



CARVER FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES OF MARCH 6, 2023 MEETING

Present: Chairman Alan Germain, Vice Chair Elizabeth Sulger, Ron Clarke, Bill Cullum, Walter Cole, Tony Macrina, and Patrick Meagher.

Also Present: Sue Moquin, Bob Fennessey. and Recording Secretary Ashley Swartz.

Joint Meeting with Capital Outlay.

The Committee Chairman reasonably anticipates the following matters will be discussed and possible votes will be taken at this meeting.

Mr. Germain opened the meeting at 6:36 PM – Ms. Sulger opened the Capital Outlay Committee.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Public comment – hearing none

Capital Outlay discussion: School.

Scott Knief and Ron Griffin

Amended school department capital plan. They have reprioritized their requests for Capital - \$343,00 is the new budget (roughly \$500,000 in reductions).

The schools purchase 1-2 buses a year but there is now an 18-month delay. They haven't received this yet, so they have used a vendor that has been contracted. Mr. Germain asked if there was an advantage to holding off this year. He noted that if it's taking a year and a half for busses, maybe they should put the request in now instead of kicking the can. He also expressed concerns about keeping to the 10-year plan – and the number of reductions the school is taking could impact future years. Others agreed that putting the bus back in this year's plan would be better than pushing. Mr. Fennessey added that there would be money put back into capital based on articles that could be refunded.

In regard to technology, they did not make any cuts – there are projects that are in their final phases, so they decided to prioritize. Scott added that there were a number of grants they were able to acquire which are helping with the budget. Mr. Macrina asked about the field revitalization – asking if this was a school property. This is a combined project with the recreation department and if there are additional funds to bring that back, they would begin phase one which is the design of the field. Mr. Macrina pointed out that recreation plans had been drafted a few years ago – and Ron said he would have that conversation with them. Mr. Germain added that this was another reason why Recreation should be its own department in the town.

The conversation continued by asking Scott and Ron to prioritize the items they took out – so they know what projects to put back first. They said they could provide the list by the next Capital Outlay meeting, with the caveat that it would be voted on by the school board. Mr. Germain asked who the culinary program was for. Scott explained that this was for the students and has a lot of involvement and engagement. He further explained that there are pathway programs that were developed to balance the academic programs currently in place. There are certifications that are awarded for some of these programs that can help students find jobs right out of high school. There was further conversation about the success and future of these programs – looking at the return on investment even as there is turn over in the staff. There were some “back burner” items that were on the list of article funding – Ron clarified why some of these items were listed this way – Covid and inflation impacted the timing on some of the projects. Scott added that the irrigation project was pushed back because they had to build a new well – separating the irrigation water from the water that was used inside the school.

Budget discussion: Planning.

Tom Bott, Town Planner. He began by suggesting moving \$5,700 from the budget into identifiable pots – better defining their purpose. Sue explained that there will be a sub-category of the permitting supplies and then have a line item for each – keeping the list itemized but moving this into a separate sub-category. Motion to recommend the budget of \$216,891 to the select board, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Cornelius Shea of the Planning Board asked for an increase for the stipend of Planning Board members due to the expenses associated with the position (currently \$800 per member with \$1,000 for the Chair). He is requesting an increase of \$200 for each position. Mr. Germain said the Select Board increase was because they were acting as “CEOs of the Town”. Conservation was increased to match planning board since they have similar responsibilities (bi-weekly meetings and site visits). Mr. Cotter added some context about how they rebalanced the stipends in 2014. Mr. Germain followed up with summarizing the process of getting these stipends and they should all be reviewed by the Finance Committee. They continued to stipends versus reimbursement for expenses. Mr. Germain explained that he was not concerned with the dollar amount – but concerned with giving a raise to one department and not another. Mr. Fennessey gave a breakdown of the different boards but cautioned about giving one a raise and not another. Mr. Clarke said looking at stipends for everyone would make sense. Mr. Clarke made a motion to add \$1,200 for the elected salaries of the planning board, seconded by Mr. Meagher. Mr. Germain asked if the \$1,200 was available. Mr. Macrina said going forward he would like to review a year’s expenses for someone who sits on a board. There was further discussion about the stipend being a “recognition” and not a reimbursement of expenses. Tom added that sitting on a board is more of an “exempt” position than an hourly position. Ms. Sulger was concerned about not raising stipends across the board (or review of the other stipends). Mr. Meagher added that there was a “distinct inequity” across the various boards. He thought maybe Mr. Fennessey could look at other towns’ boards and assess the responsibilities of different members. Mr. Fennessey agreed that this was a good idea – there are different classifications for jobs and should be assessed as such. Mr. Germain pulled the meeting minutes from the Governance committee and read the notes about how the stipends were changed in 2014. Motion approved 5-2-0. Motion to offer the alternate a \$200 stipend, approved 6-1-0. Sue will add a line-item budget to accommodate the alternate position.

Motion to adjust the planning board budget to \$218,291 to reflect the recent vote on the stipends, made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Budget discussion: Library

Motion to recommend the budget of \$447,983 made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Budget Discussion: Emergency Management

Motion to recommend the budget of \$67,110 made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Budget Discussion: Select Board

Mr. Germain said there were some questions – the Town Administrator and the Assistant Town Administrator/HR Coordinator were separated – “Town Administrator” and “Administrative Salaries”. Some hours were also adjusted in the “additional hours” line item. Mr. Cotter asked what the Management Reserve fund was for – concerned that there was no Capital Outlay Reserve for items that fell outside Town Meeting. Now that fund is through Finance Reserve since Capital falls under Finance. Mr. Germain said he would like the project management line to move under Finance or Capital Outlay for oversight. Mr. Clarke added that the money would have to be fluid enough that would not require a vote to move the money easily. There was a suggestion to trim the \$75,000 to \$25,000 and reallocate it to items that were recently adjusted. Municipal insurance was also questioned – they pay it up front in order to get a discount. Motion to recommend the budget of \$933,538 made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Motion to recommend the utilities budget of \$446,481 made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

In regard to the Legal Services – Mr. Germain said he would like to see which boards are spending what amounts for legal services. Sue said she would investigate how this can be broken down by department. Motion to recommend the legal budget of \$140,000 made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Budget/Discussion: Finance Department

There were questions about the Reserve Account – asking if it should be in the Finance Department budget or in the shared accounts. Mr. Germain asked if they wanted to move the grant account above the line. Sue asked about the North Carver Water District’s debt. There is a stabilization account where it is not specified how it can be used. There is roughly \$250,000 in that account to cover the NCWD. They decided the grant program should stay as it is for this year.

Motion to recommend the shared costs of \$15,169,851 made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Motion to recommend the Finance Committee’s budget \$31,025 made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

There was a question about the Finance Director and Accounting budget – the software wasn’t coming out of Capital. Mr. Cotter asked why we are changing software – the company said they would no longer provide software upgrades (so as laws change, they will not apply to the system). ARPA can’t pick up this bill because it doesn’t fit in any category. The Committee was

concerned that this budget shouldn't be a part of the operating budget but instead be funded through Capital. There was a subcommittee created that would be using the software. Mr. Cotter asked what the implementation plan looked like – Sue said she has worked with this company before, and it was an easy implementation. There was further discussion around the vetting process for finding the new software. There was also discussion about putting this software to be placed above the line (to split with the school). Sue explained that this historically has been in the Finance budget, which is why it's there now. Motion to recommend the Finance Director and Accounting budget of \$317,137 made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Motion to recommend the Assessing Department budget of \$235,570 made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Motion to recommend the Treasure/Collectors Office budget of \$332,650 made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Motion to recommend the IT budget of \$50,780 made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Motion to recommend the budget for Capital Outlay of \$750 made by Mr. Clarke, seconded by Mr. Meagher, approved unanimously 6-0-1 with Ms. Sulger abstaining.

Town Administrator and Finance Director updates

Sue asked them to look at short term interest for loans it is on that line for interest for the first year until it gets moved when the borrowing is finalized.

Motion to recommend the short-term interest on loans budget of \$120,00 made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

There was some discussion around town article money – the list shows what money can be given back to the town if voted at Town Meeting. Ms. Sulger identified some additional places (Human Resources and Health Insurance) that appeared to have excess money that could be moved.

Approval of minutes of meeting: February 13, 2023 & March 2, 2023

A motion was made at the last meeting to postpone the minutes after the joint select meeting.

Next meeting date: Tuesday, March 7, 2023, at 7:00 PM.

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Clarke, seconded by Ms. Sulger, approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Adjournment 9:32 PM.

Minutes submitted by Ashley Swartz.