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Freetown Finance Committee
Combined meeting with the Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes

Tuesday May 4, 2021 – 5:30pm
Police Station Community Room
15 Memorial Drive
East Freetown, MA 02717

5:30pm Call to Order

Board of Selectmen

Selectmen Matthews called the meeting to order at 5:31pm. Selectmen Zager, Selectmen Grunwald, Town Administrator Peter Jankowski, Executive Assistant Lu-Ann Souza, Department Heads, Town Accountant Kim Fales, Library Director Nicole Davignon, Bev Sadeck, Amy Sypher, Water Sewer Commission members, Paul Sadeck & Lee Baumgartner, Timm McIntosh, Finance Committee members Gary Martin, Robert Alderson, Katie Calheta, Margaret French, Emily Anne Dors, Christine Dupras, and Kent Wilkins were also present.

Gary Martin called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:31pm.

Selectmen Matthews ran through how the evening will flow.

Discussion/possible action on the following topics:

Agenda

1. Presentation and discussion on the remaining areas of the budget listed below

Water/Sewer Commission – presented by Bob Parker.

Mr. Parker noted they are doing their normal operating budget and have no large projects planned. They went over the budget with Town Accountant Kim Fales and they agreed this was a solid budget to present. Mr. Jankowski asked if there was any planned development in Town that would need water this year? Mr. Parker noted there will be a development for senior housing but that will not happen this year. Selectmen Grunwald asked if the contractor would absorb the costs of water. Mr. Parker stated that would be the case.

Library – Presented by Nicole Davignon.

Nicole Davignon noted only change she added a programming budget line. Offering programming on recreational educational programs for adults, teens and children. They are doing most of their program as take home and do programming at the James White Library. They hope to get back to in person programming soon. Mr. Jankowski asked if we met your

requirements. To be certified by state the town has to a lot a certain amount towards library which we are currently a little above that number.

Tree Warden - Tree Warden Maurice DeMoranville was not present. Mr. Jankowski noted no change in salary, increase rental for rentals and leases and police detail to cover prevailing wage. Selectmen Grunwald asked if paying prevailing wage is a new thing. Mr. Jankowski said before he was not required to do prevailing wage, but he is required to do so now. Selectmen Matthews asked what is rental and leases. Mr. Jankowski said it when he engages someone to come out to do larger projects as needed. Selectmen Grunwald asked if the police detail costs are coming from this budget. Mr. Jankowski said they are for the related projects.

Accounting – presented by Kim Fales

Ms. Fales noted there really were no changes to this year's budget. Her contract expires this year so there is no budgeted increase for next year currently. The amount for the assistant is the rate from the collective bargaining agreement. The stipend for educational incentive is flat. She has reduced the amount to repair and maintain equipment as it has never been used so it was reduced to \$50. Meetings and trainings have been reduced by \$100. She noted the conference and training she attends. The bookbinding has gone up a bit but that will be to get two years of books bound. Postage was dropped to \$100. Increased for other purchase services for Shred it – vendor who destroys records once Secretary of Archives approved destruction. Office supplies is funded level. Travel was not spent this year but have reduced it as some trainings are not happening. Reduced memberships by \$500. Overall, there is a budget decrease from last year.

Auditing – presented by Kim Fales.

Ms. Fales noted we have an engagement letter for a rate of \$19,750 for FY22 audit. The fee could increase \$5,000 because of the pandemic and the Town receiving significant amount of funds if the Town receives more than \$750,000. This additional \$5,000 will be covers by CARES Act. Auditor is Roselli Clark and Associates.

Capital Building – presented by

\$10,000 to replace carpet and floors due to safety hazard. This was presented in the last date by Barbara Place. Mr. Jankowski asked if Jeff Chandler submitted one for windows at Town Hall. Ms. Fales noted that she did not receive one. Mr. Jankowski noted Ms. Fales staff counted the windows in Town Hall. Ms. Fales said there are 60 windows in Town Hall. Mr. Jankowski noted that it is about \$1,000 per window so he would like to see that money added to the budget. Ms. Fales asked to confirm that she is adding \$60,000 for windows. Mr. Jankowski said yes. He continued that he has had a meeting with Mary Rezendes-Brown from Historical Commission regarding this. Mr. Jankowski will ask Fire Chief to submit an estimate for Boiler and soffits and painting need to be done at Fire Station.

Conservation Commission – Keven Desmarais was unable to attend. Mr. Jankowski noted they had no changes in his budget. Selectmen Zager noted that he received a text message from Mr. Desmarais that budget was level funded and he was unable to attend this evening. Mr. Alderson asked is the salary line for a per person stipend for the commissioners. The monies are for the clerk the commissioners do not receive a stipend. They are looking to hire 2 gatekeepers 10 hours/week seasonally from May 18 – Sept. Mr. Alderson asked if Keven Desmarais is being paid. Kim Fales stated Mr. Desmarais is not paid for this position. Selectmen Matthews asked if the gate keeper position has been filled. Ms. Fales said it has not and is unsure if it has been posted. Mr. Jankowski noted that the conservation commission hires their own staff.

Finance Committee – presented by Gary Martin.

Mr. Martin noted they are keeping everything level. The big item is money for a clerk which has been an open position for a while. They are hoping it will get filled as they need someone to do the minutes. Mr. Martin said there was someone who may be interested. Mr. Jankowski noted we can post again. Mr. Martin noted they do a joint mailing sometimes with the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Martin noted they can pick up the fee for a fall mailing.

Reserve Fund – presented by Gary Martin.

Mr. Martin noted it was submitted at \$90,000 but has been corrected to \$125,000 which is what it has been set at for many years. Selectmen Matthews asked what this account is for? M. Fales noted this is where money comes for budget transfers. Ms. Fales said the amount of the appropriation goes down and is transferred to the department who has an approved request.

Legal – presented by Peter Jankowski.

Increased to \$125,000 due to legal rates going up, having to do all Collective Bargaining Agreements, Copart and Excel fees are unpredictable as well. He noted that we spent \$112,000 in a calendar year. Selectmen Matthews is there a contingent reserve for lawsuits do we have monies set aside in the budget for this. Stabilization fund you could utilize or do an override if you had a court order settlement to pay.

Town Administration – presented by Peter Jankowski.

Mr. Jankowski noted he has his salary \$125,000, administrative assistant salary \$36,000, Executive Assistant \$62,000. He noted Executive Assistant is less than former employee. Admin. Increased as he did not want a union employee for this office. Increased monies for engineering which will help with Excel and Copart as well. Increased monies for trainings for procurement training. Dropped membership and dues to \$700.

Health – presented by Peter Jankowski

We are in transition from the new Health Agent who was here only 2 months so this office has been in change for a while so salaries have not been changed except for anything that happens from collective bargaining. Ms. Fales said these would need to be voted at Town Meeting before they are allocated. Mr. Jankowski was unsure if Clerical will be done before Town Meeting. Increase to \$5,000 to help cover beach testing. He wanted to add a line item for beach and boat ramp and parks as we have not done much with these areas lately and he wants to put \$15,000 in there. He noted he would like to do improvements, picnic tables, defined swimming area, fence, covid signage and other required signage, bring in sand for beach, millings at parking lot, cut back trees to increase parking, work at Hathaway Park and Boat Ramp, and basketball court. Selectmen Matthews asked if this stuff can be done inhouse. Mr. Jankowski said somethings we can do ourselves but things like water testing must be outsourced. He would like to maintain what we have and make some improvements as well. Ms. Fales asked we are adding \$15,000 to health budget as what type of an expense. Mr. Jankowski understood that the health budget took care of the beach. Ms. Fales said Other property services to take care of the beach. The boat ramp is covered by a revolving fund. Ms. Fales explained how the revolving fund works. The goal is to expand hours at the beach and the boat ramp. He noted that we have the ballfields and some of the fields need some help as well. Ms. Fales is asking how basketball court part of the health budget? Mr. Jankowski said we do not have a parks and recreation dept and it was under health previously. Mr. Fales suggested it went to facilities. Mr. Jankowski noted that he has some difficulty with facilities getting things done so he wants it in health. Ms. Fales said the fence and picnic tables are part of the \$15,000. Mr. Jankowski noted that it is. He also noted he wants the parks and rec. committee to weigh in. Selectmen Matthews noted he sat in on the first committee meeting. He noted they could do something at the bandstand and noted there has been some historical funding for that. Selectmen Matthews said he was told the beaches ended up in board of health as there was no clean place to put them.

Selectmen – presented by Peter Jankowski.

Mr. Jankowski noted the big things we have moved the Executive Assistant salary to Town Administrator Account. Increased dues and memberships for new Selectmen to attend trainings as these are coming back. Selectmen Matthews noted we may be going to a five-person Board of Selectmen so we would need to cover that expense. Mr. Jankowski said if that passed it would take more than a year to make that happen. Selectmen Matthews asked do we pay to use the police station for meetings. Mr. Jankowski said no. A finance Committee asked what does the parking clerk stipend cover. Mr. Jankowski noted there are two staff members who do this as part of this job they manage tickets. Mr. McIntosh confirmed this.

Management Info Systems – presented by Mr. Jankowski

He noted we just change IT service providers. The new person's rate goes up a bit but keeping the old person for Police and one project at the Fire Dept then the new person will do the Fire

Dept as well. Selectmen Grunwald asked did we allot enough monies for that. Mr. McIntosh noted all computers were upgraded at Town Hall. Selectmen Matthews asked we only have 20 Microsoft 365, that is correct. Town report stayed flat.

Economic Development – nothing received, place holder in the omnibus budget at \$2,000 per Kim Fales.

Parade & Fireworks – not happening this year.

DEP Hazmat – presented by Peter Jankowski

No longer apply, we changed ownership so the new owner will get that fee.

Pay raises – Mr. Jankowski noted that we not through CBA, he would recommend to fund all of those at 2% and if you are doing adjustments, they can put into Personnel Board in the fall. Selectmen Matthews said all non-union employees would get 2% and if employees feel they deserve more they can put request to Personnel Board. Selectmen Grunwald asked if we had a pay scale for each position. Mr. Jankowski said we do not, he noted in a small community employee end up doing multiple jobs.

Trash collection and disposal budget needs to be increased based on the vote at last evenings Board of Selectmen's meeting. For disposal \$64.79/ton from Crapo Hill their contract expires June 30th, we asked for a 5-year contract, they came back with a 1-year contract. SEMASS starts at \$90 per ton. Mr. Jankowski's recommendation is to do the 1-year contract with Crapo Hill and that will give us time to figure out where we will go as Crapo Hill is going to shut down by 2027. Selectmen Matthews would like to lock in with SEMASS sooner than waiting and being in competition with every other town looking for trash. First line item will need \$457,000 instead of \$374,128 as indicated in budget books. Mr. Jankowski noted the fee should be flat to cover bringing to Crapo Hill. The acceptance fees will be \$64.94. Selectmen Zager noted that Crapo Hill has a lot of towns using Crapo Hill and once they close everyone will be looking to go to SEMASS and it would be best to get ahead of it. Selectmen Matthews agreed. Cost of getting rid of recycling currently budgeted at \$64,000. Mr. Jankowski said he has not discussed with Borges where the recycling is going so, he will be in touch with them to figure out what that cost will be. Mr. Jankowski asked should we increase the green bags? Gary Martin questioned why was 2020 higher than other years. Miscommunication between health agent and vendor for bags so more were printed than originally intended so we had to pay for them per Kim Fales. Other supplies at \$225 will stay flat.

Mr. Jankowski asked if the Historical Commission submits anything? Ms. Fales said no.

Selectmen Matthews asked how does the school budget been done in the past? Mr. Martin said the Finance Committee would invite Superintendent to come to one of their meetings. Selectmen Grunwald said the Board of Selectmen historically the school committee submits the budget to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Alderson said there is 4.35% increase for the school budget requested for this year and previous years about the same increase. He noted the school committee gives us a budget and we just pay it. Selectmen Grunwald noted there should be lower expenses for things like buses due to COVID. Mr. Alderson noted there should be a lot of decreases as there is a lot of COVID money floating around. Mr. Jankowski said in his former town he would have finance committee; school committee and selectmen would sit down and discuss the budget and sometimes the school would reduce the budget as it had to be approved by both towns. Selectmen Matthews said if we vote down the budget what happens. Selectmen Grunwald said it can be voted down at Town Meeting. Mr. Alderson asked if we would sit down with the schools. The superintendent presented the budget at a school committee meeting so you could watch that. Mr. Alderson asked does Lakeville have a finance committee. Selectmen Grunwald said there is a combined school committee finance group that votes on the budget. Mr. Alderson asked are we going to sit down with the schools? Selectmen Grunwald said we could. Mr. Alderson said a lot of things did not happen due to COVID school buses for example so he would like them to explain what the increases are for.

Mr. Alderson noted that the school budget is almost as large as the entire town's budget and there will never be any reductions, so we need to take a closer look at it.

Selectman Matthews said this is something we can look at for a process to have all parties comes to the table to discuss.

Mr. Alderson noted that most of the Town's budget is salaries and benefits. Mr. Jankowski noted that only health is covered and all other communities he has covered dental, health, eye and others benefits that the Town of Freetown do not cover. Selectmen Grunwald noted that Fire subsidized about 50% of their budget. The Town Hall tries to make money but it not what we are in the business to make money but to provide services. Mr. Alderson noted we would not want Police to be self-funded as everyone would get a ticket. His question is not the cost but to justify the money in the budget to the taxpayers. How come my taxes are going up I'm not getting any more services for it? Mr. Alderson noted the biggest elephant in the room is the school system. Selectmen Grunwald suggested to meet with the Select Board in Lakeville to see where we all stand on this topic. The regional finance committees do not have any voting just informational. Mr. Alderson said it would benefit both towns to have the selectmen meet to discuss things. Mr. Jankowski said that is a good idea to meet over the summer to see how to attack the next school budget. Selectmen Matthews said we need to find out when the

school has their final budget numbers are out and then set up a meeting to discuss. Selectmen Grunwald suggested to meet with them before they give the budget and say we will not go over 3% or whatever. Kim Fales has provided Selectmen Matthews and Mr. Jankowski with a spreadsheet of where we are at budget wise. Mr. Jankowski asked in regards to Expenditures vs Revenues are we balanced? Ms. Fales is unable to answer that at this point.

Mr. Jankowski asked what are the next steps? Selectmen Matthews noted the Finance Committee can review and vote on the budget and get back to the Selectmen and take it from there. Mr. Martin noted they are meeting next Thursday and will get back to the Board of Selectmen After that.

Mr. Martin asked are we going to be discussing the school budget. Selectmen Matthews noted that he was unsure.

- Motion to adjourn meeting at 7:08pm was proposed by Selectmen Grunwald and seconded by Selectmen Zager.
- Vote: approved in a unanimous roll call vote

Respectfully Submitted,

Lu-Ann Souza

- Motion to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting at 7:09 pm was proposed by Katie Calheta and seconded by Margaret French. Vote: approved unanimously by voice vote.

Added by Gary Martin

