

Finance Committee Meeting

April 6, 2022 7:00 PM EST
Veterans Memorial Building – Room #229
Millis, MA 02054

Committee Members In Attendance:

Pete Berube, Chair
Jodie Garzon, Vice Chair
Peter Underhill, Clerk
Joyce Boiardi
Jim Borgman
Jonathan Loer
Cathy MacInnes
Sara Reyes
John Steadman

Invited Guest:

Michael Guzinski, Town Administrator
Carol Johnston, Finance Director
Peter Jurmain, Select Board Chair
James McKay, DPW Director
Jonathan Barry, Capital Planning Committee Chair
Brutus Cantoreggi, Millis Tree Warden
Ellen Rosenfeld

Pete Berube called the Finance Committee Meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

Article #16 – Tree Removal/Maintenance:

This article would appropriate \$50,000.00 to remove hazardous trees throughout town. There is \$31,000.00 remaining from the funds appropriated at the November 2021 Town Meeting. The daily cost for the contractor is \$7,500.00. The DPW has a list of residents' requests for the removal of town trees.

The town has a good rapport with Eversource. In conjunction with the Town Tree Warden and DPW, the utility company provides a plan to trim trees dangerously close to power lines. Typically, the stumps of the trees removed are not ground out due to the expense to do so. The town has improved its plan for tree removal in the last five years; it's a great investment. It is anticipated that in the future, less funding for tree removal will be needed.

The Millis Tree Warden has jurisdiction on determining what trees are on town property and whether or not the tree poses a hazard and needs to be removed/trimmed.

Capital Planning Committee Recommendations:

Jon Barry provided the Capital Planning Committee's Report outlining the Capital needs of the town based on their prioritization ranking:

Highest:

- Public Safety Radio Backup Generators: \$ 25,000.00
- Public Safety Radio Console Update: \$112,580.00
- Sidewalk Design and Road Repair: \$160,000.00
- DPW Chevy Silverado with Plow: \$ 54,416.00
- School District Server Replacement: \$112,288.00

Medium:

- DPW Skid Steer: \$ 52,699.00
- Library Lighting Management System: \$ 30,000.00
- School Pickup Truck with Plow: \$ 61,470.00
- School Skid Steer: \$ 62,820.00

Lower:

- School John Deere Tractor: \$ 51,399.00
- DPW Message Board: \$ 19,400.00
- Recreation Pickleball Court Sound Proofing: \$ 19,122.00

It was noted the Capital Planning Committee does not choose items for consideration at Town Meetings; the Select Board decides what items are placed on the Town Meeting Warrant for consideration at Town Meetings. The Finance Committee then makes their recommendations to Town Meeting after discussion and deliberation on available funds and what is in the best interest of the town.

A Summary of Capital Needs was provided totaling \$78,049,280.00. Included are \$15,000,000.00 for a new Council on Aging Facility and \$8,503,500.00 in School Department Renovations; the Middle/High School. The School Committee is working with the State to obtain funding for the necessary renovations, similar to the Elementary School Project. The committee's biggest challenge is attempting to utilize the town's resources and equipment more efficiently; School and DPW for example. Ellen Rosenfeld commented that the town needs to further utilize town owned equipment and personnel in order to optimize on its resources. The Finance Committee and Select Board have members that participate and weigh in on the Capital Planning Committee's considerations and recommendations. The committee hopes to transition its summary from an Excel Spreadsheet to better software.

The Town Administrator has made great strides with optimizing resources for Town Building Maintenance. Moving forward, Town Building Maintenance is proposed to be centralized in the School Department, eliminating Town Hall, Library, Fire and Police Department outsourcing custodial services of each facility. Snow removal however, is a more complex situation.

In adopting a Capital Planning Committee, the town is better prepared in reviewing and planning for the future. The time and effort put forth by the members is greatly appreciated.

FY23 Operating Budget Proposal:

Carol Johnston provided the committee with a proposed FY23 Operating Budget and outlined the significant increases and decreases in each line item:

- General Government – Line Item #1
 - The Executive Office Budget reflects a 26.91% increase due to the anticipated approval of an Assistant Town Administrator/Municipal Human Resource Director, the addition of an Administrative Assistant I; eighteen hours per week to assist with Meeting Minutes for the Capital Planning Committee and Human Resource Administration, a reduction to the Administrative Assistant II weekly hours to facilitate Friday's off and the incorporation of the Annual Audit, \$37,000.00. To offset some of the cost, approximately \$9,200.00 in Marijuana HCA (Host Community Agreement) Funds will be appropriated towards the budget as well as \$35,000.00 for a town-wide Social Worker. Currently, several Human Resource functions are distributed between the Treasurer and Finance departments, moving forward, those functions will primarily be administered through the Executive Office. The proposal of an Assistant Town Administrator/Human Resource Director will alleviate the Town Administrator's time from Collective Bargaining Agreement Negotiations, grievances and discipline of town employees.
 - The Assessor's budget includes a 12.87% increase largely due to including Annual Inspections and Recertification line items.
 - The Elections Budget has been increased for additional staffing to facilitate upcoming elections, specifically, early voting. The town hopes to obtain grants to offset the cost.
 - The Town Buildings Budget has been reduced by 25.9% due to the transition from building maintenance to the School Department; the School Department's budget has been increased by \$130,000.00 in order to maintain all Town Owned Buildings.
- Public Safety – Line Item #2
 - The 10.88% increase is due to contractual salary increases as well as the addition of Police Cruiser replacement included in the Operating Budget. In the past, the funding of replacements was considered a Capital Item; the town is moving toward incorporating such costs into department budgets. The Town Meeting Article for (2) Police Cruisers is requesting the authorization to enter into a Lease Agreement; funding is already included in the budget.
 - Fire and Rescue has been reduced by 3.02% due to anticipated reduction in overtime.
- Millis Schools – Line Item #3
 - The School Department is facing a shortfall of \$361,000.00 due to including the below in their Operating Budget:
 - \$130,000.00 in Shared Custodial Services
 - \$90,000.00 in School Bus Leases
 - \$69,000.00 in School Computer Leases
 - \$5,000.00 for Medicaid Reimbursement
 - \$67,000.00 for SPED (Special Education) TransportationThe Select Board has voted unanimously to approve additional funds above the 4% in order to bridge the gap. HCA Funds are being used for a Social and Emotional Adjuster, \$35,000.00 and Metal Detectors, \$21,000.00.

- Tri-County – Line Item #4
 - The town is assessed an amount to reflect the number of students that attend Tri-County as well as the Capital Needs of the institution.
- Public Works – Line Item #5
 - A reduction to line items includes reduced funds in Tree Care due to the Town Meeting Warrant, reduction in Office Cleaning due to the collaboration between the Town and School Department to centralize custodial services and a reduction in Landfill Monitoring.
 - The Snow and Ice Budget is in deficit but will be included in the Tax Recap. Ultimately, the cost is factored into the taxpayer's annual rate.
- Health and Human Services – Line Item #6
 - Increased hours for Council on Aging Staff.
 - Additional hours for the Town's Nursing Services as well as cellphone costs and an E-cigarette Program.
- Culture and Recreation – Line Item #7
 - Includes a Teen Coordinator for the Recreation Department funded by HCA Funds
 - Extended hours at the Library funded by HCA Funds
 - Oak Grove Farm Improvements for ground maintenance, specifically trails funded by Community Preservation Act Funds as well as \$17,055.00 funded by HCA Funds.

The Town is proposing to fully fund the Recreation Director's Salary. In order to do so, the Recreation Department's Revolving Fund will be eliminated. As a result, all revenues collected by the Recreation Department, estimated at \$100,000.00 annually, will be deposited into the General Fund. It was noted that while this will be a temporary blip in the department's capability to juggle funds while providing programs, the overall concept has been long overdue.

- Debt Service – Line Item #8
 - This line item reflects the town's obligation for previously approved Capital Items as well as Water/Sewer/Stormwater projects and infrastructure improvements.
 - The Town's Levy Limit is 2.5% also known as Proposition 2 ½. New Growth could offset the 2.5% increase.

The Town Administrator's FY23 Proposed Operating Budget totals \$40,247,557.96. Available Revenues total \$40,255,205.83; the difference is \$7,647.87.

The Town's Stabilization Fund Policy requires 5% of the General Fund Operating Budget as a "rainy day fund" and impacts the Town's Bond Rating. Mike Guzinski recommends deferring funding the Stabilization Fund until the November Town Meeting. HCA Funds are included in the Operating Budget and those funds will expire which would impact the 5% Stabilization Fund Policy. The committee voiced their concerns with including HCA Funded Positions in the Operating Budget; HCA Funds are not perpetual revenues, unlike New Growth.

ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act):

The Select Board's priority is to use ARPA Funds to offset the cost to construct a new Water Treatment Plant in an effort to mitigate PFAS in the drinking water. The Town Administrator and Select Board Members are working with State Officials to acquire additional funding for the project.

May 2022 Town Meeting Warrant Article Discussion and Recommendations:

Article #1 Unpaid Bills – This a standard article at each Town Meeting to authorize payment of invoices from prior fiscal years.

Jodie Garzon made a motion to recommend approval of Article #1 Unpaid Bills in the amount of \$3,464.51 of which \$3,427.19 is funded by Free Cash, \$18.66 from Water Enterprise Reserves and \$18.66 from Sewer Enterprise Reserves; Cathy MacInnes seconded. Vote: 9/0 motion carries unanimously.

Article #2 FY22 Additional Wages and Expenses – Deferred until the April 13, 2022 Meeting when more information is available.

Article #3 FY23 Operating Budget – Deferred until the April 13, 2022 Meeting after the Select Board make their recommendations.

Article #4 SEIU #888, Firefighters Local #4704, AFSCME Council 93 Local #1301 Contract Ratifications

Jodie Garzon made a motion to recommend approval of Article #4, Contract Ratifications, in the amount of \$115,000.00 of which \$100,000.00 from Free Cash, \$5,100.00 from Sewer Enterprise Reserves, \$6,400.00 from Water Enterprise Reserves and \$3,500.00 from Stormwater Enterprise Reserves; Jonathan Loer seconded. Vote: 9/0 motion carries unanimously.

Article #5 Sewer Enterprise Fund – Deferred until the April 13, 2022 Meeting.

Article #6 Water Enterprise Fund – Deferred until the April 13, 2022 Meeting.

Article #7 Stormwater Enterprise Fund – Deferred until the April 13, 2022 Meeting.

Article #8 Consent Agenda:

- Amendments to the Personnel Plan
- Board of Health Appointing Authority
- Revolving Funds
- Community Preservation Fund

Deferred until the April 13, 2022 Meeting.

Article #9 Community Preservation Open Space/Recreation Reserve Fund – Soundproofing the Pickleball/Tennis Courts

Joyce Boiardi made a motion to recommend approval of Article #9 in the amount of \$21,035.16; Jim Borgman seconded. Vote: 9/0 motion carries unanimously.

Article #10 Community Preservation Open Space/Recreation Reserve Fund – Town-Owned Properties Inventory and Management Plan – This article will be recommended at Town Meeting.

Article #11 Community Preservation Open Space/Recreation Reserve Fund – Oak Grove Farm Trail Improvement Project – Deferred until the April 13, 2022 Meeting when more information will be available.

Article #12 FY23 Recertification Process – Board of Assessors

Jodie Garzon made a motion to recommend approval of Article #12 in the amount of \$17,800.00 from Free Cash; Joyce Boiardi seconded. Vote 9/0 motion carries unanimously.

Article #13 Capital Items – This article would fund the following:

○ Public Safety Radio Console Update	\$112,580.00
○ Public Safety Radio Backup Generator	\$ 25,000.00
○ DPW Chevy Silverado with Plow	\$ 54,416.00
○ DPW Skid Steer	\$ 52,699.00
○ DPW Message Board	\$ 19,400.00
Total:	<u>\$264,095.00</u>

The above items would be funded by Free Cash \$169,209.00, Sewer Enterprise Reserves \$31,629.00, Water Enterprise Reserves \$31,629.00 and Stormwater Enterprise Reserves \$31,628.00.

Select Board Chair, Pete Jurmain, noted the Public Safety Equipment is out of date and do pose an immediate concern; spare parts are no longer available.

The Lion's Club is working to obtain funding for a Message Board that will be located in front of the Veterans Memorial Building; the DPW Message Board would be used throughout town to notify residents of Water Main Breaks, Hydrant Flushing, Road Closures, etc. The School District Server Replacement in the amount of \$112,288.00 will hopefully be funded at the November Town Meeting. Jodie Garzon noted that the Town does not have to appropriate all of the Free Cash Available; it would roll over into the next Fiscal Year.

The committee decided to defer voting a recommendation on Article #13 until their next meeting after they have had time to digest the Operating Budget, etc.

Article #14 PFAS Water Treatment Bonding Amendment

John Steadman made a motion to recommend approval of Article #14 in the amount of \$500,000.00; Jodie Garzon seconded. Vote: 8/1 motion carries.

Article #15 Design and Construction of Sidewalks and Road Improvements

The committee discussed the need to invest in Town Roads and Sidewalks and until their Final Recommendations are made in terms of Free Cash Appropriations, this article is deferred until the April 13, 2022 Meeting.

Article #16 Tree Removal/Maintenance

The committee discussed encouraging the Select Board to shift funds from Article #16 to Article #15 due to the significant amount of funds the Town has expended in Tree Care in the past 5 years. This Article is deferred until the April 13, 2022 Meeting.

Article #17 Authorize New Computer Lease

Sara Reyes made a motion to recommend approval of Article #17; Jodie Garzon seconded. Vote: 9/0 motion carries unanimously.

Article #18 Authorize New Police Cruisers Lease

Sara Reyes made a motion to recommend approval of Article #18; Jodie Garzon seconded. Vote: 9/0 motion carries unanimously. The Police Department receives numerous grants to equip their fleet with the necessary equipment.

Article #19 – 28 were deferred until the April 13, 2022 Meeting.

Article #29 Citizen's Petitioned Article – Election of Enterprise Funds Commissioners

Article #30 Citizen's Petitioned Article – General ByLaw Addition – Enterprise Funds Commissioners Powers and Duties

Article #29 and 30 were petitioned by a resident in an effort to ensure Enterprise Funds were not being used to fund General Fund items; DPW Staff and Town Hall Staff. The Town contracted Community Paradigm who will present their findings at the upcoming Select Board Meeting. Article #29, if approved at the May Town Meeting, will then be a Town Ballot Question at the May 2023 Town Election.

Mike Guzinski outlined his experience with working with Elected Water and Sewer Commissioners. Most often, The Select Board and Water and Sewer Commissioners had different philosophies with advancing Water and Sewer Infrastructure and Economic Development. Select Board Chair, Pete Jurmain, provided the committee with his response to both Petitioned Articles outlining the concerns. The Town Administrator and Select Board Chair received feedback from other communities that have Elected Water and Sewer Commissioners, the majority advised against the concept. Having an Elected Water and Sewer Commission has caused dissention in certain towns, power struggles, etc. It was unclear if the Select Board Chair's response was the position of the Select Board.

Brutus Cantoreggi, Town Tree Warden, implored the committee not to reduce the \$50,000.00 Tree Maintenance Warrant Article. With additional funding, the plan is to address the trees on Rt 115 from the Holliston town line to the Norfolk town line. The town has invested in tree removal over the last few years, that investment will payoff with less funding needed in future years.

Review and Approve Bills Payable:

Cathy MacInnes made a motion to recommend approval of payment to the Millis Postmaster in the amount of \$736.00 for postage to deliver the Finance Committee Report to residents; Jodie Garzon seconded. Vote: 9/0 motion carries unanimously.

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes Approval:

Jodie Garzon made a motion to approve the Finance Committee's Meeting Minutes from March 30, 2022; Jonathan Loer seconded. Vote: 9/0 motion carries unanimously.

Jonathan Loer made a motion to approve the Finance Committee's Meeting Minutes from March 23, 2022; Cathy MacInnes seconded. Vote: 8/0 1 abstained motion carries.

Adjourn Meeting:

Joyce Boiardi made a motion to adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting at 10:19 PM; Jodie Garzon seconded. Vote: 9/0 motion carries unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Deirdre Gilmore