

LYNNFIELD FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

BUDGET SUMMIT

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2023

600 MARKET STREET, MERRITT CENTER

Present: Chris Mattia, Tom Kayola, Steve Riley, Gene Covino,  
Sarah Kelley, Brian Moreira, Alexis Leahy,  
Nick Connors, Joe Gallagher

Not Present: Chris Caprio, Julie Mitchell

Guests: Glenn Davis, Nick Secatore, Julie McCarthy, John Tomasz,  
Coral Hope, Don Lyons, Kirk Mansfield, Eric Hamlin,  
Bob Curtin, Rob Dolan, Abby Porter, Linda Naccara,  
Emilie Cadematori, Tom Geary, Amanda Haggstrom,  
Peg Sallade, Susan Mistretta

**Notification of Upcoming Meetings**

Thursday, January 11, 2024, 7:00 p.m., via Zoom

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Chairman Mattia called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**Opening Remarks**

Chairman Mattia opened the meeting thanking all department heads for their attendance stating FinCom values this budget summit for providing the opportunity for FinCom to listen and evaluate each department's operating and capital proposed requests for FY '25. This enables FinCom to have a focused view in planning the 2024 budget season.

Chairman Mattia provided an overview of what to expect in tonight's meeting, stating it's an opportunity for each department head to summarize their half-year update with a preview for next year. Town Accountant Julie McCarthy will wrap the meeting up with her schedule of dates for budget submissions, as well as some FinCom closing remarks.

TA Dolan recapped the Town's successes, including the commencement of the War Memorial, the largest road repair program, state funding of the Rail Trail for 2026, new tennis courts and basketball courts at the high school recreation center, public safety project, which recently opened its filed sub-bids coming in two percent under budget, and concluded that ninety percent of the project is out to bid.

TA Dolan stated the Town sustained its AA plus bond rating with a positive outlook as a community.

TA Dolan commended all departments for their effective operational and logistical transition to facilitate the continuity of Town business during the renovation of the new town hall and safety building.

TA Dolan praised the Town's use of ARPA money, citing the results of this spending frees up future capital expenditures.

TA Dolan cited the new hires of the town clerk and treasurer as great additions in a difficult municipal hiring community.

TA Dolan addressed the progress of the Sagamore development project, stating it is currently in the regulatory phase.

TA Dolan stated he is pleased with the current on-target spending in all departments, including the enterprise funds, while controlling most overtime costs. He added the Town settled all contracts while being fairly negotiated and signed throughout July of 2025.

TA Dolan cited the stabilization funds, approved tax rate, and free cash number will provide the Town a very healthy capital budget in 2025. TA Dolan added all major capital projects are on budget and advancing.

TA Dolan expressed his concern on the topic of new growth, which he believes will not be supported by the community as a whole.

TA Dolan reiterated his continuing view of local town government, stating it is the only level of government which must have a balanced budget. TA Dolan cited the processes of that budget is FinCom approval after public review, the Board of Selectmen's approval after public review, and the open town meeting process in which every citizen has the right to participate. Post that; the DOR audits the approved budget to ensure the tax rate meets spending. Finally, an independent private accounting firm comes in to review and provide a management document.

TA Dolan ended with the single most important responsibility of every town department, whether elected, appointed, or hired is the financial solvency of the Town.

### **Department Head Presentations**

Ms. Abby Porter, Library Director, stated the library's FY '24 operating budget is on track at forty-two percent, adding she does not expect any surprise changes to that.

Ms. Porter stated the next year's operating budget still needs to be approved by the Library Board of Trustees. Her current expectation is no significant increases aside from contractual salary increases. Ms. Porter cited the increase in the materials budget must increase slightly to stay within the sixteen percent of operating budget to comply with the certification requirements.

Ms. Porter cited the library's capital request will be to potentially update the phone system, citing ongoing problems with voicemail, transferring calls, and remote access to the system. Ms. Porter is thinking of requesting funds for an outdoor sound system to facilitate programs on the Common. Ms. Porter stated she will not be requesting any new positions.

Mr. Eric Hamlin, Executive Director of Lynnfield Media Studios (Lynnfield's Community Access Television Station) cited his operational responsibilities. Mr. Hamlin stated his funding is through Comcast and Verizon. Mr. Hamlin is looking to update computers, field gear, microphones, and gear to enhance capabilities at different locations for broadcast. Mr. Hamlin stated he is currently on-target with the budget, which he expects to be similar to last year's budget.

Ms. Julie McCarthy, Assistant Finance Director and Town Accountant, stated the accounting budget is on track for this year, adding it's approximately ninety-seven percent salaries and that expenses are in line for the next FY and level-funded, with the exception of contractual salary increases and IT financial software.

Ms. Pat Sallade, Prevention and Healthy Lynnfield, cited she's had a banner year of programming. Ms. Sallade cited this program is funded by grants, adding the current year operating expenses are on track for this fiscal year.

Ms. Sallade expects the next fiscal year will see a decrease in federal grant funding, but she will continue to look to offset by applying for additional grants. Currently she has a staff of three point two, and anticipates a small decrease in the staffing next year, but will continue to maintain the level of programming.

Ms. Susan Mistretta, Treasurer/Collector, stated after consulting with Town Accountant McCarthy, her budget looks like it's on track and sees no real changes for next year, with the exception of contractual requirements and postage to accommodate several elections.

Ms. Amanda Haggstrom, Town Clerk, stated the line items related to the clerk's office are trending on target. The elections line items are fine as long as no special elections are necessary. Ms. Haggstrom cited as a result of the new VOTES act, all the new election laws and increased workload will necessitate more staff.

FinCom inquired what the extra costs are for special town meetings and special elections. Ms. Haggstrom responded the largest expense for a town meeting is the voting clickers, and in the case of elections the poll workers, estimating special town meeting, ten thousand dollars, special town elections, fifteen to twenty thousand dollars.

Mr. Glenn Davis, Fire Chief, stated his YTD budget is at a hundred percent on track at between forty-three and forty-four percent. Chief Davis stated recruitment and retention continues to be his biggest concern for call firefighters. Chief Davis added he continues to work on grants, specifically, a SAFER. grant to offset salaries. Chief Davis stated his Enterprise Fund has had a favorable impact to the increase for service.

TA Dolan addressed the challenges of maintaining the current call firefighter system and the present hiring difficulties in all communities.

Mr. Nick Secatore, Chief of Police, stated his budget is on track at between forty-three and forty-four percent and is doing very well. Chief Secatore noted although the dispatcher budget report seems high, it gets offset by state funds for training. Chief Secatore added overtime still exists in the budget due to staffing problems at twenty-one officers with an officer in training. He is actively in the process of hiring currently, with the goal of filling both positions by February.

Chief Secatore does not anticipate any huge capital needs for next year, adding many technical purchases were offset with ARPA funds. He added these tech purchases will travel from the temporary location into the new safety building and will not have to be re-purchased. Chief Secatore does expect the need to update his fleet, which would be his largest purchase for next year.

Mr. Don Lyons, Director of Golf, stated the present fiscal year is in good shape with revenue up by thirty thousand dollars from the previous year considering all the rain. Mr. Lyons cited his practice is every three to four years, he increases green fees by a dollar or two as is the practice of surrounding courses, leading to cash numbers up, but rounds down.

Mr. Lyons stated new carts will be coming in with a one-dollar increase. Mr. Lyons discussed the difference between the two town golf courses.

FinCom inquired about the retained earnings, with Town Accountant McCarthy responding it was over five hundred thousand dollars.

Mr. Lyons will be requesting two capital requests for a new irrigation pump for Reedy Meadow and a field mower (used at each course). Mr. Lyons cited his professional opinion is nine-hole golf courses are the wave of the future.

FinCom inquired if a capital investment is being considered to update the tee boxes at Reedy Meadow to turf.

FinCom and TA Dolan discussed the potential borrowing from the Golf Enterprise Fund utilizing the gift in lieu of tax for capital improvements.

Mr. John Tomasz, DPW Director, cited he is at forty-two percent of his budget for the year, adding his overall budget looks good. Moving forward the usual snow and ice estimate is never predictable. Next year he estimates a lot of his vehicles will be at the end of their useful life. Director Tomasz stated he is concerned about the age of his staff.

Director Tomasz cited the previous ESCO project investment was very successful in the continued maintenance of town buildings.

FinCom inquired if there is a deferred maintenance plan cataloged anywhere in town in order to establish a five-year capital improvement program as cited in the charter.

Ms. Coral Hope, Director of the Health Department, stated the Health Department's budget is on track, with the exception of contractual increases. Ms. Hope cited two grants; one already awarded, one she will know about soon, which she can utilize for training, education, shared inspection services, part-time public health nurse, emergency response.

Ms. Hope is anticipating a response by the end of the month if the town will be awarded the FDA food grant, which will help audit the food safety program, as well as food borne illness outbreaks and education in community food establishments.

Ms. Hope mentioned that the opioid funds were allocated to the Health Department at town meeting. Ms. Hope stated the department is in the early stages, along with the Police Department, Fire Department, and Healthy Lynnfield in developing programs and services to help the community.

Mr. Kirk Mansfield, Lynnfield Historical Commission, updated the Town on his rental totals, income, and expenses. Mr. Mansfield stated at present his budget is in good shape. Mr. Mansfield informed the town the three historic cemeteries in town are in pretty bad shape (headstones and graves unidentifiable). Mr. Mansfield's goal is to apply for grants and state money to remediate this problem prior to 2026.

Mr. Mansfield mentioned the Meeting House's availability for committee meetings with no charge during the week with some exceptions.

Ms. Emilie Cadematori, Director of Planning and Conservation, stated her budget is in good shape with no changes. Ms. Cadematori cited progress is being made with the Comprehension Vision Plan 2040, as well as work being done by the Open Space Working Group of volunteers (Beaver Dam Brook, Essex County Greenest Trail).

Ms. Cadematori may request for minimal funds for increased signage and rules and regulations promised to the LED and existing properties.

Ms. Cadematori noted her focus in the next six months will be permitting the elderly housing project at Sagamore, adding the first public hearing is next week at the Merritt Center, and the process should take about six months.

Ms. Cadematori cited attempt at compliance with the MATA Community Zoning Act must be accomplished by the October town meeting. If unsuccessful, the town will be out of compliance leading to potential loss of eligibility for several state funds. Ms. Cadematori in cooperation with the tree warden, will seek a grant for a master plan for street trees.

Ms. Cadematori will request capital funds to treat Pilings Pond and is investigating new technology in lieu of chemical treatment.

Ms. Cadematori stated she expects all the permitting departments will be requesting replacement of permitting software, usually budgeted through IT.

FinCom inquired why the Pilings Pond treatment funding is a capital rather than an operational budget item.

Mr. Tom Geary, Acting School Superintendent, stated presently the school budget is on target for this year. Special education continues to be the main area of concern. All contracted services are up with additional students being identified.

Mr. Geary identified a safety grant received, stating Lynnfield is the fifth highest funded-town in the state, which will help with more school security.

Mr. Geary stated he expects the traditional technology request. He added they are in the process of evaluating and reviewing who and why Chromebooks are being distributed, as well as upgrades in classroom technology, and teacher laptops.

Mr. Geary stated as far as his operating budget requests, special education staffing and models need to be evaluated, as well as out-of-district tuition and transportation.

Mr. Geary commented recent enrollment increases, particularly at the elementary level, need to be reviewed.

Mr. Geary stated budget transparency, areas of trust and credibility need to and will be addressed.

Ms. Linda Naccara, Senior Center, stated her current budget is at fifty-one percent. Ms. Naccara informed the town her main expense is the food program with ongoing escalating food prices, but expects to level it out by year's end.

Ms. Naccara will be making a capital request for a new van, which will not require a C.L. driver. Ms. Naccara will be looking to sell the current larger van.

Ms. Julie McCarthy requested department heads with access to the MUNIS financial system enter their budgets into the system. The operating budgets will be due on Friday, January 12, 2024, and the capital budgets will be due on Friday, January 19, 2024. Ms. McCarthy stated budget packages should have been received last week. Ms. McCarthy added if anyone needs help to give her a call to schedule training prior to the budgets being due.

TA Dolan expects local aid from the governor should be announced shortly after Martin Luther King Day and much earlier than last year.

FinCom cited the importance of receiving department budget requests in a timely manner.

FinCom will be setting subcommittee meetings with department heads shortly after the first of the year.

Chairman Mattia thanked everyone for participating this evening and looks forward to a successful budget season.

### **Minutes**

Tom made a motion to approve the minutes of 9-21-23 as written. Joe seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Tom made a motion to approve the minutes of 10-2-23 as written. Nick seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Tom made a motion to approve the minutes of 10-16-23 as written. Nick seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

### **Adjournment**

Nick made a motion to adjourn. Tom seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Debbi Mallett, FinCom secretary