

BOARD OR COMMITTEE: Finance Committee

DATE: Thursday March 16, 2023 **TIME:** 6:30 pm

LOCATION: Videoconferenced on Zoom, link below

Meeting Minutes

Attending Gabe Voelker, Chuck Hartwell, Claire McGinnis, John Bonafini, Michelle Tontodonato and Dr Liz Z.

Call to order at 6:30 pm

Discussion

1. Police Department budget request – John is asking for two full time officers which is a big jump in year over year budget, but John feels it necessary to keep up with training requirements. Feels without the full time employment he won't be able to retain staff.
2. Mahar Budget request is a 4.9% increase in this request in expenses. 23% increase in school building leadership. Bruce Mitchell is retiring, having done job as Dean, and his replacement is at higher salary, shifts expense from general ed to leadership sections within their budget. General Ed doing a rebound following pandemic reductions. Governor's Healey's Budget 1 did not have increase in regional transportation at 90% that she promised on campaign trail. New Salem enrollment down 8 students. Schools chapter 70 went up over \$300K, which is huge in comparison to prior years. New Salem's proposed assessment is lower for FY24 than current year, due to our reduced student enrollment.
3. Mahar Capital Stabilization description. Two articles placed on the warrant as they school currently has no emergency fund. Excess & Deficiency that the school is allowed to carry from one year into next, accumulating small year end surplus, is capped at 5% of operating budget. Anything over is returned to towns as an assessment reduction in the following year. The accounts would provide another way to accumulate savings to fund capital or special education spikes or emergencies, without awaiting the next year budget or going to all four towns for a special town meeting. The will be going to MSBA for roof replacement project in the next few years. Capital and Special Ed stabilization categories, which Finance Director wants to fund through E&D excess and Medicaid reimbursement of special ed qualifying services. They are willing to put restriction in warrant wording to state source is surplus E&D or Medicaid reimbursements. Michelle agreed to forward new language for the Special Town Meeting scheduled which includes these two articles.
4. Next meeting Monday evening 6:30 with Select Board, then 7:00 same night with Wendell Fin Comm to hear Swift River budget proposal. See if we can hear the Fire Chief Capital requests Friday 3/24 at 10:00 am if Joe is available.
5. Adjourn 7:55

Documents Referenced:

Police Chief's budget request

FY24 RCM Budget Information to Member Town Officials 3-10-23