

Westwood Finance and Warrant Commission

Tuesday, October 10, 2023

IN PERSON

7:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

Finance Commission Chairperson George Hertz called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Chairperson Hertz then granted permission to Westwood Media Center to film and record the meeting for future viewing. The Chair mentioned the meeting is not livestreamed tonight due to Planning Board having their meeting at the same time as FinCom. The meeting was moved to Tuesday, October 10th due to Monday being a holiday and to accommodate the Select Board's schedule.

Finance and Warrant Commission members who were present: William Bruce Jr., John Carey, James Ferraro, Lauren Fitzpatrick, Seth Frederickson, Mike Gay, George Hertz, Angeila Hughes, George Laham, George Maroun, Kristina Patyjewicz, Christopher Poreda and Alex Yale.

He then welcomed all participants, members, presenters and members of public and press to the FinCom October 10, 2023 meeting.

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

The Select Board also called their meeting to order at 7:03PM.

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.

Prior to the evening presentation, Chairperson Hertz made some introductory comments:

- He welcomed the newest member, Seth Frederickson and thanked the Town Moderator for providing a skilled group of people to serve as volunteers on the Commission.
- Mr. Frederickson introduced himself with a brief background. The Chair mentioned Mr. Frederickson will have the opportunity to meet each individual member of the Commission and will serve on the Education Sub-committee this year.

The Evening's Presenters:

- Marianne Le Blanc Cummings [Select Board Chair], Stephanie McManus [Asst. Town Administrator/Finance Director], Members of the Select Board – Town Status and Budget Update

The Chair introduced the evening's first presentation. Ms. Marianne Le Blanc Cummings [Select Board Chair], Stephanie McManus [Asst. Town Administrator/Finance Director], and Members of the Select Board were present. Ms. Cummings spoke briefly about her history with the Commission. Additionally, she mentioned it has been a pleasure working with Mr. Hertz and Mr. Ferraro while serving under FinCom and then welcomed the newest member, Mr Frederickson. Ms. Cummings also stated she understood the importance of FinCom's role, the process including the timing of warrant articles and the amount of work that the Commission needs to do before the Annual Town Meeting.

Then she invited Ms. McManus to join her at the table. Ms. McManus and Ms. Cummings presented the following topics: general overview of Town's financial policies and municipal finance, Town's budget cycle, FY25 Budget Overview and Timeline, timeframe when other budget and finance documents will be available, FY23 Year End Review, overview of free cash, FY23 Revenue, Tax Levy calculation per Prop 2 ½ (FY24 Budget), General Debt overview, Debt Management within Prop 2 ½, Current debt status as of June 30, 2023, Capital planning process and the next steps in the budget cycle.

After their presentation, Ms. McManus answered members' questions. One member requested Ms. McManus if she can forward the budget vs actual report covering July 1st to Dec 31st to FinCom. Ms. McManus will send this information to the Commission. Chairperson Hertz thanked Ms. Cummings and McManus for presenting and for their time in attending the meeting.

- Tim Piwowar [WPS Superintendent], Tony Mullin [School Committee Chair], Members of the School Committee- Introduction and Informational Update on WPS

The Chair introduced the evening's final presentation. Tim Piwowar [WPS Superintendent] and Tony Mullin [School Committee Chair] were present. Chairperson Hertz welcomed Mr. Piwowar to the Town of Westwood and welcomed Mr. Mullin for attending the meeting. Mr. Piwowar mentioned he will be presenting a formal preview of the FY25 with the School Committee on Thursday night, Oct 12th and will share his PowerPoint slides with FinCom afterwards. Then he talked a little bit of his background. Mr. Piwowar pointed out that he is currently going through his entry planning process where he is meeting with as many people in the community as possible to identify the School's strengths and challenges. He will be sharing his entry planning report with the School Committee at their November meeting. Afterwards, Mr. Piwowar highlighted a few key topics related to the School's status. The topics included in

part challenges in developing the FY25 budget and the hiring of a new Director of Student Services. Moreover, Mr. Piwowar gave a quick update on the School's capital project planning process which included Pine Hills Elementary School opening next February.

Mr. Mullin added there is a lot of excitement building up in the Westwood Public Schools due to the MCAS coming up and two school curriculums coming together. He also shared that even though there has been a high turnover of staff during the pandemic, the School is in a good position with a new Superintendent. Mr. Piwowar stated he met a lot of people who moved to Westwood because of its strong school system.

Chairperson Hertz thanked Mr. Piwowar and Mr. Mullin for presenting an excellent overview of the School update. A Q&A took place after the presentation. Later, the Chair echoed that he has met families that shared stories of how Town of Westwood has such a great school system.

Furthermore, Chairperson Hertz commented it will be a challenging year on the capital side for both Municipal and the School due to a significant amount of demands for funding many needed capital projects. The Chair thanked Mr. Piwowar and Mr. Mullin again for their time and mentioned he is looking forward to working with Superintendent Piwowar and the School Committee. He also stated that Mr. Bruce will be chairing the School Subcommittee.

Members Discussion:

Chair's Update -

- ❖ Chairperson Hertz clarified the overtime funds for the Fire Department authorized by the Select Board will be used to staff nine firefighters. The goal number of 11 firefighters is to be decided by the Select Board for FY25.
- ❖ The Chair stated the Budget Steering Committee had their first meeting. He thought the meeting was very effective in which both the Municipal and the School are working together to address their issues. The second Budget Steering Committee meeting will be held early November.
- ❖ Lastly, he mentioned the subcommittees will have the same structure as last year. This year, there will be three new members chairing the subcommittees. Each subcommittee will be working hard in understanding budgets and issues brought before the Commission.

Vice Chair's Update –

- ❖ Vice Chair Poreda stated the Town Clerk clarified if a member who missed a meeting and wishes to vote to approve the meeting minutes in the next meeting, they will need to fill out the Confidential of Evidential Review form related to the Mullin Rule. Chairperson Hertz asked if the Mullin rule applies for a member who reviewed all the materials and wishes to vote for a warrant article at a Public Hearing. Town Counsel who was present at the meeting stated that if the member only missed one meeting and they confirmed they reviewed all the relevant material then they would be allowed to participate in voting the warrant article.
- ❖ Mr. Poreda shared that a number of the FinCom members attended the Canton Street Reconstruction Meeting and then gave a little background information about the meeting. He thought Mr. Todd Korchin (Director of DPW) did a great job at defusing the tension at the meeting and for making the meeting very productive. Moreover, Mr. Korchin will be meeting with the State in the morning of Oct. 23rd and presenting the results to the Select Board the same night. Vice Chair Poreda brought up the Canton Street Reconstruction Project because the reconstruction may bring forth a warrant article.
- ❖ Vice Chair Poreda indicated there is no update on the Hale conservation restriction because there is no new news.
- ❖ One member commented on the Canton Street Reconstruction Project and shared his feedback on how he thought residents feel about the project. Vice Chair Poreda explained that FinCom voted in favor of recommending the town approve funding for the initial design of the project. He noted that many people understood the project to only be a sidewalk while it was always a reconstruction of the street. With State and Federal funding, the project is more than just one sidewalk on one side of the street. Chairperson Hertz added that Mr. Korchin did an excellent job in his efforts to secure all possible state and federal funding for then project. Then the Chair stated that Commission will wait to see what happens after Mr. Korchin's meeting with the State.

Old Business:

Chairperson Hertz mentioned the FinCom onboarding document is about 99.9% complete. He confirmed with Ms. Wong that they are only waiting to update the town organizational chart. After the draft is finalized, he would like to share the document with the Select Board. The Chair pointed out that Ms. Wong and Vice Chair Poreda put in a tremendous amount of work into the

document. Additionally, the document is designed for recruiting new members and to show the town residents how the Commission operates.

Next, he informed members the Commission will be shifting their meetings to Zoom until the public hearings and public meetings in the spring in preparation for town meeting. The Chair wanted to accommodate members with their busy schedules and provide some flexibility.

Chairperson Hertz asked if there were any objections from the members. There were no objections.

Members were asked to review and approve the meeting minutes for September 06, 2023. A motion was offered and seconded. A ROLL call took place. Nine members approved the minutes. Four members abstained. Two members were not present for the vote.

Chairperson Hertz asked if there were any questions from the Public and the Press.

- ❖ First resident believed the Commission has a misunderstanding of how the Canton Street Sidewalk warrant came about. She then provided a brief background of the Canton Street Reconstruction Project. The resident also expressed her concerns that the Town needs to be more transparent in what is brought forth to FinCom and the Annual Town Meeting. The resident asked if the money hasn't been spent for the Canton Street Sidewalk Project under debt authorized.. Ms.McManus stated the project has been issued a short term bond. Vice Chair Poreda reiterated that the Town has borrowed the money for the project and the money has been paid to TEC but it hasn't been put into a long term financing. Ms McManus pointed out that each fiscal year the Town spends money on a specific project and the Town is required to borrow that funding within a certain time period. She also stated that the Town is all within the guidelines.
- ❖ Second resident seconded the first resident's concerns. She also thanked the Commission for all of their hardwork. Then she brought up residents' desire to keep the Canton Street sidewalk as rural like scenery instead of reconstructing the street into an urban setting. Chairperson Hertz clarified that FinCom members are not allowed to participate in the Long Range Financial Planning Committee. The Town Charter does not allow FinCom Members to serve on any other committee. Nevertheless, the Chair said the Commission will watch closely on the financial side for whatever recommendations is brought forth to the Commission.
- ❖ Third resident thanked the Commission for listening to their comments and concerns. She shared that residents and herself only want the Town to be aware of their concerns.

Chairperson Hertz told the residents that their voices have been heard. Then he thanked them for their comments and for attending tonight's meeting..

The Select Board adjourned their meeting at 8:36PM.

As the Chair was about to adjourn the meeting, the Town Counsel stated that for in person meetings, a roll call was not needed and a general vote is acceptable. The Chair thanked

members for attending and asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion was offered and seconded. Members who were present all raised their hands in favor to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:36PM

For a complete video of the 10/10/23 FinCom meeting please see the following link:
<https://westwoodmediacenter.tv/>