

**Oakham, MA. Finance Committee (FinCom) Meeting**  
**3/24/2021 Meeting Minutes**

FinCom Chair Paul Rochette called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. Members Steve Dollinger, Clare Hendra and Alan Flagg were in attendance. Oakham BOS was represented by Lucy Tesnau and the Town Accountant Tom Wilson is in attendance.

The Chairman confirmed there have been no public inquiries or mail communications received since the last meeting, he then reviewed the meeting's agenda, and distributed the FY2022 budget books received from the BOS along with additional budget materials developed by the FinCom.

As we start to address the budget FinCom Chair stressed our priority is the Towns operational needs. Lucy Tesnau reviews guidelines set by the BOS for development of the budget. These include a request to target flat funding by dept with a written explanation for any increases, and to not request any salary increase. The BOS will review all salary for the town separately. It was recognized historical constraints on expense increases have resulted in some depts likely needing operational increases to their FY2022 budgets and the FinCom will address each of these individually. FinCom Chair believes a joint team should be created to work on future capital expense planning. He will address this with the BOS.

A review and open discussion of the current revenue forecasts is conducted with open questions being identified. It was noted that the current revenue forecast is \$4,441,975.68 minus debt exclusion of \$53,211.78. Local receipts forecast of \$461,500.00 is then discussed as it is flat to FY2021. New Growth is estimated at only \$5,000. FinCom wants to further evaluate these projections.

FinCom then reviews expense budgets in alphabetical order starting with the Assessors budget. It is noted that for departments that did not submit a budget the FY2022 budget will be kept flat to the FY2021 budget. The Town Account and Clare Hendra discuss funding of the Assessors Stabilization fund and debate if it falls under Proposition 2.5 for funding. Action item, the two will work this question outside of the meeting. Action Item FinCom will set up a meeting with the Assessor.

BOH budget discussion recognized many new challenges by the BOH because of Covid19 and that the BOH has had an extremely heavy workload this year and has done some excellent work. This led to a discussion on the many challenges from Covid including the lack of highspeed internet by Oakham residents. It is agreed a new line will be added to the Board of Health budget for Extraordinary Admin Services, currently driven by Covid. Lucy Tesnau addressed the group and discussed the American Rescue Plan Act which makes \$572,000 available to the town. Clare Hendra states research shows these funds could be used to improve internet services. All agree this needs to be a priority and that the FinCom and BOS need to quickly address this item. Clare has confirmed this with Brian Sweeny. Action item the BOS and FinCom will put together a team to work the item.

Discussion on eliminating the Council on Aging stipend but it was agreed to leave as is.

Rutland Dispatch budget reflects a decrease of ~\$7,000.

The preliminary Education budget is reviewed with an emphasis on the Quabbin Regional budget of \$2,529,871.00. FinCom is concerned over the increase and would like a better understanding of the budget as there are new requirements in the budget that we need to understand. Action item. FinCom will ask to meet with Oakham School Board Members to review.

Preliminary review of the Fire Dept budget results in an Action item that the FinCom meet with the Chief to discuss the FY2022 budget increases.

Historical Commission increase of \$2,000 for planned printing and video work receives preliminary approval from FinCom as justified.

There remains some confusion in the Highway budget as to funding for Part Time Seasonal overtime with the question being should it be in the ice and snow budget or operational budget. Action item is the Town

Accountant to review proper handling. Total Highway budget reflects a decrease of \$(5,831.00). May not need to meet with Highway if we can resolve the question on part time seasonal help.

We discuss the timing of future budgets as we are repeatedly note errors many of the budgets where prepared prior to the STM and as a result do not reflect the changes approved during the STM. Recommendation is the budget process should not start until we are 6 months into the fiscal year.

A possible increase to some of the stipends paid by the town is discussed for elected positions such as the town Moderator.

Municipal building budget data from BOS does not match with FinCom data, the discrepancy was resolved as some approved changes are missing.

Police budget review resulted in an action item to meet with the Police Chief to discuss the Police budget. It is also noted the line item "equipment repair" is not in the FY2022 budget. This may be an oversight.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:58pm.