

CHELMSFORD FINANCE COMMITTEE  
MINUTES

February 25, 2021



**MEETING:** A virtual meeting was held on Thursday, February 25, 2021 at 6:30 PM using Zoom Video Communications software.

**PRESENT:** J. Clancy, D. Goselin, E. Chambers, K. Duffett, V. Parks, A. Langford, and A. Tanini

**ALSO PRESENT:** P. Cohen, D. Siriani, D. Boyle, L. Prescott, J. Sousa, D. Newcomb, and V. Crocker-Timmins

**HANDOUTS:** Sent via email: 2021 Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant, 2021 Spring Annual Town Meeting Article Listing, Easement Maps, Finance Committee Contact Liaison List and Budget Hearing Schedule, FY2022 Council on Aging Budget Request

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM.

J. Clancy read the following statement regarding the virtual meeting:

*“Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Town of Chelmsford Finance Committee will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the Town’s website, at [www.chelmsfordma.gov](http://www.chelmsfordma.gov) For this meeting, members of the public who wish to watch the meeting may do so by accessing the Chelmsford Telemedia website [www.chelmsfordtv.org](http://www.chelmsfordtv.org).*

*No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the Town’s website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.”*

**Approval of Minutes:**October 1, 2020:

K. Duffett made a motion to accept the minutes of October 1, 2020 as written. V. Parks seconded the motion. All voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed. The minutes were approved as written.

February 11, 2021:

Corrections were made to the minutes of February 11, 2021. K. Duffett made a motion to accept the minutes of February 11, 2021 as amended. E. Chambers seconded the motion. K. Duffett, E. Chambers, V. Parks, J. Clancy, and D. Goselin voted in favor of the motion. A. Langford and A. Tanini abstained from voting. The motion passed. The minutes were approved as amended.

**FY2022 Cemetery Commission Budget:**

D. Boyle reported that there were not a lot of changes in the FY2022 Cemetery Commission budget request. He indicated that the expenses had decreased by a small amount and the personnel budget had increased. He said that the increase was due to step increases. He added that the Cemetery Commission personnel was now non-union and operated under the Personnel Board.

J. Clancy asked how the work was going at the cemetery. D. Boyle replied that there were a couple of projects that they were working on. He said that the new niche wall at Pine Ridge Cemetery was due to be installed the following week. He reported that it would be a 64 unit wall and 25 of these units were already sold. He added that in spring they would be looking for the transfer of funds for a fourth niche wall at Pine Ridge Cemetery. D. Boyle reported that the 3.5 acre expansion at Pine Ridge Cemetery was moving along and the land had been hydroseeded prior to the winter and now needed to sit for a year. He said that he anticipated that the new plots would be ready for sale by July of 2022.

D. Goselin asked if the cost of units in the new niche wall would be the same as the cost in the original niche wall. D. Boyle replied in the affirmative. He said that the price was increased every couple of years and there would probably be a price change in March of 2022. He said that the current price schedule was \$1,000 for the top level, going down by \$100 per level to \$700.

K. Duffett asked if a copy of the Cemetery budget had been sent out to the Finance Committee members. J. Clancy said that he received the Council on Aging budget, but not the Cemetery budget. J. Sousa opened the operating budget and scrolled to the Cemetery budget for the Finance Committee members to review.

J. Clancy asked about the fourth niche wall. D. Boyle replied that the fourth wall would add continuity by having two walls in the middle and one wall on each side. He said that the fourth wall would hold them for another 10 years. J. Clancy asked if there were any other projects planned. D. Boyle replied that granite benches were being installed at the niche wall at Fairview Cemetery. He explained that prisoners from Norfolk Prison had built benches for Pine Ridge Cemetery 2 to 3 years ago and they were now doing the same for Fairview under the MassCor prison program.

D. Boyle reported that cemetery personnel went non-union in FY2020. He said that over time the PTO and sick-time line items would disappear from the budget. He reiterated that there were no changes in the expense line items. He added that perpetual care interest income paid for seasonal labor. He explained that they had a college student who would be coming back for a third year this year as he had worked out well. D. Boyle invited the Finance Committee members to call him any time if they had additional questions.

**FY2022 Council on Aging Budget:**

D. Siriani thanked the Finance Committee for inviting her to the meeting. She said that she had been asked for a level-services budget which is what she provided. She said that the only changes under personnel were due to step increases. J. Clancy asked how things were going at the Senior Center. D. Siriani replied that things were going well. She said that AARP tax appointments were well underway, and the social day care program was running and had been split into three different rooms since August. She said that the main hall had also held a few events such as voting and vaccination clinics. She added that they did miss all of the normal activity at the center. D. Siriani reported that they were still running the Meals on Wheels program since March delivering approximately 160 meals a day.

J. Clancy asked about the kitchen project at the center. D. Siriani replied that there had to be some changes to the original design as they found that they needed a grease trap in the back. She said that the grease trap was now installed, and they were ready to move to the next step. She added that they needed to find a home to be in while the work was happening. V. Parks asked how long the project would take. D. Siriani replied that it would take about 6 to 8 weeks.

K. Duffett asked why the electricity line item had dropped. She pointed out that it had been \$25,000, then \$23,000, then dropped to \$14,000 and was now budgeted at \$18,000. D. Siriani replied that when the town went green their electricity had been bundled in with other departments, so they got a deal and efficiency savings. She added that rates have been a little higher this past year and they had to keep the main hall open and ventilated which increased fuel costs.

K. Duffett asked about the Meals on Wheels budget which had dipped in 2020. D. Siriani replied that they had received grant money at the end of the year which was put back into this account. K. Duffett asked if there was any elaboration available of the grant money or other funding that the Council on Aging received. D. Siriani replied that there was a listing of these funds which she could provide to the Finance Committee. She said that the Council on Aging maintained 13 revolving accounts. She pointed out that the town paid about \$375,000 of personnel costs for the Council on Aging and service grants paid for about \$390,000. She explained that grants paid for at least the same amount of personnel expenses as was paid by the town. K. Duffett asked if there were grants or funding for additional cleaning costs such as from the vaccination clinics. D. Siriani replied that she could put in these costs as Covid-19 expenses, so they were not in the Council on Aging budget.

E. Chambers commented that a lot of things from the Council on Aging goals and mission statement required time and labor. He asked if Nashoba or volunteer organizations such as the boy scouts could help with any of these projects. D. Siriani replied that they had used Nashoba

and CHS students in the past. She added that due to Covid-19 their volunteer programs had suffered.

D. Goselin asked if the maintenance person was supervised by the town. D. Siriani replied that the maintenance person reported to her for half of his time and for the remainder he reported to the DPW. She said that she received 20 hours per week of his time. She added that he was very flexible and did things that a volunteer would not be able to do. She said that they had also used the prisoner program for things like painting in the past. She said that when things break they really needed the maintenance man to handle things.

**FY2022 Community Preservation Committee Budget:**

L. Prescott reported that the CPC budget looked like an overall healthy budget for FY2022. She said that with the two town hall projects being paid off they were in a position to take on another larger project. She added that last year the Town Clerk had requested half of a million dollars for the preservation of records. She added that even with the approval of this project they were still in a healthy position. L. Prescott reported that with Covid-19 half of the towns voted on the CPC funding including large cities which put a stress on the statewide budget. She added that the real estate market was hot and with a healthy budget they were waiting for the next project.

**Review of Warrant Article 26 – CPC - Playground Equipment:**

L. Prescott reported that the playground equipment at Varney Playground had reached the end of its useful life and was not worth repairing. She said that the equipment proposed for Varney was lovely, durable, and handicapped accessible and came in at about \$285,000. She added that this equipment should last another 20 years. J. Clancy asked if the plan was to remove the equipment which was currently there. L. Prescott replied that they would remove the existing equipment, resurface the area, and install the new equipment. J. Clancy asked if they had been shown any concepts of the new equipment. L. Prescott replied that she had seen pictures and the plan. She said that the equipment would function like the old equipment, but it was more contemporary.

L. Prescott reported that the equipment at Southwell was also at the end of its life and had a lot of issues. She added that they wanted it to be handicapped accessible. She said that the plan also included tables for families and was more involved than what was there now. J. Clancy asked what the timeline for the project was. L. Prescott replied that the plan for both playgrounds was to have the new equipment up and ready to go by next summer.

K. Duffett asked what the process was to apply for funding on future projects. L. Prescott replied that there was an application on their web site which needed to be filled out and submitted to the CPC. She added that projects needed to fit into one of the seven mandated categories for CPC funding. She noted that most applicants usually provided a PowerPoint presentation and may have to go back and rework the request based on feedback. She said that the CPC assured that the project was a candidate for the funds and was something that Town Meeting would like and understand.

K. Duffett asked if there was any way that CPC funding could be an option for taking care of moving wiring to underground. L. Prescott replied that she wasn't sure if such a project would qualify for CPC funding or if it was something that they would want to spend funds on. P. Cohen added that it was not clear if such a project would qualify and it was unclear if it would be

an acceptable use of the funding to the community. He added that he would prefer to exhaust all options with Verizon regarding this project.

**Review of Warrant Article 27 – CPC – Warren-Pohl Parking Area:**

K. Duffett stated that she was happy that the town had acquired the Warren-Pohl farm. She gave compliments all around to those involved in the acquisition. L. Prescott reported that the Conservation Commission jumped right in and wanted the parking lot up and running so there would be a place to park. She said that the DPW would put in a 20 car lot with access from Boston Road. She said that this article would cover the funding for having the parking lot paved and striped early in the season. L Prescott reported that there was funding from the Wright Reservation endowment to cover parking access improvements on the side abutting the Wright Reservation.

**Budget Hearing and Spring Town Meeting Warrant Schedule:**

J. Clancy reported that there would be no Finance Committee meeting next week. He said that a number of departments had been confirmed for the March 11<sup>th</sup> meeting including DPW, Stormwater, Waste, Sewer, Public Facilities, PEG, and Nashoba. He suggested members reach out to the remaining departments to see when they could meet. K. Duffett reported that the schools had held their meeting and voted their budget. She said that she had sent J. Lang dates for their budget hearing. E. Chambers said that he would circle back to D. Pigeon to confirm the date of the 11<sup>th</sup>. D. Goselin added that D. Pigeon had confirmed the March 11<sup>th</sup> date for Nashoba. J. Clancy stated that the committee could be ready to vote on the articles on March 25<sup>th</sup> or the first week of April. He added that if Town Meeting was delayed there would be the option to hold a meeting closer to the date of Town Meeting in case there were any changes.

**Public Comment:**

None.

K. Duffett made a motion to adjourn. E. Chambers seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela A. Morrison