



TOWN OF FREETOWN
Finance Committee
3 North Main Street/P.O. Box 438

Assonet, MA 02702-0438
PHONE: 508-644-2201; FAX: 508-644-3342

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FREETOWN TOWN CLERK

2021 APR 20 AM 8:36

Cheryl C. A. Estrella

Minutes of

MEETING: 5:30 PM Thursday March 4, 2021

Virtual Meeting. A recording of this meeting is posted on the town website and the Town of Freetown YouTube Channel

Call to order 5:37 PM

Present – Gary Martin - chair, Katie Calheta, Carol Woldorf, Christine Shea-Dupras, Kent Wilkins

Absent – Robert Alderson, Craig Rosen

Town Administrator Peter Jankowski was expected to join the meeting to introduce himself to the Finance Committee and offer his thoughts on proposed by-law changes affecting preparation of the Omnibus Budget, but he didn't show up.

There was much discussion of four issues with the existing by-laws regarding the Finance Committee we might want to propose changes to. Those issues are:

1. Should the Finance Committee be elected or appointed? How many members should it have? If appointed, who should be the appointing authority? If appointed, when should the terms begin and end?
2. Who should prepare the Omnibus Budget: the Town Administrator or the Finance Committee?
3. Should the deadline remain as February 1 for departments to submit their budget requests?
4. Should the Finance Committee be restricted to providing recommendations on financial articles on the Town Meeting Warrants or have the option to make recommendations on non-financial articles as well?

Motion by Katie, seconded by Christine, to recommend to the Town Meeting Study Committee that it propose a by-law change making the Finance Committee consist of five members recommended by majority vote of the Finance Committee and appointed by the Town Moderator. Approved unanimously. Yes: Christine, Carol, Kent, Katie, Gary.

The reasoning is that it is hard to find seven people willing to collect signatures on nomination papers and if there are unfilled seats, members get appointed as it stands now. Seven is on the high end for Finance Committees in Massachusetts and a large majority of them are appointed.

Motion by Carol, seconded by Kent, to recommend to the Town Meeting Study Committee that it propose amending by-law Article 4.3 to remove the responsibility for preparing a budget from the Finance Committee. Approved unanimously. Yes: Christine, Carol, Kent, Katie, Gary.

The reasoning is that the Town Administrator prepares the budget according to by-law Article 3.3(E)(2)(a), Town Counsel advises that that supersedes Article 4.3, in recent history the Town Administrator has prepared the budget, and the Finance Committee does not have the time to carry out such a large task.

Motion by Christine, seconded by Katie, to recommend to the Town Meeting Study Committee that it leave unchanged the by-law requiring departments to submit their budget requests to the Finance Committee by February 1. Approved unanimously. Yes: Christine, Carol, Kent, Katie, Gary.

The reasoning is that there is no means of enforcing this deadline, but keeping it on the books could encourage departments to start the process early.

Motion by Kent, seconded by Carol, to recommend to the Town Meeting Study Committee that it propose a by-law change making terms on the Finance Committee begin on July 15. Approved unanimously. Yes: Christine, Carol, Kent, Katie, Gary.

The reasoning is that July 15 is the deadline for transfer requests for the fiscal year ending June 30, so new appointees would no longer start their terms in the middle of budget and Town Meeting Warrant Article discussions, but, instead, would have nearly seven months to become familiar with the workings of the Finance Committee before the busy time arrives.

Motion by Carol, seconded by Kent, to recommend to the Town Meeting Study Committee that it leave unchanged the portion of by-laws 2.7 and 4.3 regarding the requirements of reports, advice, and recommendations of the Finance Committee. Approved unanimously. Yes: Christine, Carol, Kent, Katie, Gary.

The reasoning is that the current by-laws permit the Finance Committee to recommend for or against any article, financial or otherwise, on a Town Meeting Warrant, but also allows it to choose to make no recommendation, which is what the committee usually does for articles with no obvious financial implications.

Katie presented a report on what the Regional School Finance Committee has been discussing.

Motion by Christine, seconded by Katie, to adjourn at 6:50 pm. Approved unanimously. Yes: Christine, Carol, Kent, Katie, Gary.

Minutes prepared by Gary Martin