

**Town of West Stockbridge
Finance Committee**

Public Hearing Meeting Notes: 02/29/24 6:00 PM

In Attendance:

Fin Com Members - Bob Salerno, Steve Sautman, Ed Sporn, Frank Landsberger, (Dan Buehler -absent)

Other: Marie Ryan – Town Administrator, Kathleen Keresey (Select Board), Andy Potter (Select Board), Andy Krouss (Select Board), Curt Wilson (Director Dept of Public Works), Jamie Boyer (DPW – Supervisor)

1. Accepted Minutes from the Finance Committee Meeting FY25 Budget review on 2/23/24. Frank-Approved, Ed-Seconded, All-Ayed.
2. Bob Salerno proposed to approve the revised Town Investment Policy. Frank-Approved, Ed-Seconded, All-Ayed.
3. Frank Landsberger proposed adding a Special Article to help fund the 250th Anniversary of West Stockbridge celebration since there is no provision in the FY25 budget for it. The plan is to hold the celebration at the Historical Society Building during the town's Zucchini festival. Frank proposed an amount of \$7,500 to come out of Free Cash.
 - a. Steve asked if this new proposal is following the budget review process since we have already reviewed the proposed budget. Bob clarified that any citizen can propose a Special Article to be added to the budget which will be voted on at the Town's meeting.
 - b. Ed-Approved motion, Frank-Seconded, All-Ayed with Bob abstaining.
4. Solicit Public Input on budget.
 - a. Curt Wilton as Director of Public Works commented on presented budget V5 which stated the in the Comment column "Parity / Job Change" for line Town Bldg & Grounds Superintendent Salary, that there is no job change. He ask to change the comment to only "Parity" in the printed budget to be shared with the town.
 - b. Curt Wilton as a citizen questioned the select board if it is a good idea to set a precedent of opening up a contract during its cycle instead of at the end to renegotiate pay as they have done with the Police Chief contract. The select board has not opened up other contracts such as with the Director of Public Works and Town Administrator. Curt has sent a letter to the board and is waiting their response.

- i. The Select Board is in negotiations with the Police Chief. The contract has not been finalized. The increase in the budget is based on the proposed salary from the Police Chief. The Finance Committee approved the increase amount based on what the final contract dictates.
 - c. June Biggs asked why some of the pay increases were due to parity while others were not. She also asked if the same pay increase was used across the board for all positions.
 - i. Bob Salerno responded that the Finance Committee only reviewed and approved the proposed increases requested from the different departments. Some of the departments justified their increases to be in parity with the surrounding towns. Other pay increases were dictated by contracts. Some departments did not ask for a pay increase in the budget and therefore were not giving pay increases.
 - d. June Biggs also asked what the overall budget increase was.
 - i. The overall budget increased 6.08% from FY24.
 - ii. The Education budget (which is 52.4%) increased 6.71% from FY24 which is just giving to the town.
 - iii. The rest of the budget increased 5.38% from FY24.
 - iv. The Education Budget MLC distribution to West Stockbridge is based on the number of students and the property evaluation, which both had increases for WS.
- 5. The Finance Committee called to vote on the budget as a whole for all line items and Special Articles. _Frank-Approved, Ed-Seconded, All-Ayed.
- 6. Frank Landsberger made a motion to thank Dan Buehler for his 6 years on the Finance Committee since Dan is not running for another term. Frank stated that Dan is the "Nestor of our committee and source of its wisdom." We wish Dan the best in his retirement.

The meeting adjourned at 6:28 PM.