



CHELMSFORD FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES

March 30, 2023

MEETING: A meeting was held on Thursday, March 30, 2023 at 6:30 PM at the Town Hall Office Building, 50 Billerica Road, Chelmsford and via Zoom for remote participation.

PRESENT: J. Clancy, S. Chase, D. Goselin, A. Tanini, C. Goodland, J. Thibault, and K. Duffett

ALSO PRESENT: P. Cohen

HANDOUTS: None

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM.

Approval of Minutes:

March 23, 2023:

Corrections were made to the minutes of March 23, 2023 via email. S. Chase made a motion for the Finance Committee to accept the minutes of March 23, 2023 as amended. D. Goselin seconded the motion. J. Clancy, D. Goselin, A. Tanini, K. Duffett, S. Chase, and C. Goodland voted in favor of the motion. J. Thibault was absent for the vote. The motion passed (6 in favor, 1 absent). The minutes were approved as amended.

Public Comment:

None

Review, Discussion, and Vote on Recommendations for FY2024 Budget and Spring Town Meeting Warrant Articles:

The Finance Committee discussed and voted on the warrant articles as follows:

Article 1 - Reports of Town Officers/Committees:

No recommendation needed.

Article 2 - Amend Fiscal Year 2023 Operating Budget:

P. Cohen indicated that he did not have the final numbers for the amendments to the operating budget. No action was taken.

Article 3 - Funding for Collective Bargaining Agreements:

P. Cohen reported that there were several contracts where agreement has been reached but the contracts have not been fully ratified so no action could be taken on them.

Article 4 - Nashoba Valley Technical School District FY24 Assessment:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 4 to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds a sum of money to fund the Town's Fiscal Year 2024 assessment to the Nashoba Valley Technical School District; or act in relation thereto. She said that the amount for the article is \$3,859,704. S. Chase seconded the motion. J. Clancy stated that the amount that Nashoba is asking for went down this year and was adjusted downward even further when the governor's budget was released. He said that the amount they have been out seeking in grant funding was laudable. He added that Nashoba had vastly improved in the information which they provide to the Finance Committee over the last few years. He called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 4 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 5 - Fiscal Year 2024 Chelmsford Public Schools Operating Budget:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 5 to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds a sum of money as may be required to defray charges for the operations of the Chelmsford Public Schools for the fiscal period July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount was \$70,700,000. A. Tanini seconded the motion. S. Chase asked if this was the amount that the Town Manager had recommended. J. Clancy replied in the affirmative. P. Cohen commented that it was his recommended budget and the budget which the School Committee had voted on. D. Goselin asked about the impact from the Chapter 70 funding. P. Cohen replied that the Chapter 70 funding would not impact the operating budget. J. Clancy noted that this was a vote up or down for the total funding amount as the schools had budget line autonomy. He called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 5 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 6 - Fiscal Year 2024 General Government Operating Budget:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 6 to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds such sums of money as may be required to defray charges of the Town's General Government operations for the fiscal period July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount for the article was \$76,627,545. D. Goselin seconded the motion. S. Chase commented for the record, that in case those watching thought that the Finance Committee had no interest in discussions on these topics, the Finance Committee had listened to presentations which covered all of the details of the budgets. He said that he wanted to remind the public that the committee had reviewed the budget details and had opportunities to ask questions of the Department Heads and Town Manager at prior meetings. J. Clancy thanked S. Chase for highlighting that the Finance Committee has already had multiple opportunities to review and discuss the budget. He called for any further discussion and hearing none, called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 6 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 7 - Finance Committee Reserve Fund:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 7 to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds such sums of money to be used as a Reserve Fund at the discretion of the Finance Committee for Fiscal Year 2024, as provided in General Laws Chapter 40, Section 6; or act in relation thereto. She stated

that the amount for this article was \$400,000. A. Tanini seconded the motion. D. Goselin commented that the article was the same amount every year. S. Chase asked how many years the amount was at this level. P. Cohen replied that it had been this amount for about a decade. He added that it was far below the percentage of the operating budget that it could be, but they had held the amount steady at \$400,000. J. Clancy commented that some years it has all been used and other years free cash has been returned at the end of the fiscal year. He noted that it could prevent the need for Special Town Meetings and the funds could only be used for unforeseen circumstances. K. Duffett said that it would be interesting to take a look back and see how much was used each year. Finance Committee members agreed that this information would be of interest. J. Clancy called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 7 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 8 - Fiscal Year 2024 Capital Budget:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 8 to see if the Town will vote to: a.) appropriate a certain sum of money for the capital projects as presented. She added that the amount was \$4,387,207. A. Tanini seconded the motion. J. Clancy thanked D. Goselin for serving on the Capital Planning Committee again this year; noting that K. Duffett had also served for a number of years. He added that it was important to keep up with capital projects and he just wished that there were more funds available. She added that she did not see anything frivolous on the capital budget. D. Goselin commented that the process was very thorough, and changes had to be made to the budget as the final budget did not include all requests. He explained that some number get moved or cut, and some projects don't make it. S. Chase added that typically the numbers requested were much higher than what was presented in the capital budget. J. Clancy asked for any further discussion and hearing none, called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 8 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 9 - Fiscal Year 2024 Sewer Enterprise Fund Operating Budget:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 9 to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a certain sum of money for the Fiscal Year 2024 budget to operate the Sewer Enterprise; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount for Article 9 was \$4,900,382. D. Goselin seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 9 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 10 - Miland Avenue Sewer Pump Station Upgrade:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 10 to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a sum of money to upgrade the Miland Avenue sewer pump station; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount for Article 10 was \$542,028. D. Goselin seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 10 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 11 - Fiscal Year 2024 Stormwater Management Enterprise Fund Operating Budget:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 11 to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a certain sum of money for the Fiscal Year 2024 budget to operate the Stormwater Management

Enterprise; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount was \$1,563,013. A. Tanini seconded the motion. S. Chase asked J. Clancy if he could explain for the audience what was meant by an Enterprise Fund. J. Clancy replied that an Enterprise Fund was a microcosm which maintained their own income and expenses separately from the operating budget. He said that the Stormwater Enterprise was one of several enterprises including the Sewer, Forum, Golf Club, and PEG Access which maintained their own operating budgets. He asked for any further discussion and hearing none, called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 11 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 12 - Fiscal Year 2024 Forum Ice Rink Enterprise Fund Operating Budget:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 12 to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a certain sum of money for the Fiscal Year 2024 budget to operate the Forum Ice Rink Enterprise; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount for Article 12 was \$65,000. D. Goselin seconded the motion. J. Clancy asked if the new five-year contract had been executed. P. Cohen replied in the affirmative. J. Clancy commented that they were working to get the Boosters in there to work on any improvements. He added that there was a push to have the shop and concession opened. He said that it was a busy facility with a lot of usage. J. Clancy called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 12 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 13 - Fiscal Year 2024 PEG Access and Cable Related Enterprise Fund Operating Budget:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 13 to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a certain sum of money for the Fiscal Year 2024 budget to operate the Cable Television Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) Access Enterprise; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount for Article 13 was \$580,630. A. Tanini seconded the motion. S. Chase stated that their budget this year went down slightly. J. Clancy asked if this was related to the fees coming in. S. Chase replied in the affirmative. J. Clancy called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 13 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 14 - Fiscal Year 2024 Golf Course Enterprise Fund Operating Budget:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 14 to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a certain sum of money for the Fiscal Year 2024 budget to operate the Golf Course Enterprise; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount for Article 14 was \$30,000. A. Tanini seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 14 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 15 - Annual Authorization of Departmental Revolving Funds:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 15 to see if the Town will vote to authorize the total amount of expenditures for Departmental Revolving Funds for the Fiscal Year 2024 as presented. A. Tanini seconded the motion. J. Clancy commented that the revolving funds had to be voted by Town Meeting every year. He called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 15 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 16 - Cemetery Improvement and Development Fund:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 16 to see if the Town will vote to transfer a certain sum of money from the Sale of Graves and Lots to the Cemetery Improvement and Development Fund; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount for this article was \$35,000. A. Tanini seconded the motion. D. Goselin commented that the Cemetery Department was a very well run organization. J. Clancy called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 16 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 17 - Community Action Program Fund:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 17 to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds a sum of money to fund the Community Action program established under Article 12 of the Warrant for the April 29, 1996 Spring Annual Town Meeting to provide matching funds to community improvement projects undertaken by individuals and/or organizations within the Town of Chelmsford; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount for this article was \$10,000. A. Tanini seconded the motion. J. Clancy asked if the full amount had been used last year. P. Cohen replied that it had not, and they were building the fund back up. J. Clancy added that it was a great resource to have in the community. He called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 17 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 18 - General Bylaw: Sealer of Weights and Measures Inspection Fees:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 18 as presented. A. Tanini seconded the motion. J. Clancy commented that it has been quite some time since the fees have been updated. P. Cohen replied that the state uses the minimum part of the statute which doesn't cover the costs. He added that NMCOG requested that they update the Sealer of Weights and Measures Fees. J. Clancy called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 18 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 19 - Zoning Bylaw Amendment: Nonconforming Uses and Structures to Allow for Special Permit:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 19 as presented. A. Tanini seconded the motion. J. Clancy stated that Articles 19 and 20 were the two zoning articles which were discussed at last week's meeting. He stated that he saw no issues with Article 19 as it addresses the unfortunate issue of the zoning section inadvertently being taken off the books. He called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 19 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 20 - Zoning Bylaw Amendment: Single- and Two-Family Reduction of Dimensional Requirements:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 20 as presented. S. Chase seconded the motion. J. Clancy said that there had been some back and

forth discussion of this article last week. He asked if there was any further discussion. Hearing none, he called the vote. J. Clancy, D. Goselin, K. Duffett, S. Chase, J. Thibault, and C. Goodland voted in favor of the motion. A. Tanini voted against the motion. The motion passed. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 20 by a majority vote (6 in favor, 1 against).

Article 21 - Enactment of a Specialized Energy Code for the Design and Construction of Buildings:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 21 to see if the Town will vote to enact Chapter 25, of the Town of Chelmsford Massachusetts General Bylaws, a “Specialized Energy Code” for the purpose of regulating the design and construction of buildings for the effective use of energy and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, pursuant to the entirety of 225 CMR 22 and 23 including Appendices RC and CC, including future editions, amendments or modifications thereto, with an effective date of Jan 1, 2024, a copy of which is on file with the Town Clerk; or act in relation thereto. A. Tanini seconded the motion. A. Tanini asked if this article was for just new construction or for new construction and renovations. J. Clancy added that it would include substantial renovations, but it was unclear what would constitute substantial renovation as it was a little vague and there seemed to be a lot of open questions. He said that it wasn’t clear what would trigger the renovation, it was unclear if National Grid would be able to keep up, and there wasn’t a full understanding of the costs. He added that he understood that there was the target of reaching net zero by 2050 and a couple of other towns were considering this. S. Chase responded that Concord and Acton were considering it. J. Clancy said that he had concerns for the consequences for someone wanting to renovate. He said, for example, that if you have gas or were adding gas you would be required to run all the electricity as well and would have to put in a heat pump and provide for solar. He added that it was unclear what the qualifications were for not needing solar. He said that many older homes in Chelmsford were not built for a heat pump transfer. He explained that they didn’t have the duct work and putting in the duct work in an older home is not an easy task. S. Chase commented that it would be very expensive. J. Clancy said that he had too many questions which weren’t readily answered, and he was concerned that this would cause monetary issues for people in town. D. Goselin stated that conclusions were made during the presentation without any materials to back them up. S. Chase said that he thought that many of the conclusions were actually assumptions.

A. Tanini stated that her concern was on the renovation piece of this. She said that she was okay with new construction as it would not be incrementally much more in cost to incorporate electric. She added that it would protect the new homeowner and bring up the quality and provide options. She said that she was more concerned with the renovations as there were a lot of older homes in town and these requirements would not be cheap. J. Clancy commented that the assumption was that the offset for the additional cost would be covered by the solar but noted that electricity prices were not low and showed no signs of decreasing.

J. Clancy reported that Monday night the Select Board moved forward with a new electricity contract and decided that people would be opted into the middle ground of 50% clean energy which was a higher cost. S. Chase said that they would start off out of the gate with a contractual higher rate than they otherwise would have had the Board elected not to default to that option. He added that residents could opt out or down, but there had been a lengthy discussion at the Select Board meeting regarding this issue. He said that concerns were expressed that most people did not read inserts and they would not be aware that they were automatically defaulting to a mid-range service. He said that the Select Board indicated that they would like to see steps taken such as an education program.

J. Clancy stated that Chelmsford was already three to four months in on the new energy code and was a Green Community. He noted that this would be an additional thing that the town could opt into, and he didn't think that it was a decision that should be made at this time. S. Chase commented that this could be done at any time when things were clearer. He said that he wanted to add the concern of it being mandated. He said that he was concerned with it being mandatory as he believed that people should have choices and these changes should be market driven. K. Duffett stated that she applauded the effort and intention of the article, but she thought that Chelmsford did not need to be first in line for this. She said that she agreed with what has been said and she would be voting "no".

P. Cohen reported that Cambridge had adopted this code. C. Goodland commented that Cambridge had a lot of older homes as well. J. Clancy responded that Cambridge had a very high commercial base and the large portion of people that live there have the ability to handle these adjustments. He said that the structure of Chelmsford was different. He asked for any additional discussion and hearing none, called the vote. All voted against the motion. The motion failed. The Finance Committee will vote against Article 21 by a unanimous vote (0 in favor, 7 against).

Article 22 - Community Preservation Fund: FY24 Debt Service, Admin. Expenses & Reserves:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 22 as presented. A. Tanini seconded the motion. J. Clancy stated that this was an annual article for the CPC, and he called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 22 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 23 - Conservation Land Acquisition – Wilson Lane:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 23 as presented. A. Tanini seconded the motion. J. Clancy asked for clarification as to where the property was located. P. Cohen replied that it was off of Meadow Brook. J. Clancy called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 23 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 24 - Capital Improvements on Conservation Land:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 24 to see if the Town will vote to appropriate and transfer a certain sum of money from the Community Preservation Fund General Reserve for rehabilitation, restoration, and improvement of capital conservation lands which make the lands more functional for their intended conservational use; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount for Article 24 was \$50,000. A. Tanini seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 24 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 25 - Conservation Land Easement – 2 Shore Drive:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 25 as presented. A. Tanini seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 25 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 26 - Historic Records Preservation:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 26 to see if the Town will vote to appropriate and transfer a certain sum of money from the Community Preservation Fund General Reserve to be expended by the Town Clerk for the preservation of the Town's vital historic records; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount for Article 26 was \$275,000. A. Tanini seconded the motion. J. Clancy stated that this continues the restoration project started by the Town Clerk. He added that the committee had seen the pictures of the preservation work being done during the presentation. He called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 26 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 27 - Highland Park Playground Equipment:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 27 to see if the Town will vote to appropriate and transfer a certain sum of money from the Community Preservation Fund General Reserve for the purchase and installation of new playground equipment at the Highland Playground which is located off of John Street; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount for Article 27 was \$50,000. A. Tanini seconded the motion. J. Clancy stated that this article was a continuation of the CPC updating playgrounds around town. He added that this playground was definitely in need of the update. K. Duffett commented that it was in need 27 years ago when her daughter used it. J. Clancy called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 27 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 28 - Forefathers Cemetery Headstone Preservation:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 28 to see if the Town will vote to appropriate and transfer a certain sum of money from the Community Preservation Fund General Reserve for preservation of headstones at Forefathers Cemetery; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount for this article was \$8,000. A.

Tanini seconded the motion. K. Duffett commented that Chelmsford was blessed to have such an interesting and historic graveyard. She said that many of the stones were in rough shape. J. Clancy agreed saying that some of the stones were knocked over or broken in half. He added that they did a beautiful job with the stone restorations and this article would address 16 headstones. J. Clancy called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 28 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 29 - Center Village Brook Walk:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 29 to see if the Town will vote to appropriate and transfer a certain sum of money from the Community Preservation Fund General Reserve for creation of a walkway along Beaver Brook at 1 Billerica Road/44 Central Square; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount for Article 29 was \$47,250. A. Tanini seconded the motion. S. Chase commented that this was a long time in coming. J. Clancy said that especially with the town owning the parking lot it would be nice addition to that area. He called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 29 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Article 30 - School Street Freight House Relocation and Preservation:

C. Goodland made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 30 to see if the Town will vote to appropriate and transfer a certain sum of money from the Community Preservation Fund General Reserve for the dismantling, transporting, and preservation of the School Street Freight House to the Garrison House property located at 105 Garrison Road; or act in relation thereto. She stated that the amount for Article 30 was \$50,000. A. Tanini seconded the motion. J. Clancy commented that he was surprised to hear that the building had “good bones”. S. Chase asked if a structural engineer had looked at the building. P. Cohen replied in the affirmative. J. Clancy added that he was glad that the Garrison House was willing to take on this project. D. Goselin noted that the funds were only for the building move. J. Clancy pointed out that the Garrison House would be taking responsibility for the restoration. He called the vote. All voted in favor. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 30 by a unanimous vote (7 in favor, 0 against).

Discuss Budget Hearing and Spring Town Meeting Warrant Article Schedule:

S. Chase asked which of the warrant articles would fall under a consent agenda. P. Cohen replied that after review with the moderator, nine articles being 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 would be brought forth under a consent agenda.

J. Clancy stated that two articles may come up in the next few weeks which would warrant a Special Town Meeting. P. Cohen suggested that the Finance Committee reserve the date of Thursday, April 13th. He stated that the Special Warrant would be signed by the Select Board on April 10th, and contracts would be ratified that night. He said that they had agreements for all but the firefighters union which would go to mediation in two weeks. He said that there were a couple of capital requests for the Special Town Meeting including the boiler for the Center Elementary School. He said that the final numbers would probably be between \$100,000 and

\$150,000 which he would fund from the reserve fund. He added that there was also a half million which they would need to borrow for kitchen renovations at McCarthy Middle School and the high school. P. Cohen stated that the Special Town Meeting would be Thursday, April 27th which was the second night of the Spring Town Meeting. He expected that they could take care of all the articles within the two nights of Town Meeting.

J. Clancy requested that the rationale for the one recommendation with a dissenting vote (Article 20) be provided to incorporate into the letter. He also requested that if there were reasons which Finance Committee members wanted to include for the one Article which was voted against (Article 21) to get them to him next week.

Public Comment:

S. Chase commended C. Goodland for the excellent job she did at reading the articles for the recommendations to be made. J. Clancy agreed that she did an admirable job.

S. Chase made a motion to adjourn. D. Goselin seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela A. Morrison