

Oakham, MA. Finance Committee (FinCom) Meeting
11/13/20 Meeting Minutes

The meeting was opened by FC chairman Paul Rochette at 3:05pm. Members Clare Hendra, Alan Flagg are in attendance along with one resident of the town Peter Clifford attended as an interested citizen. FinCom Chairman asks if any public inquiries or requests from Town Depts had been received by any member of the FinCom. None received since the prior meeting from any member present.

FinCom Chairman states if no new items he wants to focus on one topic for this meeting that being preparing for a joint meeting with the BOS to initiate the process of developing the FY2022 budget. Town resident Peter was asked if he had a specific reason for attending or a specific issue he wanted to discuss with the FinCom. He is concerned that members of the FinCom are considering resigning in protest from the Finance committee over the disagreement between the BOS and FinCom expressed at the June ATM. Adding he believes that under the Oakham Town By-Laws supported by various state laws and statutes that it is the FinCom's responsibility to develop and present the final budget at the ATM not the BOS. He is concerned that is not happening. Clare Hendra thanks him for attending and we welcome his input.

FinCom Chair asks we now focus on the 11/17 meeting with the BOS to address the budget planning process. He advises that the BOS has requested all town departments to submit their proposed FY2022 budget to the Town Accountant. He expects we will have some preliminary data back from the various town departments and that will be discussed at the 11/17 meeting. However, he wants most of the discussion needs to be on the calendar, roles, and responsibilities of the FinCom in the budget process not the actual budget for this meeting.

Clare believes it is fine for the BOS to send out the budget guidelines to the various departments as the first step in the budget process. Adding the FinCom needs to receive complete copies of the budgets submitted to the Town Accountant by each department not just a summary spreadsheet. Motion made and FinCom votes unanimously to send a written request to the Town Accountant that he provide the FinCom copies of the budget requests as they come in along with the initial revenue forecast.

We discuss timing for the budget calendar. Clare expresses concern that the law reads budget requests are not to be made sooner than 10days prior to the end of the calendar year. And that the current request is in violation of state law. Suggestion made to ask the Towns outside counsel to review this item. FinCom Chair reviews Selectmen's Handbook) that reads BOS prepares the preliminary budget, submits it to the FC and the FinCom develops the final budget and makes the budget recommendations at the ATM. FinCom agrees to the following as the go forward process for the budget. (1) executive branch (Town Account) to assemble the initial budget book with revenue forecast and provide copies to the BOS and FinCom. (2) BOS present their proposed the budget to FinCom (3) The FinCom reviews and then the FinCom & BOS meet to discuss any area of disagreement. (4) If the BOS and FinCom cannot resolve the ~~any~~ disagreements it is the FinCom budget that gets presented at the ATM. Clare expresses concern the BOS will not agree to this as the process as they want to control the budget as demonstrated during the development of the FY2021 budget even though the towns bylaws are clear on the FinCom responsibility for the budget. FinCom chair recounts the problem that occurred at the 2020 ATM for Peter. Where the BOS Chair advised the BOS to believe the FinCom had no standing in setting or presenting the budget as there was no record of our being official sworn in. FinCom Chair explained to Peter the BOS and FinCom agreed to compromise on various aspects of the budget at the start of the ATM in the best interests of the town and moving the meeting forward. Discussion on the point that if BOS rejects the FinCom role in developing the budget. Do we go to the state and ask they review or we can go to the towns people with a petition to present at the town meeting. Peter Clifford advises Clare Hendra to write to Jim Crowley DOR Legal and ask the theoretical question – what step to take if the

articles submitted by the FINCOM are changed by the Selectboard, and what step to take if the article(s) submitted by FINCOM do not appear on the warrant.

FinCom Chair concludes meeting saying he hopes we can work with the BOS, reach agreement on the budget calendar, roles, and responsibilities at the 11/17 meeting and not have to escalate the topic to the state. Meeting adjourns at 4:30.