



## CARVER FINANCE COMMITTEE JOINT WITH CAPITAL OUTLAY MINUTES OF APRIL 22, 2024, MEETING

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

Absent from Finance: Barry Struski

Present for Capital Outlay: *Chairwoman Elizabeth Sulger*, Vice Chair John Cotter (also Select Board), Jennifer Cullum and Jackie Lake.

Present for the Select Board: John Cotter (also Capital Outlay), Sarah Hewins and Dan Ryan.  
Absent from the Select Board: Mark Townsend and Jim Hoffman.

Also Present: Interim Town Administrator Elaine Weston and Recording Secretary Ashley Swartz. Finance Director Karen Preval was not present.

Mr. Germain opened the meeting for Finance Committee at 7:08 PM.

Ms. Sulger opened the meeting for Capital Outlay at 7:08 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Ryan nominated Ms. Hewins as acting Chair, seconded by Mr. Cotter, approved unanimously 3-0-0. Ms. Hewins opened the meeting for Select Board at 7:09 PM

**Public comments are invited during the meeting for any questions.**

Hearing none.

**Town Administrator and Finance Director updates.**

No Update from Elaine.

**Police department budget review**

Chief Marc Duphily of the Police Department began by sharing some stats. 14,908 calls were logged in 2023 (slightly less than 2022) handled by 16 officers and 4 dispatchers. Chief Duphily gave a high-level summary of the calls they answered in 2023 as well as how they worked with the school department. He noted they responded to fewer overdoses than previous years as well as deploy body cameras for officers. He also mentioned the loss of the Mental Health Crisis Counselor they had on payroll who has since taken a new job (and they are working diligently to

get that program back in order). Chief Duphily also talked about the three or four retirements he expects to see this year – which he noted they needed to start planning for. Other notes of concern for increases including the body camera fees, the computer software, and ammunition. Mr. Macrina asked about the increase for protective clothing and Chief Duphily said the Mr. Cotter asked about lowering the overtime and Chief Duphily said they increased this a few years ago but since the number is based on percentage change (he has a breakdown of the last five years) and they do the best they can to keep it to the number presented. Mr. Cotter also asked about the training – asking if it was an unusual year for training. The training line is only covering the actual training (not the overtime to complete it) and some of the money will come back to them (with operational training). Mr. Cotter asked about the dues and memberships – and Chief Duphily said he has been working diligently to get those numbers as accurate as possible. Ms. Lake asked about the weapons versus firearms replacements – the Chief explained that there is a line item for replacements during the year that should cover all the replacements due to the lifespan. Mr. Meagher asked if there was anything significant that could not fit into the budget. Chief Duphily said they were to have a new officer come on July 1, 2024 and they moved the hire date to save half a year's salary (\$35,000). He said working with the Finance Director and Interim Town Administrator they will find some one-time money to get a new hire before people retire. He explained that there is a gap between retirement and new employees which has been an issue year over year. Mr. Germain asked where he thinks they will close this year's budget (even, short, etc.) and if the current FY'25 budget is realistic for their needs. This year the Chief expects the budget to be "very close". There are pools of money that will have to be moved, and once they do they will either be spot on or slightly over. June is historically one of the highest over time months and he said they may need to take a look at the budget once officers start taking vacation. In terms of FY'25 budget, he stated that they cannot predict how much overtime is going to be needed because it is all situational. Mr. Germain said he is looking to just have a better handle on the upcoming months and understood that overtime is a huge expense for the police department – so he wanted to make sure Chief Duphily was comfortable with the budget he was presenting. The Chief clarified that most of the numbers are based on contracts but is also comfortable because of the people working with him (the committees in the room) – because he feels trusted to run the department as needed. The only goal they did not accomplish in 2023 is increasing staff so that was something he was hoping to do. Mr. Germain noted that votes would not be had until Monday night.

Ms. Sulger said the replacement admin cruiser was the only change and asked if it was okay. Ms. Cullum noted the cruiser replacement has gone up \$30,000. Chief Duphily said they have a cruiser replacement program that assigns a cruiser for each officer. They have been purchasing used vehicles where they can and they want to buy two marked cruisers and two used cars – they agreed if they cut back one marked car and purchase two used cars – bringing their total to \$180,000.

There was a brief recess to get the monitors working for the school budget presentation.  
Resumed the meeting at 7:45 PM

#### **Discussion of school budget with school administration**

Scott Knief and Ron Griffin of the School Department. This summary is what was presented to the school committee on April 1, 2024. Scott explained there are four priorities for the schools:



(1) support safe schools, (2) enhancing teaching and learning, (3) making strong connections with community partners (continue to lead the Commonwealth with MHS pathways), and (4) thoughtful funding and budget development. The operating expenses for FY'25 are projected at nearly \$26.5M. The majority of the budget is for the employees. The increases are primarily for the Special Education District Tuition Costs. Ron gave a brief explanation as to what these costs equate to and how they come about. Ron further explained that these spikes happen every six to eight years. Mr. Macrina asked if an out of town student is covered by these fees – Ron explained that the State works to reimburse those costs (because of School Choice) – which comes out of the operating budget and is fronted by Carver, and the bill goes to the student's town and reimbursed the following year. Revenue for FY'25 is projected to equate to about \$24.2M as of April 1, 2024. Ron explained Chapter 70 and how there are challenges with this act (Carver receives less than 1%, three quarters of towns receive less than 3%). Mr. Germain made a comment about how the state is not concerned with towns like Carver and expressed his frustration with the lack of funding. Mr. Germain asked Mr. Cotter if last year when the Health Insurance was moved above the line – he was wondering why the percentages for school versus town split changed from last year. Mr. Cotter explained that he did not know the why behind why the percentages have changed. Scott said he believed this was considered a common practice (putting this above the line) with Carver being an outlier. Ron said he thought this was an opportunity to plan for how these funds should be accounted for and would like to do so moving forward. Mr. Germain said starting July 1 they should have a group that involves the school, and members of other committees of the town, to work towards a five-year stability plan. Mr. Cotter agreed with Mr. Meagher's comments about having the Health insurance split that is forecasted. He also agreed with Ms. Sulger's concern as to whether or not the numbers were accurate. Ron said it didn't matter how this was done, as long as there was a plan for these expenses. The plan for balancing the budget included using some one-time funding as well as cutting some costs – he said that using a little bit of both prevented larger problems in the future. There are plans for two full-time employee RIFs (these are not layoffs, but positions that will be vacated that will not be filled) – saving 7.7% of the budget. There are also some costs that will offset based on grants. Additionally, there will be use of one-time fees to offset some of the costs. Mr. Cotter asked about School Choice – the number of School Choice students is a recommended number by the School Committee – which will typically be five for kindergarten and then additional slots for middle and high school. Many of the high school students is a result of families moving once the student hits high school and giving the student the ability to finish school in Carver. They are currently sixty students positive in the School Choice program (meaning more students are choosing to come to Carver rather than leave). Scott further explained that the School Choice numbers is a revolving fund that can be rolled over to offset the budget. Mr. Cotter also asked if these funds were a net gain – Scott said they have to be mindful to not take too many students through School Choice – making sure they can cover the expenses of these students (accommodating through existing services).

Ms. Sulger asked to review the Capital items – beginning by asking if they would fund a Capital item with School Choice funds. Scott said they do not traditionally do that but if they felt they had sufficient funds they could fund some Capital items through these funds. Scott said that immediate needs are typically funded through School Choice rather than coming to Finance. He then provided several examples of what types of items they buy with the School Choice funds that vary year to year. Ron quickly reviewed the Capital requests for the school. They have

decided to postpone the 71-passenger bus (\$135,000), Middle-High School Library (\$120,000 in savings), and the Elementary School Playground (\$50,000 in savings). Ron noted that the two new busses have just arrived this week. Mr. Germain was concerned about the cost of the firewall replacement (\$60,000). Ron said they work with someone who can go find the best prices as well as getting reimbursement by e-Rate. Mr. Germain followed by asking if Comcast provided any of these services since they are the internet provider for the town. Mr. Germain asked about the increase of the busses (from \$87,000 to \$135,000) – asking about what it would look like to substitute contracts rather than owning the buses. Ron said it would be about a 50% increase. He also advised that once you pull the busses from the town, its hard to go back to running their own busses.

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Ryan, seconded by Mr. Cotter, approved unanimously 3-0-0.

Motion to adjourn Capital Outlay, made by Ms. Cullum, seconded by Ms. Lake, approved unanimously 3-0-0.

Motion to approve the minutes of April 8, 2024 made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Meagher, approved unanimously 5-0-0.

Committee member comments.

Next meeting date: 04/25/2024 Budget review for IT, Planning, Veterans  
04/29/2024 Final budget review with TA and Finance director  
04/30/2024 Joint meeting with Select Board, budget presentation for warrant.

Motion to adjourn made by Ms. Sulger, seconded by Mr. Meagher, approved unanimously 5-0-0.

**Adjournment 9:26 PM.**

**Minutes submitted by Ashley Swartz.**