



CHELMSFORD FINANCE COMMITTEE  
MINUTES

May 27, 2021

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TOWN OF  
CHELMSFORD  
PATRICIA E.  
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TOWN CLERK

**MEETING:** A virtual meeting was held on Thursday, May 27, 2021 at 6:30 PM using Zoom Video Communications software.

**PRESENT:** J. Clancy, D. Goselin, E. Chambers, K. Duffett, A. Langford, A. Tanini, and V. Parks (not present for voting)

**ALSO PRESENT:** P. Cohen, J. Sousa, D. Lussier, J. Langner, and public

**HANDOUTS:** None

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:**

April 8, 2021:

The approval of the minutes from the meeting of April 8, 2021 was postponed until the next Finance Committee meeting.

**Public Comment:**

None

**Review, Discussion, and Vote on Recommendation for Spring Town Meeting Warrant****Article 2:**

D. Lussier reporting that in order to close the fiscal year they needed to request funding from the Finance Committee Reserve fund. She said that \$54,000 was being requested for Municipal Administration. She explained that last year during the audit a request had been made for them to do a cyber security assessment. She added that the MIS Department had hired a firm to help write the plan which cost \$20,000. She noted that this was unexpected as the need was not known when the original budget had been set. D. Lussier reported that \$32,000 was needed under legal for labor services which included the negotiations with the Police Sergeant Union. She reported that another student was added to the existing student going to Minuteman, so they needed an additional \$2,000 for Out of Town Tuition.

D. Lussier reported that \$71,000 was needed under Public Safety. She said that \$60,000 of this was for vehicle maintenance and turn-out gear for the Fire Department and \$11,000 was needed under Building Inspection for salaries. She said that Chief Ryan had reported some unexpected issues with vehicles which they needed to repair in order to keep the vehicles running. She added that he had four new firefighters coming in and he needed to purchase the turnout gear for them before they start in July. She said that the building commissioner had to go out on a medical disability resulting in the need to hire another building inspector. She noted that in the short-term they would be paying two inspectors.

D. Lussier reported that under Public Works \$50,000 was needed due to the increased tonage under Solid Waste and \$10,000 was needed under Street Lighting due to a solar cost increase. She said that the increase in tonage was related to Covid-19 with people being home. She added that solar usage was hard to predict and \$10,000 was needed to keep the Street Lighting budget in the black. She said that the \$60,000 needed for Public Works would come from a transfer from the Snow & Ice budget. She explained that there was a surplus of \$100,000 in the Snow & Ice budget this year so they would just transfer the funds over to Solid Waste and Street Lighting.

E. Chambers asked if the cyber security assessment was going to be an annual occurrence. J. Sousa replied that an outside consultant was doing a threat assessment of their network, programs, and cyber security features. He said that they would give them some items that they would like to see IT work on. He said that it would be a continual improvement process, but they did not foresee the need for an annual assessment. He added that he thought any improvements could be handled within the IT budget going forward.

E. Chambers asked if the inspector's salary when on disability wouldn't be paid from a special account such that the salary line item payment would not continue. D. Lussier replied that short-term disability would be paid out from the salary line item budget.

E. Chambers asked how the solar cost went up. D. Lussier replied that solar usage was charged on the National Grid bill. She said that if there is no sun no solar is being produced. She said that the cost depends on the sunlight and in the winter months the cost was running higher than seen in the prior year. She explained that if we are producing a lot of solar it shows up as credits on the National Grid bill, but if not, it shows up as a charge on the bill.

K. Duffett asked if the increased costs under solid waste were brought forward to next year's budget foreseeing the increased tonage as a continuing trend. P. Cohen replied that the budget had been increased significantly next year not only for the increased tonage, but also for the increase in the tipping fee to \$90 per ton up from \$73 per ton.

**Adjustment to Spring Town Meeting Warrant Article 10:**

P. Cohen reported that the request for funding for Article 10 was increasing from \$175,000 to \$275,000. He reported that the PFAS presence at 54 Richardson Road was getting worse. He said that the results from the initial monitoring resulted in the need to install additional monitoring wells. He said that elevated PFAS levels were found along the roadway of Richardson Road near the outflow of the DPW garage and from an unknown oil-water separator which was under pavement. He added that there was the concern that PFAS materials were migrating to the adjacent North Chelmsford Water District supply wells. He reported that they had contracted with Weston & Sampson engineers to oversee the investigation and remediation of the site. He said that the costs under this article were going up for a couple of reasons. He explained that it was difficult to dispose of PFAS materials, so the costs of disposal were significant. He added that the testing was also extensive, and they had just received a revised amendment to the contract including extensive testing which resulted in the need to increase the funding for this article by \$100,000. He said that this amount would be enough to get to Fall Town Meeting. He said that he did not think that they would see the full results of the second phase of well installation and testing until August. He added that the completion of the assessment in October included a report being submitted to the DEP. He noted that depending on what came up there may be the need to revisit the situation at Fall Town Meeting.

J. Clancy asked for confirmation that with Article 2 and this article there would be no remaining Finance Committee Reserve funds to return to free cash. P. Cohen replied that this was correct. He said that the \$125,000 needed for Article 2 along with the \$275,000 for this article would use the entire \$400,000.

**Presentation of Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 1 – Katrina Road Pumping Station:**

P. Cohen reported that no action would be requested for Article 1. He said that this wasn't because there were no costs associated with the unforeseen break at the Katrina Road pumping station, but that they would use Federal American Rescue funds to cover the roughly \$600,000 cost of repairs. He said that they would do a temporary bypass down below the water table similar to what had been done at Southwell in March of 2020. He said that they had kept this article as a placeholder while they were waiting to hear about federal funding.

K. Duffett asked if Town Meeting approval was needed for spending the federal funding. P. Cohen replied that this funding was being treated as a grant, so the Select Board was considered the custodian of the funds. He said it would be roughly 11 million dollars and would require full reporting and auditing, but in regard to authorization of expenditures it would be treated as a Chapter 41-53A grant.

**Presentation of Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 2 – Main Street Acquisition:**

J. Clancy recused himself from the presentation of this article. J. Sousa reported that his office had been contacted by an elderly resident and their adult daughter regarding a long narrow strip

of land just over 6,600 square feet with an assessed value of about \$1,800. He said that it sits along Main Street at the Meadowbrook Road intersection. He said that this is a remainder from when Route 3 was built and much of their property had been taken by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. He said that the resident has been paying taxes on it for many years, but no longer lived in that exact area and had no use for the land and wasn't interested in paying taxes on a parcel of land that they couldn't use. He said that this was discussed with the Town Manager and Town Council and it was decided that the best option would be to take the land as a land donation. He said that a land donation was a two step process with the Select Board voting in favor of the gift of land by a unanimous vote on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and now the next step being to bring it before Town Meeting for consideration. J. Sousa said that while the use of the land was limited, it sits right along Main Street so may be of interest to the DPW. He added that in working within cooperation of the resident they were able to avoid all legal fees and land court costs should they need to go through a foreclosure process. He said that the land donation would benefit both parties.

**Presentation of Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 3 – Bentley Lane Acquisition:**

J. Sousa reported that the legal counsel for the current owners of two parcels of land contacted the Town Manager's office in late April regarding these parcels. He said that the owners went before the Board of Appeals in an attempt to seek a variance to build a structure on these parcels. He said that there was significant neighborhood opposition to this and the owners seeing the opposition did not wish to pursue the variance further and were seeking to donate the parcels to the Town instead. He said that just as with the prior article this would require the approval of both the Select Board and Town Meeting to accept the land gifts. He said that they would hold the parcels for general municipal purposes as open space.

E. Chambers asked if the Town had the option to not accept the land gift if they didn't want it. J. Sousa replied in the affirmative but said that it would be a benefit to the Town to accept the land. He said that there could be a use for the land in the future. He added that since he has been the treasurer these parcels have been in and out of tax title many times resulting in significant time and expense, even though they have never been foreclosed. He said that if the Town refused they would probably try to sell to another private party who could then bring them back before the Board of Appeals and restart the cycle. P. Cohen added that the property owner has hard feelings regarding abutters and therefore sought to donate the land to the town. P. Cohen commented that recently a parcel on Billerica Road which had been received in this manner had been sold by the Town. He explained that circumstances can change in the future. E. Chambers asked what the assessed value of each parcel was. J. Sousa replied that the assessed value of the larger parcel is \$32,300 and the smaller one is assessed at \$23,500.

**Presentation of Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 4 – Solar Lease – Forum, Senior Center:**

P. Cohen reported that they were seeking to lease the roof of the Chelmsford Forum and the Senior Center for a 20-year period. He said that they would use the state procurement law to go off a state bid list to enter a solar agreement. He said that they would use the solar power from the installations to power the respective building. He said that this was part of the Town's green energy program. He added that they had not done this yet on the Senior Center because they had just recently re-roofed the Center. He said that now that the Town owned the Forum, and both buildings had new roofing the Town was ready to proceed with solar leases. He added that once

solar is in place on the Forum they would be able to go from natural gas to electricity when they install the new chiller system. He stated that the net savings for the Senior Center was expected to be \$100,000 for the indicated time period and would be much more for the Forum. He said that the true savings on the Forum roof would be around \$600,000, as the chiller would need to be done either way and when the chiller costs were factored in the savings is still estimated at over \$100,000. He added that these were two of the last remaining town buildings which were appropriate for a solar project. E. Chambers asked how the lessee made money on this and if their only advantage was the use of the excess power. P. Cohen replied that they would also receive tax credits. He said that they wouldn't actually write out a check for the lease as they would receive the credits and the Town would have a fixed cost on electricity. He added that there would also be a minor payment in lieu of taxes for the Senior Center roof. He noted that there would be no taxes received from the Forum as the building was located in Billerica. J. Clancy commented that this may help with some of the energy issues that the Senior Center has experienced over the last few years.

**Presentation of Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 5 – “Steadman” to “Stedman”:**

J. Langner of 115 Stedman Street stated that he has lived on Stedman Street since 1981. He stated that the spelling of the street has been inconsistent, and it is getting worse. He said that this inconsistency has resulted in issues with mail order sites, getting a license with Real ID, issues with package delivery, and concerns over possible confusion when an ambulance is required. He stated that Stedman Street starts at Westford Street in Lowell, crosses the town line and Route 3, runs through the Westland's section of town, and ends at Chelmsford Street.

J. Langner reported that Stedman Street was named for John G. Stedman who worked in construction and real estate. He added that his brothers also lived on the street at different times in the late 1800's and early 1900's. He said that Stedman Street was accepted at the March 1900 Town Meeting with the warrant being signed by town officials. He noted that the spelling was consistent in the documents as “Stedman”. He added that history books, property deeds, maps, official lists of residents, street signs, and bills from Town Hall also have the consistent spelling of “Stedman”. J. Langner explained that there is an issue with inconsistency in that Google street view captured an inconsistent spelling of “Steadman” on street signs and the USPS zip code lookup has the correct spelling of “Stedman” for Lowell, but the incorrect spelling of “Steadman” for Chelmsford. He explained that many businesses import this standard address file which results in the issue spreading. He said that more businesses are copying the wrong spelling from the USPS into their own databases. He said that this could result in a mess and increased chaos as the incorrect spelling can creep into legal documents. He noted that recent tax bills had changed to having the incorrect spelling.

J. Langner said that the fix to this problem was easy. He said first street signs should be restored to the original spelling. He said that the USPS should be instructed to correct their database so that the entire street has the correct spelling. He added that the Assessor's Office needed to go back to using the street name which was on the property deed which they had done until recently. He noted that this article was not changing the street name but was reining in the few areas where the incorrect spelling was being used. He said that the Stedman Street residents would be very grateful if Chelmsford could help put an end to this issue.

E. Chambers asked if there was any issue with the wording of the article which requested the change of the name when it was really not changing the name. P. Cohen replied that Town Council and the Town Clerk researched this issue and Town Council drafted the language of the article. D. Goselin commented that J. Langner did a very good job in doing all of the research around Stedman Street.

**Review, Discussion, and Vote on Recommendation for Warrant Articles:**

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

Article 2 – FY2021 Operating Budget Amendments:

K. Duffett made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 2 for the FY2021 operating budget amendments to transfer funds to the following line items:

Line Item #2	Municipal Administration Expenses	\$52,000
Line Item #3	Out of District Education Expenses	\$2,000
Line Item #5	Public Safety Expenses	\$71,000
Line Item #7	Public Works Expenses	\$60,000

For a total of \$125,000 coming from the Finance Committee Reserve Fund. A. Langford seconded the motion. P. Cohen made a friendly amendment to break up the Public Safety line item into Public Safety Expenses for \$60,000 and Public Safety Personnel for \$11,000.

E. Chambers asked what would happen with the remaining \$40,000 from the \$100,000 snow and ice surplus. D. Lussier replied that there were some outstanding invoices for the DPW which haven't come through yet such as for plow repair. She said that they had to leave a little for these invoices and they would pretty much be using all of these funds.

J. Clancy called the vote. D. Goselin, A. Langford, E. Chambers, K. Duffett, J. Clancy, and A. Tanini voted in favor of the motion. V. Parks was absent. The motion passed. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 2 by a unanimous vote with one absence.

Article 10 – PFAS at Richardson Road:

K. Duffett made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 10 to transfer \$275,000 from the Finance Committee Reserve Fund for the investigation, reporting, remediation, and other related costs pertaining to the presence of elevated levels of PFAS that have been detected in groundwater monitoring wells located at the Town-owned property at 54 Richardson Road. A. Langford seconded the motion. J. Clancy stated that the original vote on this article was 6 with 1 absence. He said that this vote was to adjust the amount of the funding to cover the additional work. J. Clancy called the vote. D. Goselin, A. Langford, E. Chambers, K. Duffett, J. Clancy, and A. Tanini voted in favor of the motion. V. Parks was absent. The motion passed. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 10 by a unanimous vote with one absence.

Article 1 - Repair at Katrina Road Sewer Pump Station:

J. Clancy stated that no action would be taken on Article 1.

Article 2 – Main Street Parcel:

J. Clancy recused himself from the discussion and recommendation on Article 2. K. Duffett made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 2 to authorize the Select Board to acquire by purchase, gift, eminent domain, or otherwise, a parcel of land containing .15 acres, more or less, which is identified as Main Street, shown as Lot 1 on Assessor's Map 23, Block 99, and more fully described in a deed recorded in the Middlesex North Registry of Deeds in Book 1198, Page 384, said parcel to be held under the care, custody, and control of the Select Board for general municipal purposes; and further authorize the Select Board and Town Manager to take all actions necessary to acquire said parcel. E. Chambers seconded the motion. D. Goselin, A. Langford, E. Chambers, K. Duffett, and A. Tanini voted in favor of the motion. J. Clancy abstained from voting. V. Parks was not present. The motion passed. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 2 by a unanimous vote with one abstention and one absence.

Article 3 – Bentley Lane Parcels:

K. Duffett made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 3 to authorize the Select Board to acquire by purchase, gift, eminent domain, or otherwise, two parcels of land containing 1.72 acres, more or less, which are identified as Bentley Lane, shown as Lots 9 and 25 on Assessor's Map 70, Block 311, and more fully described in a deed recorded in the Middlesex North Registry of Deeds in Book 21071, Page 178, said parcels to be held under the care, custody, and control of the Select Board for general municipal purposes; and further authorize the Select Board and Town Manager to take all actions necessary to acquire said parcels. E. Chambers seconded the motion. J. Clancy stated that it wasn't an insignificant amount of land and the owners had attempted to build on it but had failed. He noted that it was interesting that the conservation commission did not want the land, though he commented that it was in the middle of a neighborhood. He added that as J. Sousa had stated if circumstances changed there may be the ability to sell the land in the future. He said that as J. Sousa had also indicated, tax title expenses were not insignificant. He added that he would hate to see the property go through that expense again. E. Chambers asked if there were any issues or concerns if the town buys this land and then an abutter wishes to purchase it. P. Cohen replied that there was no issue, though they would have to go back to Town Meeting to get authorization to sell the land. J. Clancy called the vote. D. Goselin, A. Langford, E. Chambers, K. Duffett, J. Clancy, and A. Tanini voted in favor of the motion. V. Parks was absent. The motion passed. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 3 by a unanimous vote with one absence.

Article 4 – Lease of Senior Center and Forum Roofs for Solar:

K. Duffett made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 4 to authorize the Town Manager, with the approval of the Select Board, to lease the roof of the Senior Center building, which is located at 75 Groton Road, Chelmsford, Massachusetts and shown as Lot 4 on Assessor's Map 12, Block 18, and the roof and parking lot of the Chelmsford Forum, which is located at 2 Brick Kiln Road, Billerica Massachusetts, for the installation of a roof-mounted solar photovoltaic systems for a period not to exceed twenty (20) years. E. Chambers seconded the motion. J. Clancy stated that he was glad to see this as it may help to alleviate some of the energy issues that the Senior Center has been dealing with for the last few years. He called the vote. D. Goselin, A. Langford, E. Chambers, K. Duffett, J. Clancy, and A. Tanini voted in favor of the motion. V. Parks was absent. The motion passed. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 4 by a unanimous vote with one absence.

Article 5 – Steadman to Stedman Street:

K. Duffett made a motion that the Finance Committee recommend approval of Article 5 for the Town to change the name of Steadman Street, which was accepted by vote on Article 22 of the Spring 1900 Town Meeting with a spelling of both Steadman Street and Stedman Street, and which according to the street acceptance documentation was the subject of a further vote by the Town in 1926 to use the name Steadman Street, to Stedman Street. E. Chambers seconded the motion. A. Langford said that she could attest to much of what J. Langner said during his presentation. She said that she could not get a Real ID as documents don't match. She said that her mortgage and deed are under Stedman, but her real estate bill sent to her mortgage company in 2021 was under the different address of Steadman. She said that it took several weeks to resolve the problem. She said that she sometimes doesn't get mail and shopping online is problematic. E. Chambers said he was in favor of this article. He said that he thought it was straight forward and can see how this would be a concern for residents on Stedman Street. J. Clancy commented that he could see the issues and frustration that this issue is causing and could see no reason not to support the article. A. Langford asked how much it would cost to replace the street signs. P. Cohen replied that the cost would not be material. J. Clancy asked how the USPS change would take place. P. Cohen replied that the town was responsible. He said that the request would come out of the clerk's office and the change would happen over time. J. Clancy called the vote. D. Goselin, A. Langford, E. Chambers, K. Duffett, J. Clancy, and A. Tanini voted in favor of the motion. V. Parks was absent. The motion passed. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of Article 5 by a unanimous vote with one absence.

Discussion on Vote Reporting:

J. Clancy stated that the first night of Town Meeting was June 17, 2021 so the target was to get the letter together next week along with the changes to Article 2 and Article 10. He said that the goal was to provide one publication for both the Spring and Special Town Meetings. He thanked K. Duffett for sending her opposing views on several articles and invited other members to send along their views.

**Discuss Plans for Upcoming Meetings:**

J. Clancy stated that this meeting should close the meetings for the current fiscal year. He said that he did not foresee the need to meet again until starting up again in August unless something else popped up.

**Public Comment:**

J. Clancy reported that two members are leaving the Finance Committee at the end of the fiscal year. He said that they had both dedicated themselves greatly to the Finance Committee and put in a lot of time and effort in their work with the community. He said that he would like to thank them both for their time. He said that one leaving member, A. Langford, was present this evening and has been on the committee for quite some time and has been a great asset and the same can be said for V. Parks who was on earlier but couldn't stay for the entire meeting. He said that the committee was sorry to see them go but understood why they were leaving and wished them luck in their future endeavors. He said that they would be tough to replace. K. Duffett seconded these sentiments. E. Chambers agreed. D. Goselin said that he would make it unanimous.

A. Langford said that it was bittersweet to walk away from something that she has enjoyed as much as she has enjoyed being a member of the committee. She said that being a part off the committee she has been fortunate working with the people she has worked with over the last five years and she was proud to have been a member of the team. She said that she was made to feel at home from the moment she first joined, not just by the members, but by town employees from all departments. She said that she was never made to feel like she was asking stupid questions as she learned the nuances of fiscal finances. She said that everything achieved is a result of mutual collaboration and cooperation and it was a pleasure and privilege to have worked alongside people who know how to bring out the best in each other. She thanked J. Clancy for his inspired leadership and thanked the other members for their humor and friendship. She said that she would be starting law school in August which was a life-long dream. She said that she would miss everyone as they have been a part of her journey for a long time, and she hoped they would be a part of it going forward. She said it was not "goodbye" as she would see people around town. She added that with technology she was only a text, email, or Facebook message away. She thanked everyone. The Finance Committee members thanked A. Langford and wished her well.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela A. Morrison