

Westwood Finance and Warrant Commission
March Sub-Committee Presentations Meeting
Tuesday, March 16, 2021
Remote Meeting - ZOOM Webinar
5:30 PM
Meeting Minutes

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12 2020 Order suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law MGL C. 30A Sec. 18 and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this public hearing of the Finance and Warrant Commission of Westwood, MA is being conducted largely by remote participation and we are not allowing in-person attendance by members of the public. Further, we have attempted to create at least 6 feet of space between all in physical attendance. The public is encouraged to join our meeting and participate fully. Members of the public attending this meeting virtually will be allowed to make comments if they wish to do so during the portions of the hearing designated for public comment. You will be queued up by the system operator and prompted when it is your turn to speak. The Chair will continue to give guidance and instructions as needed.

JOIN ZOOM MEETING:

You are invited to a Zoom webinar.

When: Mar 16, 2021 05:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Topic: Finance and Warrant Commission

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82645949801?pwd=NUhvVkkxkZWJLNGQyWXVraWJvZmRQQT09>

Passcode: 739698

Or Telephone:

888 475 4499 (Toll Free) or 877 853 5257 (Toll Free)

Webinar ID: 826 4594 9801

The livestream link: https://youtu.be/c6jcI5O7_yM

FinCom Chair Peter Lentz called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

Finance and Warrant Commission member not present, Jim Ferraro.

The Chair then granted permission to Westwood Media Center to live stream and record the meeting. He also asked if anyone else would like to record this meeting.

Chair Lentz made introductory comments and welcomed all participants including remote members, presenters and members of public and press to the FinCom March Sub-Committee Presentations meeting.

Chair Lentz announced that member Kate Wynne was not in attendance as she had resigned from FinCom in order to run for Planning Board, as she is required to do. Mr. Lentz thanked Kate for her service on FinCom and wished her the best of luck in her election. Ms. O'Donnell then called the ROLL.

Members were previously provided with the agenda packet for the 2021 Sub-Committees budget reviews meeting. This is the Municipal and Education Sub-Committees FY22 Budget presentations for municipal, schools, capital & overall budgets for the Town.

The Chair led members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Evening's Presenters:

Municipal Sub-Com Presentation:

Tom Kilgarriff – Chair

Chris Poreda - Vice Chair

Angeila Hughes, Chris Poreda – OPEB

Education Sub-Com Presentation:

Dianne McCarthy - Chair

Bill Bruce, George Laham, Mike Powers

The Chair introduced the evening's first presentation welcoming Tom Kilgarriff, Municipal Sub-Committee Chair. Mr. Kilgarriff introduced his team, Vice-Chair Chris Poreda and Angeila Hughes. He also acknowledged Kate Wynne who served on this team until resigning and stressed her excellent work for this committee. Chair Kilgarriff then explained which members would present for the municipal sections of the presentation, highlighting general government, police, fire, public works, community and economic development and culture/recreation. The presentation also included a summary of all departments including capital.

After this presentation, members asked questions and provided feedback. Chair Lentz again thanked members of the Municipal Sub-Committee for their excellent work and commitment to this important process which is very complicated and time-consuming.

Chair Lentz then entertained questions from the public and press.

The Chair then introduced the Education Sub-Committee Chair, Dianne McCarthy for that team to begin their presentation for Westwood Public Schools budget review. Ms. McCarthy introduced her team, FinCom members Bill Bruce, George Laham and Mike Powers. The Education Sub-Committee then presented in detail the following: the Process, Executive Summary, FY22 Overall and Operating Budget, WPS Covid Cost & Budget Impact, Staff Changes and Costs, Special Education Budget and Capital Budget Details.

Upon completion of their extensive presentation, members asked questions and provided feedback on the Education Sub-Committee presentation for Westwood Public Schools. The Chair thanked Ms. McCarthy and her colleagues for excellent work and for providing important review of the budget process necessary to continue educating the children in Westwood.

Finally, Chair Lentz entertained questions from the public and press on the Education Sub-Committee presentation, seeing none he moved onto approval of minutes.

The Chair then suggested the approval of the March 8, 2021 Public Hearing minutes. Those minutes were seconded and then approved by 13 in favor and one no vote.

The Chair then spoke briefly about the importance for FinCom planning regarding the Final Public Hearing on March 29 and March 30th if needed, which will cumulate with the Commission voting all articles on the final warrant. He encouraged members to send as many questions as possible in advance of the final public hearing.

Mr. Lentz requested volunteers for the final assignment of articles for the 2021 ATM based on some changes. Members volunteered for final assignments. Ms. O'Donnell will forward the final list out to members.

Member Peter T. Ittig, inquired about introducing new business and possibly making a motion. Prior to his making a formal motion, the Chair approved him to read the motion that he was considering. Mr. Ittig read the following: *“Whereas proposed school overrides will substantially increase the average property tax on homes in addition to the usual increases for other expenses, And, as these increases may be a problem for seniors on fixed incomes, And, as seniors mostly do not have children in the schools, Therefore, the Commission recommends that the Select Board consider a property tax concession for seniors to coincide with the school overrides, such as a split tax rate if all residents of a home are over 65, allowing for a 5% reduction in property taxes for those homes.”*

The Chair opened up discussion of that motion to the Commission. The potential motion was discussed at length by FinCom members. And while members expressed concern about the impact of increased taxes on seniors on fixed incomes, several major issues and concerns were raised about Mr. Ittig's proposal.

Some of the points raised were:

- If the town were to grant a 5% decrease in taxes to one group of residents, what other group of residents would have to have their taxes increase in order to offset the revenue loss.
- No override is currently being proposed for the current town meeting
- There are many young families with children who also have limited financial resources and cannot bear the burden of a disproportionate increase in their taxes
- The purpose of an override vote is to allow all residents of the town to decide if they want to support an increase in taxes beyond the limits of Proposition 2 and ½ to fund projects such as a new elementary school.
- There are already vehicles available for seniors in place including aid to the elderly, and Westwood Community Chest.
- Many members of FinCom felt that such a policy proposal is not appropriate for FinCom to consider and should be discussed by the town's elected Select Board Members.

After much discussion, the Chair inquired if Mr. Ittig still intended to make a formal motion. Mr. Ittig said he would in fact like to make the formal motion and read the motion in full again for the Commission. The Chair granted permission and asked for Mr. Ittig's motion to be seconded. The motion was not seconded and therefore was not voted on.

A member asked to get Planning Board articles as soon as possible ahead of the final public hearing to be as prepared as possible.

Chair Lentz thanked members for attending and asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion was offered and seconded. A ROLL CALL vote was taken with 13 in favor.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:33PM

For a complete video of the 3.16.21 FinCom meeting please see the following link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZGrK-HnDsl>