

TOWN OF NATICK

Meeting Notice

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Natick Finance Committee

PLACE OF MEETING

Virtual Meeting accessed via Zoom:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87259529254

DAY, DATE AND TIME

October 22, 2020 at 5:00 PM

Meeting ID: 872 5952 9254 Passcode: 372880 1 tap mobile +19292056099,,87259529254# US (New York) +13017158592,,87259529254# US (Germantown)

MEETING AGENDA

Posted: Tuesday October 20 2020, 4:47 PM

Revised and Posted:

Notice to the Public: 1) Finance Committee meetings may be broadcast/recorded by Natick Pegasus. 2) The meeting is an open public meeting and interested parties can attend the meeting. 3) Those seeking to make public comments (for topics not on the agenda or for specific agenda items) are requested to submit their comments in advance, by 2:00 PM on the day of the meeting, to the Chair: phayes.fincom@natickma.org. Comments will be posted on NovusAgenda and read aloud for the proper agenda item. Please keep comments to 350-400 words. 4) The Chat function on Zoom Conferencing will be disabled.

MEETING AGENDA

- 1. Call to Order
 - a. Pledge of Allegiance & Moment of Silence
 - b. Advisement of Pegasus Live Broadcast and Recording for On-Demand Viewing
 - c. Review of Meeting Agenda and Ordering of Items
- 2. Announcements
- 3. Public Comments
 - a. <u>Committee policy & procedures available via this link and also at the meeting</u> <u>location</u>
- 4. Old Business
 - a. <u>Possible reconsideration of STM Article 1 Fiscal 2021 Omnibus Budget</u>
 - b. Possible Reconsideration of STM Article 2 Town Meeting Funding
 - c. Possible Reconsideration of STM Article 5 Operational/Rainy Day Stabilization Fund
 - d. <u>Possible reconsideration of STM Article 7 Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB)</u>
 - e. <u>Possible Reconsideration STM Article 19 FY20 and FY21 COVID-19 Related Expenses</u> of Natick Public Schools
- 5. Committee and Subcommittee scheduling
- 6. Adjourn

Meeting may be televised live and recorded by Natick Pegasus. Any times listed for specific agenda items are approximate and not binding. Please note the committee may take the items on this agenda out of order.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Linda Wollschlager, Chairperson Todd Gillenwater, Vice Chair Bruce Evans, Clerk Dirk Coburn, Member David Coffey, Member Guimel DeCarvalho, Member Bill Grome, Member Julien LaFleur, Member Mike Linehan, Member Jerry Pierce, Member Richard Pope, Member Chris Resmini, Member Philip Rooney, Member Jim Scurlock, Member

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jeff DeLuca

Town Administration

Ms. Melissa Malone, Town Administrator Mr. John Townsend, Deputy Town Administrator, Finance

CALL TO ORDER: Meeting was called to order at 5:03 PM

ANNOUNCEMENTS/CITIZEN'S CONCERNS:

None

Mr. Coffey moved to open the public hearing of the Special Town Meeting # 1 warrant, seconded by Mr. Gillenwater, <u>voted 14 - 0 - 0</u>.

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. Linehan = yes
Ms. Coffey= yes	Mr. Pierce = yes
Mr. DeCarvalho = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Mr. Resmini = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = yes	Mr. Rooney = yes)
Mr. Grome = yes	Mr. Scurlock = yes
Mr. LaFleur = yes	Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Ms. Wollschlager noted that the Committee has a hard stop because Town Meeting is at 6:30 PM this evening, so we have a very short window to get business done.

Possible reconsideration of STM Article 7 - Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB)

Ms. Wollschlager noted we received the certified free cash numbers and Town administration put a presentation together and has some suggestions about what to do with some of the additional free cash and state aid that that exceeded prior forecasts. We have some materials that are posted on NovusAgenda, but are awaiting potential motions and asked Mr. Townsend whether these Articles are available. Mr. Townsend said town administration a just completed amendments to Article 1 Motion A and Article 5 and that Ms. Malone had another set of motions that she had also worked on previously,

Mr. Townsend stated that there are no changes to Article 7 – it still allocates \$250,000 from free cash to the Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund. Ms. Wollschlager noted that the funding source is changed from state aid to free cash. Mr. Townsend noted that Town administration prefers to use free cash as much as possible for one-time items and stated that town administration had done extensive work to align things better than they were previously and said he would to go through all of that when the discussion moved to Article 1.

Questions from the Committee

Mr. Evans moved to reconsider Article 7 seconded by *Mr.* Pierce. 11 - 0 - 2.

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = abstain	Mr. Linehan = yes
Ms. Coffey= yes	Mr. Pierce = yes
Mr. DeCarvalho = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Mr. Resmini = abstain
Mr. Gillenwater = yes	Mr. Rooney = yes
Mr. Grome = yes	Mr. Scurlock = yes

Mr. LaFleur = yes

Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Debate:

Mr. Evans said that this changes the funding source to free cash, the preferred funding source now that we know the certified free cash number.

Mr. Gillenwater asked for a breakdown of the components that made up the free cash. Mr. Townsend said he did not have it readily available but would send it to the Committee following this meeting. Further Mr. Townsend said they did an analysis of the free cash number and the majority of it was turnbacks from the Town departments. At the start of the shutdown due to the pandemic, we requested that our departments cut their spending as much as possible and put a hiring freeze in place. We were relatively successful at red expenditure, and most of the turnbacks were related to salary savings from not filling positions that were vacant and not hiring replacements for senior staff who had retired.

Mr. Coburn said he wanted to know the comprehensive revenue picture of the town, including any expected changes to tax levy and local receipts, so that we can assess whether we're making full use of sources that that if we don't use them may disappear. Ms. Wollschlager said that discussion will come under Article 1 and noted that we know we have \$6.6 million in free cash.

Questions from the public

Ms. Cathi Collins stated that approximately \$2 million of free cash was spent on items at spring town meeting and asked whether there is any opportunity not to use free cash and substitute another funding source such as state aid or tax levy, so that we have access to the free cash at spring town meeting. Mr. Townsend said it was a little strange how DOR calculated certified free cash, probably because we had Town Meeting in July, and they took that \$2 million utilized in the FY 21 budget before calculating the certified free cash number. So, the \$6.6 million is separate and apart from the \$2 million allocated at Spring Annual Town Meeting.

Ms. Collins asked whether this means that, unlike in previous years where we trued up everything to make sure that we were using as much of the tax levy as we could and not other sources such as free cash. Mr. Townsend said that he would be happy to provide more detail when we discuss Article 1, but the short answer is we worked to make certain that we used the entire tax levy before tapping other sources to have the most funds available for this Town Meeting.

Mr. Evans moved to recommend favorable action on Article 7 seconded by Mr. Pierce, voted 14 - 0 - 0.

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = abstain	Mr. Linehan = yes
Ms. Coffey= yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. DeCarvalho = yes	Mr. Resmini = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Mr. Rooney = yes
Mr. Grome = yes	Mr. Scurlock = yes
Mr. LaFleur = yes	Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Ms. Malone presented a summary of the town's financial condition and future forecast. Town Administration STM Presentation -10-22-20

There are a number of variables that go into figuring out what free cash is. Of the \$6.6 million, approximately \$3.6 million was the result of great effort that the municipal department did in FY 20 by

adhering to very stringent plans cost control measures. For example, our public safety units were able to turn back a \$1 million in cost savings and also salary savings.

Free Cash breakdown provided subsequent to meeting

Ms. Malone noted that here are the major contributors to the certified free cash total. Ms. Malone called out all the hard work that went into getting this free cash number.

Town's Free Cash has b	een certified at	\$6.653.4	60
Main credit goes to the Depa	rtments for controll	ing the exp	enditures
nd returning unused amount	back to the Genera	l fund	
Here are the major contribut	ting factors:		
Overlay originally budget for			
FY 21 Budget	1,000,000		
	1,000,000		
Departmental Turn back			
General Government	1,700,000		
Public Safey	1,000,000		
Public Works	400,000		
Health and Human Services	400,000		
Cultural and Recreation	100,000		
Debt Assessment	700,000		
Employee Benefit	600,000		
Education	250,000		
Unused Free Cash	800,000		
Unused Free Cash	800,000		
Shortfall in Local Receipts	(300,000)		
	(500,000)		

Ms. Malone said the revised motions the Committee is viewing tonight were sent to the Moderator on Tuesday. On Tuesday, when it became apparent to town administration, that there were going to be modifications to Article 1 which surprised us since we had come before the Finance Committee and worked with Dr. Nolin on putting \$500,000 into the Finance Committee– Reserve Fund and \$300,000 to cover COVID expenses in Article 19. That said we want to ensure that people understand the FY 22 –FY 25 forecast that show deficits. Our plan was to put the monies that we are not utilizing into Stabilization funds and use the upcoming months to plan for FY 22 and FY 23, and use the time to plan for the three out years. Ms. Malone said they had divided the five years in that way because this fiscal year is a crisis point. It is our professional recommendation for the town to put all of the available funds into stabilization and to ensure that Town Meeting and department heads can work together to figure out a path towards FY 22 and FY 23. Recognizing that that is not likely and they're asking \$1.3 million for one department, we are starting this discussion somewhat prematurely. We have specific needs that should be funded by Town Meeting that we are also prepared to introduce. Before going into what's in Article1, I want to lay out in very clear terms, what the consequences are, as we look at this forecast.

Between Tuesday and today we've provided a macro level view of what FY 22 looks like, using numbers that have been talked about in community forums. We're doing this to show everybody the delta created should these particular motions be approved by Town Meeting. Again, this forecast is for demonstrative purposes; it's not a budget. However, if you look at pages 12-13 in this presentation,

On page 12, we assumed NPS would increase 3.3% in FY 22 to approximately \$69.3 and used \$300,000 for the Personnel board and a 2% increase for municipal department employees, plus only very minor percentage increases in operations and the deficit is estimated at \$4.3 million.

On page 13 of this presentation, the effect of the revised Article 1 Motion A is estimated at \$2.2 million.

- Natick Public Schools is estimated at \$71.5 million, a 6.61 % increase percent over FY 21.
- 2% increase for municipal employees and approximately \$300,000 for Personnel Board.
- No new initiatives from any other municipal department in this forecast.

This does not utilize stabilization accounts but is the deficit that we would start at.

On slide 15, (the blue shaded area); we forecast what a 5%, 10%, 15%, 20%, and 25% decline in commercial revenues would mean to the town financially. The section in orange is a \$10 million override and assesses what that would also mean. For example, if you look at a 15% reduction in what commercial property owners are going to pay to what the to what the residential property owners would pay, you will see that that is approximately \$557 annually. And then, layered on top of that, would be what an override would cost, so that would be the increase in the tax bill. Note that this does not take into account any appreciation in the value of residential property, which even during this pandemic we have seen as increasing.

Slide 16 depicts a 15% commercial decline and a \$10 million operational override. The reason we did this is because we do not make changes lightly. And we have looked to plan so an Article 1, if Town Meeting and the Finance Committee are inclined, our recommendation to include approximately \$1.3 million for municipal departments. And in the Article, we have specifically articulated various initiatives; some of these initiatives we have talked about before, some as recently as two weeks ago, which even include the Community and Economic Development position that we do believe is very much needed, and very much would assist. And this is a department which the permits bring in and have brought in, well over \$2 million. But in addition, this would also assist with our zoning, compliance and other aspects of planning that are much needed.



Article 1

Fiscal 2021 Omnibus Budget (Town Administrator)

MOTION A (Requires two-thirds majority vote):

Move that the Town vote to increase the appropriation voted by the 2020 Spring Annual Town Meeting under Article 8 for the following budgets by the sum of \$3,381,093, said sum to be distributed as follows:

- To supplement the Shared Expenses budget as voted under Article 8 Motion G of the 2020 Spring Annual Town Meeting by adding \$118,828 to the Debt Service budget.
- To supplement the Shared Expenses as voted under Article 8 Motion G of the 2020 Spring Annual Town Meeting by adding \$100,000 to the Employee Fringe budget for the benefits reserve line item.
- To supplement the Shared Expenses as voted under Article 8 Motion G of the 2020 Spring Annual Town Meeting by adding \$500,000 to the Reserve Fund Finance Committee line item.
- To supplement the Natick Public Schools budget as voted under Article 8 Motion A1 of the 2020 Spring Annual Town Meeting by adding \$1,308,000 to the Salaries and Expenses line item.
- To supplement the Administrative Support Services budget as voted under Article 8 Motion E of the 2020 Spring Annual Town Meeting by adding \$500,000 to the Expenses line item – Collective Bargaining.
- To supplement the Shared Expenses as voted under Article 8 Motion G of the 2020 Spring Annual Town Meeting by adding \$300,000 to the Employee Fringe budget for Merit Increases.

Ms. Malone highlighted the changes to Article 1 Motion A shown above.

Questions from the Committee:

Mr. Rooney asked whether the allocations to these departments include new hires. Ms. Malone said, in DPW, some of it is for augmenting existing salaries, and includes the FTEs that were requested in the January budget.

Mr. Rooney as for confirmation that the 6.6% NPS increase was for informational purposes only and Ms. Malone confirmed that it was only to demonstrate that consequences of article 1 Motion A in the large deficit it would create.

Mr. Scurlock asked if any of the items identified here are contractually required. In the case of NPS, the teachers agreed to forgo their contractual COLA. Is there anything similar to that for your increase request and other departments, things that were deferred, such as a COLA? Ms. Malone said there is no contract for non-union employees that I'm aware of. Ms. Malone noted further that with respect to the NPS COLA, when the CBAS that were discussed. I was the dissenting vote objecting to that agreement, noting that municipalities such as ours, and our specific department had needs that would not be met, if that contract was ratified.

Mr. Scurlock said he was asking to see if there were anything tied to a legal contract such as the contract signed with the school department, Ms. Malone said there was a contract ratified by the School Committee. However, prior to the ratification, it was discussed that if no funds were available, then the school department and the town would need to make adjustments and in fact, may need to do layoffs. So I would say that if we're willing to discuss one department's cost of living increases and increases allow the municipal departments to appropriately plan for what they believe is actually needed at this time as well.

Mr. Coburn asked whether Dr. Nolin could comment on the effect of Article 1 to NPS, given that the schools operate under a different authority by state law. Dr. Nolin said the school department negotiated a three year collective bargaining agreement with our union. And this particular year, all of the unions and non-represented employees, in order to balance the budget when there were many more unknowns, agreed to take zero percent COLA, and no merit and no bonuses, even though those items were given out in other parts of the town. This appropriation will not permit us to expand personnel or add any new initiatives. This is to honor the contract that was in play that, as noted by Ms. Malone, when there were financial issues here, we made an adjustment to zero percent COLA to do our part to assist with the whole of the town. We understand Ms. Malone's worries and we're sad that she's disheartened. However, it is true that the school department stands strong with the other town departments and wants them to be heard, especially the items that were presented in January by all departments, which I know are not reflected here in full facilities department is missing. Not all the LFNR is in here. There are other initiatives, but it's not for me to say what those priorities are. But it is important for us to stand together to ensure that everyone in this happy instance of having additional free cash, if we are going to use it, we should all use it together in this fashion. So we're pleased with this development from Ms. Malone today.

Mr. Coburn asked, with the projected adjustments to funding sources, what the current projection for tax levy is in and whether that is currently planned to be used entirely. Mr. Townsend noted that, under this particular configuration the town would expand nearly the entire tax levy and have something like \$73,000 left on the levy, not an awful lot of extra tax levy capacity.

Mr. Grome noted that when the Committee discussed this motion previously, it seemed like the sense of the Committee was that we were not interested in adding \$30,000 for the Community Development

Department budget for salaries and I see that this is still in there. In addition, there's another \$60,000 added for community development budget for a total of \$90,000.

Ms. DeCarvalho said she understands the restoration of the COLA, request for clarification of the headcount on the municipal side, i.e., how many incremental FTEs would be added should this motion be approved. Ms. Malone said that this motion would add six FTEs.

Mr. Evans moved to reconsider article 1 Motion a, seconded by Mr. Coburn voted 11 - 2 - 0.

Roll-call vote:	
Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. Linehan = no
Ms. Coffey= yes	Mr. Pierce = yes
Mr. DeCarvalho = abstain	Mr. Pope = no
Mr. Evans = yes	Mr. Resmini = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = yes	Mr. Rooney = (dropped off call during vote)
Mr. Grome = yes	Mr. Scurlock = yes
Mr. LaFleur = no	Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Debate:

Mr. Evans said he is very glad to see that some equity came into this equation here. I think the restoration of the COLA makes sense given that three things exceeded our forecast, free cash. new growth and state aid. And while it's advisable to put away some money, we can still do that, but with a lesser amount. But what we need to do first is take care of the promises that we made. One of those was the COLA. And one of the things this Committee was very concerned about at Spring Annual Town Meeting was equity. To me, this revised motion gives that equity to municipal departments as well. So I'm very much in favor of this article

Thank you, Madam Chair, ditto to all that. Mr. Evans said, and my concern when we voted for the original, much smaller motion under this Article, and when we specifically excluded the community development line item, my concern was that things were being put in without a comprehensive look at what the needs were across all operations and prioritization. I could imagine a more comprehensive process, but probably not under the current circumstances. Given the current timeframe. I think that we've seen now something that looks a whole lot more comprehensive than what we were presented with initially. And I am willing to be supportive of the needs in community development. I'm not sure I yet understand why the need tripled from what we turned down before. However, it's an important department in our town and fits into a much more comprehensive picture

Mr. Linehan said this is insufficient time for us to digest this. It may be comprehensive, but I don't think it's digestible by us within this period of time. So I'm going to vote against reconsideration.

Mr. Pierce said he supports this motion but thought that the \$90,000 community development item has to be better clarified before it reaches Town Meeting.

Ms. Wollschlager cautioned that if we vote to reconsider and do not finish voting on motions A and B, we have no recommendation for Town Meeting.

Mr. Coburn asked whether there may be someone from town administration who could talk about the community development request. Ms. Wollschlager asked Mr. Freas to comment. Mr. Freas said that the \$30,000 position is one is been discussing for a while, for a development review planner to help make our discretionary review processes more efficient and more effective. Ms. Malone noted that the reason she put in the additional \$60,000 is that she and Mr. Freas had been discussing the needs that the CED department and recognized the need for staffing CED adequately, given that it's a strong revenue-generating department, generating approximately \$2 million per year.

Mr. Coffey asked how many of the FTE positions are in CED. Ms. Malone said there were two FTEs – one earning 30,000 for half a year; the other \$60,000 for a full year.

Public Comments

Ms. Kate Flathers said she is speaking on behalf of the almost 600 Natick citizens who signed a petition just started about 24 hours ago to ask that the COLAs for Natick teachers and staff be reinstated. The teachers bargained in good faith and given the revenues that we've all been talking about, I think it's unconscionable to not pay these educators what they fairly negotiated, particularly at a time when so much is being asked of them as frontline workers in our community during this pandemic.

Ms. Cathi Collins said she has a problem adding money into a department when the department head doesn't even know what it's for. She believes that the Board of Health is underfunded at this point. Further, get the motion to add up the total amount specified in the motion.

Ms. Collins asked whether the six positions included the dispatcher position. Ms. Malone noted that the dispatcher position was inadvertently reduced, so she did not add that because it's not a net new FTE, so the public safety request includes one full time dispatcher and one patrol officer.

Ms. Grace Kenney, Town Meeting member commented that based on the questions she's hearing, it sounds like this might be a little fast to vote and it sounds like it sounds like we need more time to understand this.

Mr. Jon Freedman, Chair, Select Board said that he appreciates that the committee may feel rushed on this, and this is a little ad hoc due to the receipt of the certified free cash number earlier this week from DOR that frankly took us a little bit by surprise - we didn't expect it so quickly. But this is an opportunity for town as a whole, to recognize the needs that have gone unmet for some time, certainly during COVID. It's an opportunity to look at the needs in the town that will help us move forward and to respond to the needs that have arisen during COVID such as CED and Community Services. He said he appreciates that this might seem a little rushed, but I would ask for the Finance Committee support for this so we can continue to work together and funding these town needs holistically.

Mr. Coffey moved to recommend favorable action on an amended Article 1 Motion A that removed the appropriation for "To supplement the Administrative Support Services Budget as voted under Article 8 Motion E of the 2020 Spring Annual Town Meeting by adding \$60,000 to the Community Development Department Budget for salaries, seconded by Mr. Evans, <u>voted 7 – 7 – 0.</u>

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes Ms. Coffey= yes Mr. DeCarvalho = yes Mr. Evans = yes Mr. Gillenwater = yes Mr. Grome = no Mr. LaFleur = no Mr. Linehan = no Mr. Pierce = no Mr. Pope = yes Mr. Resmini = no Mr. Rooney = yes Mr. Scurlock = no Ms. Wollschlager = no *Mr. Linehan moved to recommend No Action on Article 1 Motion A, seconded by Mr. LaFleur,* voted 7 - 5- 2.

- Mr. Coburn = abstain Ms. Coffey= no Mr. DeCarvalho = abstain Mr. Evans = no Mr. Gillenwater = yes Mr. Grome = yes Mr. LaFleur = yes
- Mr. Linehan = yes Mr. Pierce = yes Mr. Pope = no Mr. Resmini = yes Mr. Rooney = no Mr. Scurlock = yes Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Debate:

Mr. Coffey said that clearly the \$1.3 million to restore the COLA makes a lot of sense. Further, a strong presentation was made for the \$30,000 Community Development position when the funds was short and now that there is more free cash, the \$30,000 position that hopefully will add some revenue and assist in the efficiency of that department. However, the \$52,000 position is not well defined and I cannot vote favorably for that which is why removed that amount from my recommendation. I would ask the Committee to vote favorably on the rest of this so we can get this approved by town meeting as soon as possible.

Mr. Evans agreed with the previous speaker's comments and noted that this is an equity issue for all municipal employees. In addition, I'm willing to wait until Spring Annual Town Meeting for the CED department to specify what is needed in their department and included in the FY 22 budget.

Mr. Linehan noted that the cleaner way to do it would be to amend Article 1 Motion A so it puts in the COLAs, but the Committee hasn't had sufficient time again to digest this motion and I don't think we should get in the habit of passing this quickly, as a matter of principle.

Mr. LaFleur agreed and noted that he agreed with the math questions that Ms. Collins raised and said he got the sense that this was put together very quickly, and there's a good chance when things go through quickly much chance of things go through quickly, without due process that errors will be made.

Ms. Wollschlager said she reluctantly supported the No Action vote, indicating that she did not feel that this Committee can be given this information, not even before the meeting started, but after it began and be able to have adequate time to review it and formulate questions and get answers. She expressed hope that, at Town Meeting. someone will bring forward some of these changes, including the COLAs. The presentation lacks the detail and the context to give the Committee confidence that it's the right path. And, as Ms. Collins pointed out, maybe even the numbers don't add up. I think that would be embarrassing as a Committee to support a motion where the numbers don't even add up.

THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HAS NO RECOMMENDATION ON ARTICLE 1 MOTION A. AS A RESULT OF RECONSIDERING ARTICLE 1 AND NOT HAVING A RECOMMENDATION, THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HAS NO RECOMMENDATION FOR <u>EITHER</u> ARTICLE 1 MOTION A OR ARTICLE MOTION B

Mr. Pierce moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Evans, voted 14 - 0 - 0. Roll-call vote: Mr. Coburn = yes Mr. Linehan = yes Ms. Coffey= yes Mr. Pierce = yes Mr. DeCarvalho = yes Mr. Pope = yes Mr. Evans = yes Mr. Resmini = yes Mr. Gillenwater = yes Mr. Rooney = yes) Mr. Grome = yes Mr. Scurlock = yes Mr. LaFleur = yes Ms. Wollschlager = yes

MEETING ADJOURNED 6:29 PM