

2/7/2024 -- Oakham, MA. Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

FinCom meeting called to order at 6:07 pm. Alan Flagg and Corey Packard attend in person, Steve Dollinger is remote. Lucy Tessnau is in attendance from the BOS.

The primary agenda item for tonight is to take our first look at the FY25 budget submissions from the various town boards and departments. The initial submissions result in a 9% proposed increase. FinCom Chair makes the following comments and asks we take this opportunity to:

- Become familiar with the budget submissions.
- Identify budgets that we need additional input on from the board/department.
- Reminds all this is not the time to start to analyze the submissions in detail or recommend changes.
- Review the data submitted and determine the next steps for each budget.
- Advised invitations sent out to identified departments for joint FinCom/BOS meetings.

Corey Packard advised he has completed entry of Dec expenses into the FinCom master budget, next step is to enter the FY2025 budget data. He is ready to review tonight if time permits as new business.

We proceed to discuss each of the budgets submitted by the various boards/departments.

S Dollinger asks if we can find out how many ambulance calls there are in Oakham and how does that compare to prior years and surrounding towns.

There is a discussion on Office supplies being centralized. BOS has this under review.

Question asked if the Assessors are required to send out a printed copy of the assessment every three years. At one point this requirement was a town bylaw. Did that change? Follow up needed.

Discussion on some depts budgeting funds year after year they never use and how that can result in a different department's request being denied as funds are not available. The BOS printing budget of \$1700 is discussed as an example as the \$1,700 requested amount is well over the 3-year avg cost of ~\$1,000.

Discussion as to can the highway department take over the mowing and trimming at the town cemeteries vs an outside contractor. Will be addressed once we have a new highway superintendent in place.

The salary/wages for all departments should be level funded in the proposed budgets as the BOS will address town salary/wages increase in a separate meeting.

Population growth is not driving budget increases. Growth in town management/governance costs such as staffing, new state requirements and technology are driving costs along with inflation. Staffing challenges such as the town's ability to hire PT staff is becoming difficult. Going forward this may lead to more FT positions with benefits. Additional FT staff with benefits exacerbates that problem.

Year-end transfers distort the year end actual spend reports within specific line items and that needs to be considered as we review the FY25 budget.

The review of Coreys master spread sheet is moved to the next meeting as we have a hard stop at 7:30.

Minutes from 1/3/24 Meeting approved.

The meeting adjourned at 7:32pm.