

Freetown Board of Selectmen
Combined Meeting with Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 17, 2024, 6:00pm
Police Station Community Room
15 Memorial Drive, East Freetown, MA

Call to Order

Selectmen Trevor Matthews opened the meeting at 6:04pm. Stated this meeting was intended to be a joint meeting with the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen. The Finance Committee does not have a quorum. He noted the meeting would be recorded and be on the Town's YouTube Channel. The Finance Committee Chair Margaret French stated at 6:04pm and not having a quorum present, the Finance Committee joint with the Board of Selectmen meeting will not be in session. The Finance Committee will stay public for the Board of Selectmen meeting to ask questions as members of the public. Selectmen Jared Zager, Selectmen Carlos Lopes, Town Administrator Deb Pettey, Executive Assistant Lu-Ann Souza and Administrative Assistant Lola Furtado were also in attendance.

Combined Meeting with Board of Selectmen & Finance Committee

Discussion/possible action on the following topics:

1. Omnibus Fiscal Year 25 Budget Review with Finance Committee. It is anticipated that Departments listed below will be reviewed. Others may be discussed as may come up or as they relate.
 - a. Building
 - b. Fire
 - c. Police
- a. Building Commissioner - Carl Bizarro

Commissioner Bizarro was asked about the electricity at the Police Station. Since there were no maintenance programs in place last year, there will be this year for the fire suppression systems, air systems and water system. The electricity runs about \$52,000.00. Fees did go up this past year. The department is much more efficient now because of the online permitting and providing services to the taxpayers. The Highway Department upgrades added an automatic door opener and the fueling pad had repairs to it. Mr. Bizarro complemented the Board, Town Administrator and his colleagues for all their help. We are in Union negotiations, and what you are seeing in the payroll budget is what they are being paid today. The Board asked about new construction inspections for commercial and residential. They may consider a plan review charge for the future.

b. Fire Department - Chief Harrie Ashley Jr.

Chief Ashley stated there was one new fire fighter. Money was added to the comp time line. Union negotiations are ongoing. A federal staffing grant was applied for more personnel. Two people are retiring in two and half years and they would like 2 more once the towns economic growth starts to happen. There is a new fire truck on order and it is a contractual agreement, which we are locked into. Last years ambulance cost was \$384,000.00. A new ambulance will be around \$550,000.00 which has contingency money built into the quote. It all depends on the fire station addition which we are waiting for the final numbers on. We have free cash available. There will be a warrant article at the Special Town Meeting to fund the fire station addition because we know we are short by at least a Million Dollars. Which leaves us with no contingency money and we have not put it out to bid yet. Ms. Pettey's thought process was to make the warrant article around 1.5 or 1.6 Million because there are other things in the fire station addition project that was pulled out of the project. Consisting of a new generator, a new roof, furniture and window shades. We can do these items cheaper and more economical by themselves. The ambulance may have to wait a year which is fine with the Chief. Civil Defense has a small increase. Fire replacement equipment has doubled. Fulltime staff gets a set of compliant turnout gear. Head to toe is about \$4,000.00. He buys three sets a year which goes to the new people at the academy. No component can be more than 10 years old. His goal is to buy six sets of turn out gear a year and transition everyone so they have 2 complete sets of turnout gear that's compliant and every fifth year they get a new set. Keeping it perpetual. If someone leaves, the gear stays with us.

c. Police Department - Chief Scott Rose

The Union has a contract in place and most of the increases are contractual. The IT contract went from \$500.00 to \$8,100.00. The private contractor was called upon on a needed basis. As the technology grew in the station it was wise to actually have a well-designed IT budget to do maintenance work monthly with a scheduling fee outside of the contract. Sick and vacation buyback has gone down. Police Other Purchase Services, this line item deals with contractual agreements that includes software services, shredding service, Lexus Nexus, copier maintenance, website maintenance, Space Saver Shelving maintenance, Power DMS and other agreements. Additional Staffing Request due to officers being injured on duty and officers becoming new dads on FLMA. Annual trainings or specialized trainings. Leading to shortages on shifts and open vacancies. Trying to reduce overtime has been very challenging. This will help with overtime. Looking into a grant for new officers. No new cruisers this year. It was mentioned the department might need extra equipment. Ms. Pettey stated we would fund that if we had to at fall Town Meeting. Clothing allowance is around \$1650.00, vest \$900.00. The department is required to keep up with all the leather gear for all the personnel \$300.00 to \$400.00.

Communications has no changes until Union negotiations are done. Town-wide fuel is in budget for this year and hoping it continues into next year.

Public Input

- Motion to adjourn was made at 7:33pm by Selectmen Lopes and seconded by Selectmen Zager
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

Respectfully Submitted,



Lola C. Furtado
Administrative Assistant

List of documents utilized by the Board/Finance Committee during this meeting:

- Agenda
- 2025 Budget Binders