



TOWN OF FREETOWN
Finance Committee
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Minutes of

MEETING: 5:00 PM Wednesday March 24, 2021

Joint with the Town Meeting Study Group

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

Call to order 5:21 PM

Present – Gary Martin - chair, Katie Calheta, Craig Rosen, Kent Wilkins, Christine Shea-Dupras.

Absent – Bob Alderson.

Mike McCue: Finance Committee recommends changing Article 4.3 to align with Article 3.3 E 2 A to give the Town Administrator the responsibility for preparing the budget.

Trevor Matthews: We should get the Town Administrator's input. Historically, the Town Administrator has been doing it for as long as we've had a T.A. Prior to that, the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen argued over who should do it. Christine clarifies that the change in the by-law would bring the by-laws into agreement with actual practice.

Mike: Finance Committee recommends allowing the Finance Committee to decide which warrant articles have financial impacts, allowing it flexibility to make recommendations on articles that do not have immediate impacts on the current or next fiscal year budget. Everyone agrees that that's a fair description of the Finance Committee's position and Trevor says he has no problem with that.

Mike: Should the Finance Committee be renamed the Advisory Committee to reflect this broader interpretation of its role? Ellen Lima suggests leaving it alone because the more general name would attract people with strong interests in controversial issues but no interest in finances. There is general agreement.

Mike: Finance Committee recommends leaving the budget submission deadline as February 1. There is general agreement.

Mike: The Finance Committee recommends changing from a 7-member board to a 5-member board, with members appointed by the Moderator for terms beginning July 16 from candidates recommended by a majority of the Finance Committee.

Carol: who can suggest people for appointment?

General agreement that anyone can suggest people to the Finance Committee, who would then recommend them to the Moderator, or not.

Mike: Before the 1970s, the Finance Committee was appointed by a 3-member appointing committee consisting of the Moderator, the Chair of the Board of Selectmen, and the Town Clerk. Suggests maybe replacing the Town Clerk with the Chair of the Finance Committee.

Christine: Having to be interviewed by a committee would dissuade people from volunteering to serve.

Kent: Would it be a conflict for the Chair of the Finance Committee to act on his/her own reappointment?

Craig: Why is everyone against an elected committee?

Group: Most volunteers are not willing to collect signatures to get on the ballot.

Trevor: Are candidates subject to campaign finance laws?

Group: Yes.

Mike reviews how other towns do it. They are all over the map.

Carol: How about an appointing committee of two Finance Committee members and the Moderator.

Mike takes a straw poll: Gary, Christine, Carol, Ellen, Trevor, Katie and Kent support Carol's suggestion. Craig says leave it as an elected committee.

Mike: Does the Finance Committee want to get this on the warrant for the June 2021 Town Meeting?

Kent: Sooner is better.

Gary: The June meeting usually has too much other business to devote time to this.

Mike: If we want the change to take place before 2023, it would have to be at the June meeting.

Mike: Would it help to make the change from 7 to 5 soon?

Discussion of details leads to decision to wait for the autumn.

Kent: Should we vote to change our recommendation for the start of terms from July 15 to July 16?

Mike: That's not necessary. The recommendation will come from the Town Meeting Study Group and they know we prefer July 16.

Mike polls the Town Meeting Study Group about next meeting. They settle on June.

Gary polls the Finance Committee about the next meeting. We settle on March 31 at 5:30.

Motion to adjourn at 6:17 pm: Kent. Second: Carol. Approved unanimously. Yes: Gary, Christine, Katie, Craig, Carol, Kent.

Minutes prepared by Gary Martin