

Lunenburg Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, February 9, 2023

Unanimously Approved by Finance  
Committee at February 23, 2023  
meeting.

Location: In-person at Lunenburg Town Hall and broadcast on Zoom

Present: Chairperson Evan Watters, Vice-chair Chris Menard, Jay Simeone, Tom Balish, Caesar Nuzzolo

Guests: Town Manager Heather Lemieux, Town Accountant Karen Brochu, School Committee and Capital Planning Committee member Peter Beardmore

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Watters called the meeting to order at 7p.m. and read a statement concerning the Open Meeting Law, and how all public meetings are legally being held remotely. This meeting was recorded and is viewable on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/olcG99iRSew>

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Announcements:** Mr. Watters informed the committee they have been invited by the Select Board to attend their March 7, 2023 meeting with the town's state delegation.

**4. Public Comment:** Mr. Beardmore corrected a statement he made about the FY24 Capital Plan requests for two dump trucks for the DPW at the last Finance Committee meeting. Mr. Beardmore also pointed out that the Town Manager has reprioritized several of the original requests that fell in the middle of the FY24 Capital Plan.

**5. Town Manager/Finance Director Report:** Ms. Lemieux reported the Town Accountant discovered a projected deficit regarding health insurance, but they've found surpluses in other areas of the budget to cover the deficit.

Snow and ice has gone over budget by \$170,000 due to the increase in cost of salt, as well as the cost of hiring contractors to clean up after storms. Money to cover the increased cost of the snow and ice line will come from the pavement management line in the DPW's budget. Ms. Lemieux made clear that the money would not come from the excluded debt that funds the pavement management plan. There also appears to be a \$60,000 surplus in the salary line for the DPW that could also go toward snow and ice.

**6. Capital Plan**

- a. **Possible use of ARPA funding for DPW and Public Safety requests:** If ARPA funds are used to fund the two dump trucks, and the ambulance listed on the FY24 Capital Plan, it will reduce the number of items on the plan from six to three. More items couldn't be moved up in priority in the plan because the purchases of those vehicles are slated to be funded from the Special Purpose Stabilization Fund. No other items on the capital plan are eligible for that funding source, according to Ms. Lemieux.

- 7. Tax Abatement/Assessment Discussion:** Ms. Lemieux has recommended to reserve all free cash in order to fund the overlay account which covers abatements. About 427 abatements have been filed. Whatever surplus is left from funding the abatements should be voted on by the Board of Assessors to turn over to the town to be appropriated. The Town Warrant closes March 20, 2023. The Board of Assessors has 90 days (until May 1) to approve or deny abatement applications, and then if denied, the people can appeal. Mr. Watters expressed concern over the amount of time needed to make the decisions regarding the budget at Town Meeting.

Mr. Watters created and presented a presentation describing Proposition 2 ½ , and explained that the levy limit is based on the total value of all property in town. Mr. Watters suggested people go to the mass.gov Proposition 2 ½ Primer, as well as mass.gov Division of Local Services to learn more.

- 8. Public Comment** Rhonda Lissio informed the committee that she is against using money from the pavement management line to fund the snow and ice deficit.
- 9. Upcoming Meetings** Preliminary Budget Presentation 2/16, Department Budget Presentations – COA, Land Use, Library 2/23, Police and Fire departments 3/2, joint meeting with Select Board and state delegation 3/7
- 10. Adjourn** At 8:13 p.m. Mr. Menard motioned to adjourn, Mr. Nuzzolo seconded, on vote, motion carried unanimously.