to continue restoring old and historic grave markers located in the cemetery.
- 6) Washington Street Basketball Restoration (Recreation: approximately \$44,000) – This is to rebuild the basketball court that is currently not usable in its current state.
- 7) Tree Preservation (Historic Preservation: approximately \$99,000) – This is to address the preservation of historic trees (30-50 years old) at places like Veasey Memorial Park and Elm Square.
- 8) Splash Pad at Pines Recreation Area (Recreation: approximately \$110,000) – This is to construct a splash pad at the Pines Recreation Area, which would attract families with smaller children.

- 9) Tennis and Pickleball Courts at Pines Recreation Area (Recreation: approximately \$154,000) – This is to construct a tennis court that could also be used as two pickleball courts.
- 10) Skate Park at Pines Recreation Area (Recreation: approximately \$450,000) – This is to construct a skate park at the Pines Recreation Area, which is highly requested.
- 11) Parking Lot at Shanahan Field (Recreation: approximately \$482,000) – This is to construct a parking lot at the field to alleviate dangerous traffic issues that exist today.

When there were no further questions, Mike excused himself from the meeting.

#### **Department Budget Reviews – Town Accountant:**

Ellen joined the meeting to present her budget request. She noted that there have been a lot of changes, such as group meetings, that have allowed for more cohesive process with other departments. Ellen noted that she would like to focus more on financial forecasting (setting indicators and determining how to reach them). She noted noting that everything has been level funded except for the 2% salary increase.

A discussion ensued regarding the departments working together more closely and how the development of the financial policies has helped. When there were no further questions, Ellen finished her presentation.

#### **Department Budget Reviews – Treasurer:**

Michele joined the meeting to present her budget request. She noted that she has been working on the tax title account, which has had some improvement because of approximately \$400,000 being collected. She also noted that the largest amount owed, which is approximately \$200,000 including interest, is for the former Valley Manufactured Products Company, commonly referred to as ‘Valley Screw’. She noted that the Town of Groveland would be able to foreclose on the property at the end of May. She indicated that with the addition of the Assistant Treasurer, she has had some more time and has been looking at ways to use more functionality within the VADAR system and looking at how the investments being invested.

Michele noted that most of the request has been level funded. She did note that she is looking to have the Assistant Treasurer position increased in hours as well as rate. Rebecca clarified that the hours would be redistributed from the Planning and Economic Development Assistant position, where it is currently being used, due to the greater need in the Treasurer/Tax Collector Office. Michele also noted that she is looking to increase the budget for tax title because each filing costs money and it does end up going negative every year, which is allowed. She noted that it is a difficult number to estimate because it cannot be predicted which accounts will or will not pay its taxes, but our expense line item is significantly smaller than other communities. When there were no further questions, Michele excused herself from the meeting.

**Department Budget Reviews – Town Administrator:**

Rebecca noted that she continues to have a hard time balancing the budget with the anticipated revenues and budget requests, including the assessment from the school. Jim asked whether it was feasible to anticipate a balanced budget without the need for an override noting that third party vendors do not care about Proposition 2½ limitations. He also noted that we don't have excess staff, but rather not enough staff and they have been asked to do a lot over the years. A discussion ensued regarding an override and gathering of information that would be beneficial in informing and educating the community.

**Pentucket Regional School District ('PRSD') Budget Meeting:**

Ruth noted that the meeting was a high-level discussion regarding what was looking to be restored after the previous year's cuts. She also noted that there was a website that had all the budget related information that the PRSD School Committee members received.

**Meeting Minutes:**

Melissa noted that she distributed the meeting minutes from the December 21, 2022 meeting. There were two minor changes (correction of the members attending/absent and the correction of an incorrect word). Ruth made the motion to accept the revised minutes, which Alex seconded. The motion was approved 3-0-2 with Sarah and Jim abstaining due to not attending that meeting.

**Town Administrator Informational Updates:**

No other items were noted.

**Plan Next Meeting and Agenda:**

The next regular meeting will be held on March 1, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.

Sarah noted that the new Council on Aging Director wanted to come before the Finance Board again to present a revised budget. This was because the budget was prepared by his predecessor and he had not had an opportunity to review it as it was his first week of employment. Sarah made a motion, which Melissa seconded, to allow the revised budget presentation. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Other Items Not Reasonably Anticipated at Time of Posting:**

No other items were noted.

**Adjournment:**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Sarah, seconded by Melissa, and approved unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 7:06 p.m. by Ruth.

Minutes prepared by: *Melissa Baker*

Minutes approved on: March 22, 2023

**Meeting Materials:**

1. Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Materials
2. Draft December 21, 2022 Meeting Minutes