

Spencer Finance Committee Joint with Board of Selectmen  
March 16, 2023 7:00 PM  
Spencer Town Hall, McCourt Social Hall  
157 Main Street, Spencer, MA 01562

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The meeting may be viewed on Spencer Cable Access channel 194 or at SCATV.org

#### Agenda

- 1) Call meeting to order at 7:07 PM by Chairman Braney for Finance Committee and Vice-Chairman Howard for Board of Selectmen

Members attending: Mary Braney, Chair, Chris Bowen, Nancy Tame, Ed Sproul, Charles O'Connor, Jonathan Viner, and Bill Shemeth (Town Moderator), BOS Gary Woodbury (R), Ralph Hicks (R), John Howard, Jared Grigg, and Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator. Not present: Virginia Davidson, Chris Woodbury, Bill Wall, and Mike Grames. (FC) Tony Pepe (BOS)

- 2) Announcement: The meeting will be held in person however members may opt to participate remotely per updated guidance. For this meeting, should any member choose to participate remotely all votes will be taken by roll call in accordance with Regulation 940, CMR 29.10 of the Open Meeting Law.
- 3) Budget Presentations from:
  - a) Cheryl Donahue, Director Richard Sugden Library- Ms. Donahue presented the budget for the Richard Sugden Library. She discussed the library staffing levels and noted that the funding needed to be spent on materials in order to receive state grant funding was being met. The library is showing consistent positive efforts in increasing the number of hours open per week but is still 4 hours short of the state standard of being open 40 hours per week. Utility expenses are higher due to both increased costs and increased hours the library is open. Town Administrator Bridges noted that the town is waiting for the report on the envelope of the building and that there will be significant capital issues in addition to the library air conditioning system that will need to be addressed in the near future.
  - b) ODIS- Town Administrator Bridges presented the ODIS budget and he was joined by the Building Inspector. The planning assistant position is still vacant. Modules for the new planning system and being phased in each year through the budget. Prior budgets provided insufficient funds for publication costs. The building inspector reviewed permit numbers and fee revenues for the past three years. The building inspector also noted the current three largest building projects in town were the CVS project, the David Prouty High School renovation/addition, and the wastewater treatment plant upgrade.

- c) Fire Chief Bob Parsons- Chief Parsons presented the Fire Department budget and capital requests. He noted that overtime expenses have dropped due to the adding of a full time floater position. The clerk is also an on-call firefighter. A successful firefighter training course in coordination with nearby departments was successful. The town is considering a SAFER grant for additional full time firefighters. Turnout gear is being replaced gradually as it can only be used for 10 years and then must be destroyed. There was a discussion regarding finding a middle ground in regards to the fire department being charged for both water and sewer fees to refill the fire engines for fighting fires.
  - d) Police Chief Michael Befford – Chief Befford presented the Police Department budget and capital requests. He noted that 20 officers would be the ideal number if funds became available in the future. The chief would like to have officers carry Narcan in the future. No additional training would be required for this. All officers receive mental health training. The police department is working with Open Sky to address the needs of Spencer’s homeless population. The chief is requesting a LAD records management system which would allow easier integration with the Fire Department. Another lease will be needed for Tasers.
  - e) Parks & Rec Commissioners- Chairman Rob Churchey presented the Parks and Recreation Department budget and capital requests. Dumpster is provided at Luther Hill Park to take pressure off Highway Department for trash removal in the summer. Pest control expenses are in respond to resident requests. Radios are rented instead of being borrowed from Fire Department. Security camera systems are being put in place at various park facilities which will be able to be connected to the Police Department in the future. Park commission is working with Town Planner on security camera system for Rail Trail. Park commission will explore beaver deceivers as alternative solution if beaver problem arises again.
- 4) Town Administrator Report- Status reports for FMPC projects is on track to be completed by the end of the month
  - 5) FY 2024 Budget update Town Administrator Report  
 FY 2024 Budget update - Town Administrator Bridges reported that the budget is incomplete and still a work in progress. This is due to the need to finalize 4 collective bargaining agreements. Utility costs for natural gas have increased due to rate hikes from National Grid. The town is looking for a new natural gas provider. Solar credits are being distributed across various accounts to reduce electricity expenses. The minimum local contribution represents an increase of \$537,000 for educational expenses This year we will probably be able to provide a balanced budget without using free cash or stabilization funds for operating expenses. . This is a structural deficit issue which will become even greater each year for the next few years.

**Selectmen may choose to adjourn.9:47 PM**

**Motion by Jared Griggs and seconded by Ralph Hicks. RH- Aye, GW-Aye, JG-Aye, and JH-Aye**

- 6) Minutes of February 28, 2023 Finance Committee meeting- not Received by members. Will be voted on at the next meeting.
- 7) Correspondence- Bay Path Budget. No funding is requested above the mandatory minimum assessment set by the state. Motion by Charles O'Connor to file and seconded by Jonathan Viner. Motion passed unanimously.
- 8) Liaison Reports
  - a) SEBRSC – Ed Sproul- Some growth in enrollment. There is additional staff in the proposed school budget.
  - b) DPHS Building Committee – Mary Braney- No update
- 9) Any other- Charles O'Connor noted his was dismayed that the Spencer- East Brookfield school management letter had not been received yet.
- 10) Adjourn at 9:51 PM Motion by Charles O'Connor and seconded by Ed Sproul. Motion passed unanimously.

Next Finance Committee joint with Board of Selectmen meeting March 21, 2023

Mar. 21, 2023:**Finance Committee– Joint with Board of Selectmen: 7PM** Budget presentations from SEBRSD, Treasurer/Collector, Town Clerk, Assessor, COA,

Mar. 28, 2023:**Finance Committee - Joint with Board of Selectmen: 7PM - Budget** Presentations from Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School; Utilities & Facilities (Water, Highway, Transfer Station), Sewer; Review ATM Warrant

Apr. 11, 2023: **Finance Committee: Public Hearing on FY2024 Budget** and Vote Recommendations on Annual Town Meeting Warrant

May 04, 2023: **Annual Town Meeting**

May 09, 2023: **Annual Town Election**

**Documents Referenced: Fire and Emergency Services Budget Request with list of comparable communities Fire District 8 Fire Chief survey- December 2022, and vehicle inventory chart, Vehicle Leasing Schedule for Police, Fire, Highway, and Transfer Station, FY 2023 Monthly Budget Report, Fire Department 2024 Budget, Police Department 2024 Budget, ODIS 2024 Budget, Park and Recreation 2024 Budget, Library 2024 Budget, Police Department Town Report, Fire Department Town Report, Library Town Report, ODIS Town Report, Library 2024 Capital Requests, Fire Department 2024 Capital Requests, Police Department 2024 Capital Requests, Park and Recreation 2024 Capital Requests, and letter with budget from Bay Path Regional Vocational School District.**