

**Final Minutes February 8, 2021 Finance Subcommittee Meeting  
Discussion with Susan Ramsey, Casey Townsend, and Mary DeBlois, Natick  
Community Organic Farm Preliminary 2022 Budget**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by Phil Rooney Chair of the Subcommittee

Members present were Bill Grome, Chris Resmini. Absent were Jerry Pierce, David Coffey and Julian LaFluer.

Susan had previously responded to questions submitted to her prior to the meeting concerning Community Services Administration and Council on Aging. Casey responded to questions submitted to him concerning the Natick Community Farm. At 7:46 Casey began by introducing Mary DeBlois, Farm Board President. He then provided an overview to his responses.

## **FinCom Questionnaire Responses**

### **The Natick Community Farm Overview**

During the past year the Farm responded to the COVID pandemic to meet the needs of Natick residents in three main ways. First, as other organizations closed their gates and grounds, we stayed open allowing residents to maintain some sense of normalcy as they sought outdoor spaces. Second, we increased our food production to address local food shortages and even piloted an at-home delivery CSA program for senior members of our community who didn't want to leave the safety of their homes. Finally, we increased our educational programming to meet the need of parents looking for activities that were both safe and meaningful.

#### **1. Please briefly describe how the Covid pandemic has changed the way you have managed your workforce and changed your overhead spending during 2021.**

During the early parts of the pandemic and continuing for several months, 1 member of our management team began working remotely as part of the Farm plan to manage any presence of the virus on the property should it arise. Since mid-summer of 2020, however, we have all been working on-site and have redesigned the layout of our building to spread out workspaces in order to follow social distance protocols. The Covid pandemic has not changed our overhead spending at this time and the farm house and the barn both remain closed to the public.

#### **2. The Preliminary 2022 Budget submitted for our review - have you actively participated in the preparation of the salary and overhead spending information? Do you have concerns that the budget submitted does not reflect your needs for 2022? If yes, please detail those needs and why you are concerned.**

The Farm staff has not participated in the preparation of the salary information but we do not have concerns about the budget numbers. The Town budget does not include any overhead spending for the Farm.

**3. In 2021 what has been the biggest challenge for your department with respect to staffing or spending? Please detail why.**

The Farm is thankful for the Town of Natick's continued support on a yearly basis. Salary and grade adjustments for the three positions have been a multi year issue. The grade adjustments, we believe, are critical for keeping our talented and capable staff and should be relative to other positions within the Town framework and beyond.

**4. In 2021 have you experienced staffing reductions due to retirement or resignations? Were you able to fill those vacancies? If no, are they provided for in the 2022 Budget? If no, why not?**

The Farm did not experience staffing reductions due to retirement or resignations.

**5. Please be prepared to provide context by category of overhead spending for 2022 and personnel dollar increases of more than 3% versus 2021.**

The Natick Community Organic Farm does not receive any type of overhead spending and did not receive a personnel dollar increase of more than 3% (relative to FY21).

- Casey detailed the following with respect to the Community Farm Budget.
  - The CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) Program is funded by grants. They deliver food to seniors and people in need.
  - Visits to the farm are up 20%. The main barn is closed, but people enjoy walking the property during the pandemic.
  - The farm is embarking on a new program concerning planting and gardening at selected locations in the Town (Coolidge Gardens is one site others to be identified). Foundation Metro-West & Metro-West Health Foundation were identified by the Metro Area Planning Council as funding agents for the next two years for this program. There will be a part time Director (12.5 hours per week). The goal is to have the program self-sustaining after a year or two.
  - The Town DPW provides support to the farm as needed.

Casey completed his presentation at 8:03.