**Sturbridge Finance Committee**

**Meeting Minutes: May 19, 2022**

**Veterans Hall, Town Hall**

**Call to Order**

Finance Committee (FC) Chair Kevin Smith called the FC meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Committee members present: Leigh Darrin (LD), Joseph Freitas (JF), Michael Hager (MH), Larry Morrison (LM), Kathy Neal (KN), Kevin Smith (KS) and James Waddick (JW).

Absent: Bruce Boyson (BB), Ken Talentino (KT)

Guests: virtual — Finance Director Barbara Barry (BBa).

**Reserve Fund Transfers**

*— LM moved to authorize the transfer of $5,000 from the the Reserve Fund to the Town Administrator Purchase of Services account #11232-5200; KN seconded. Motion passed 7-0-0.*

KS explained this money is necessary to fund the recruitment costs for a variety of positions, including the Town Administrator, DPW director, and several firefighters.

**New Business**

The FC reviewed the Finance Committee Report, Town Meeting Warrant, and Special Town Meeting Warrant:

In rolling conversation:

— JF questioned whether the commentary on the impacts of COVID needed to be as prominent as it was in the FY ’23 budget. KS explained it is emphasized because the most significant impact of COVID was higher-than-expected revenues, and that some of those revenues may decrease in the coming year. Thus, it is important to know that the budget does not include expectations of the same revenue anomalies, but uses historical averages for estimates. LM reported that updates from Harrington Hospital indicate there is another surge in COVID.

— FC members offered clarifications, re-wording, corrections of typographical errors, and editing.

— KS read a portion that addressed the decline in the amount in Free Cash. JW pointed out it’s important to make clear that it’s prudent to have a healthy Free Cash balance.

— JF, LD, KS and LM gave different perspectives on whether the narrative on the section about new growth was balanced. FC members questioned why it focused on one proposed development, whether it was neutral enough. Members focused on the FC’s obligation to share the knowledge and insight FC members collect during the budget process; its desire to look at things like growth and infrastructure from many different perspectives and with input from many different experts; and whether the town’s infrastructure shortfalls should even be tied to new growth in the narrative.

— Clarified that PEG in Article 14 is an acronym for “Public, Educational and Government.”

— JW suggested that the Warrant should include an explanation what a “TIF” (Tax Increment Financing) is. JW suggested that the memo that Town Assessor Ann Murphy wrote explaining what a TIF is, which explained it perfectly, should be available on the website.

— FC members discussed how to write the narrative regarding the Transfer of Land on Cedar Street to fairly, clearly and succinctly relay the impact of the two potential outcomes.

— KS announced that Article 39, a petitioned article to support changing the seal and motto on the state flag, is moot because a new seal and motto were just adopted.

— LM suggested the narrative on Body Armor explain that Body Armor is protective gear for firefighters who may respond to active-shooter situations.

**Meeting Minutes**

JW moved to accept the minutes of the April 28, 2022 meeting as amended; LM seconded. Motion passed 6-0-1. JF abstained.

JW and KN pointed out changes that needed to be made to the draft minutes.

**Old Business**

KS asked about the Charter Review Committee’s (CRC) most recent meeting to which FC members were invited, which KS was unable to attend. JW, who attended, answered that there was discussion on which offices should be elected and which should appointed. LM, who also serves on the Charter Review Committee, explained that all 28 of the suggestions submitted to the CRC are being reviewed. That includes one, considered as a courtesy to the selectman who proposed it, that proposed that recommendations on zoning matters in the Town Meeting Warrant be made by the Planning Board instead of the FC. The CRC held off on acting on that discussion, but CRC made it clear that such a proposal would not go anywhere. JW reported that he told the CRC it was better to have the budget reviewed by an independent committee with nothing at stake, like the FC.

**Adjournment**

JF moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m.; KN seconded. Motion passed 7-0-0.