

*Westwood Finance and Warrant Commission*  
**MARCH 14, 2023 REMOTE MEETING**  
**ZOOM WEBINAR**  
**7:00 PM**  
*Meeting Minutes*

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Finance Commission Chairperson George Hertz thanked Westwood Media Center & their staff, Grey Ginaitt, for their help in recording tonight's meeting. Chairperson Hertz called the meeting to order at 7:02PM. He read the Open Meeting Law pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021.

Finance and Warrant Commission members who were present: William Bruce Jr., John Carey, James Ferraro, Lauren Fitzpatrick, Rene Gauthier, Mike Gay, George Hertz, Caitlyn Jurczak, George Laham, George Maroun, Christopher Poreda, Sean Weller, and Alexander Yale.

Chairperson Hertz 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.

He then welcomed all participants, members and members of public and press to the FinCom March 14, 2023 meeting.

Afterwards, Chairperson Hertz led members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Finance Commission administrator, Ms. Wong then called the ROLL.

Members were provided with the final agenda and all other related materials prior to the meeting.

Chairperson Hertz made some introductory comments prior to the Subcommittee presentations:

- He mentioned that Asst. Town Administrator/ Director of Finance, Stephanie McManus had previously provided FinCom members with her presentation slides from the Select Board's meeting on March 13<sup>th</sup>.
  - Noteworthy items- Fixed Cost for health insurance cost are \$182K less than initially projected FY24 amount. FY24 Preliminary State Aid under Chapter 70 is \$1,062,334 which is significantly more than initial town estimates. Also, the excess levy is now at \$200K which is somewhat consistent with previous budgets.
- The Finance Commission has a new subcommittee structure this year which consist of the following: Education, Municipal Administration, Public Safety, Community & Economic Development and Capital & Long-Range Planning. Based on the Chair's observation, it has been a very open and transparent process with the town and school

officials. Chairperson Hertz thanked all the department heads and staff for meeting with FinCom members to discuss capital and operating budgets. Furthermore, he gave special thanks to Mr. Chris Coleman (Town Administrator), Ms. Stephanie McManus (Director of Finance / Asst. Town Administrator), Superintendent Emily Parks and Ms. Lemma Jnbaptiste (WPS Director of Finance & Operations) for all the assistance they provided to FinCom members.

- Due to travel delays for the Education Subcommittee chair, the Chair moved the Education Subcommittee to the end of the presentation schedule.

**The Evening's Presenters:**

***- Capital & Long Range Planning Subcommittee - Chris Poreda (Ch), Jim Ferraro, Lauren FitzPatrick***

Chairperson Hertz introduced the evening's first subcommittee presentation. Chris Poreda (Subcommittee Chair), Jim Ferraro, Lauren FitzPatrick were present. Mr. Poreda presented a general overview of their subcommittee review process and the town's capital financial policies. In addition, he provided an overview of the FY24 capital articles and other capital projects, including information on the capital projects funding sources. Afterwards, a Q&A from members took place. The Chair thanked the Subcommittee for their presentation.

***- Public Safety Subcommittee - Angeila Hughes (Ch), Alex Yale, George Maroun***

The Chair introduced the evening's second presentation. Alex Yale and George Maroun were present. Mr. Yale presented their subcommittee budget review process which covers the following departments: Police, Fire and Department of Public Works (DPW). Next, both Mr. Yale and Mr. Maroun went over the FY24 Proposed budget highlights, selected observations and FY24 capital requests for each department. Mr. Maroun concluded the presentation with a brief summary and recommendations for future budgets. The Public Safety subcommittee had a follow up question for Director of Finance in regards to finding ways to fix energy costs with long term contracts. Chairperson Hertz thanked the subcommittee for their presentation. He then suggested to email the energy cost saving question to Ms. Wong so she can forward it to Ms. McManus. A Q&A took place after the presentation. One member raised a question about the status of the Islington Fire Station HVAC system. The Chair will follow up with the Islington question and

report back. Chairperson Hertz also thanked Ms. Angeila Hughes for her hard work as Chair for this subcommittee.

**- *Municipal Administration Subcommittee – Kristina Patyjewicz (Ch), George Laham***

The Chair introduced the evening's third presentation. George Laham was present. Mr. Laham went over their subcommittee budget review process which covered eighteen municipal administration departments. He then highlighted some key points of interest which included hiring of inclusive program manager for the Recreation department, creations of new job positions, restructure of departments falling under the Director of Human Resources, and Town Clerk's election accomplishments. Lastly, Mr. Laham presented a brief overview of the Municipal Administration Budget. Afterwards, Chairperson Hertz asked Ms. Wong to share the 6 page Municipal subcommittee report with FinCom members. There were no questions asked from FinCom members.

**- *Community & Economic Development Subcommittee – Caitlyn Jurczak (Ch), John Carey***

The Chair introduced the evening's fourth presentation. Caitlyn Jurczak and John Carey were present. Mr. Carey gave a general overview of the departments and boards that make up the Community and Economic Development. He then went over the department's key prior accomplishments and their ongoing projects. At the end of his presentation, he provided a budget overview of the department of Community and Economic Development. There were no questions from FinCom members. Chairperson Hertz thanked Mr. Carey for his presentation. He also complimented Ms. Nora Loughnane on managing a wide range of responsibilities along her accomplishments as head of C&ED department activities without a Town Planner in place.

**- *Education Subcommittee – Bill Bruce (Ch), Rene Gauthier, Mike Gay, Sean Weller***

The Chair introduced the evening's final presentation. Bill Bruce, Rene Gauthier, Mike Gay, Sean Weller were present. Mr. Bruce started the presentation by going over the school budget process, the school's key challenges and the monthly updates from the School Committee meetings. Then Mr. Gay presented the overall proposed school budget and details of school salary increases. Next, Mr. Gauthier highlighted the key focuses of the Special Education program and the budget increases in the program's tuition and transportation fees. Lastly, Mr. Weller presented an overview of the school capital budget. Chairperson Hertz thanked the Education Subcommittee members for their presentation and the meetings they've done. The

Education Subcommittee including Superintendent Parks spent a considerable amount of time answering questions from members.

#### Member Discussion:

- Chairperson Hertz thanked all of the Subcommittees for their hard work. He also asked for members' feedback on the structure of the subcommittees, what worked and didn't work for each subcommittee and what improvements do members suggest.
- Under Old Business, Vice Chair Poreda went over the process of the article write ups and suggested members to choose the articles that are related to their subcommittees. Chairperson Hertz asked for volunteers on the write-ups and stated the write ups are due on Friday, 03/31/23. The Chair, Vice Chair and Ms. Wong will be working on finalizing the annual report on the weekend after the Final Public Hearing. Chairperson Hertz also shared with members what to expect at the Final Public Hearing.
- One member suggested to finalize the list of owners for the article writes up before 3/28/23. Ms. Wong will get an updated list of the warrant articles and send it out to members for article write up assignments.
- Update from Select Board's meeting on 3/13, only one miscellaneous placeholder is remaining on the warrant article list.
- Chairperson Hertz volunteered to write up on Budget Warrant Article #1.
- Under New Business, Vice Chair Poreda mentioned the Town Clerk sent out an email for Ethics Training. The Chair advised members to complete the training.
- Members were asked to review and approve the meeting minutes for March 01, 2023. A motion was offered and seconded. A ROLL call took place. Eleven members approved the minutes. Two members abstained and two members were absent.

Chairperson Hertz then entertained questions from the public and the press.

- One resident asked why the Fire Department has the least increase in their budget compared to the Police and DPW departments and why there are still placeholders for the warrant articles. The budgets that were presented to Finance Warrant and Commission maintain current levels of staffing and the Select Board has provided some funding in FY 23 for promotions in the Fire Department. All but one of the warrant placeholders have been removed.
- A second resident asked if there is funding in the FY24 budget to implement the long overdue increases to Westwood Fire Department. The Chair shared there are both operational and feasibility studies undergoing for analyzing the needs for

replacing the main fire station. The reports for the studies will be finished by late Spring and may impact the FY25 budget.

Chairperson Hertz thanked Town and School officials again for their tremendous support as the Commission meets their obligations for town residents and town meetings. The Chair then thanked members for attending and asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion was offered and seconded. Thirteen members were in favor. Two members were absent.

**Meeting Adjourned at 8:32PM**

For a complete video of the 03/14/23 FinCom meeting please see the following link:  
<https://westwoodmediacenter.tv/>