



Town of Orleans

Finance Committee

19 School Road Orleans Massachusetts 02653

Tel. (508) 240-3700
Fax (508) 240-3388

23 MAR 6 12:59 PM

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 23, 2023 – 6:15 pm

This was a hybrid meeting of the Orleans Finance Committee, convened in the Nauset Room at Town Hall, with remote participation also provided by Zoom technology. Real-time public access was provided by Orleans Channel 18 on the Town website and cable television.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Finance Committee Chairman Nick Athanassiou. Also attending, and thus constituting a quorum were Committee Vice Chairman Chris Kanaga (participating remotely), Committee Clerk Elaine Baird and Committee members Lynn Bruneau, Tim Counihan, Constance Kremer, Ed Mahoney and Peter O'Meara (participating remotely). Alissa Magnotta was absent from the meeting.

Guests: Peggy O'Sullivan from Media Operations provided technical support for this meeting.

(0:00) Public Comment: There were no public comments.

(0:30) Announcements:

Mr. Athanassiou announced a Public Hearing to be held by the Charter Review Committee on Monday, February 27 at 4:30 pm in the Nauset Room at Town Hall. They will discuss three proposed Charter changes and associated Warrant Articles for the Annual Town Meeting.

Mr. Athanassiou announced that on Thursday, March 2 at 4:30 PM in the Skaket Room, the Select Board will be meeting to discuss affordable housing-related Warrant Articles for the Annual Town Meeting.

Mr. Athanassiou announced that the Orleans Citizens' Forum will host a forum: "Doing Business in Orleans: Perspectives from the Front Line: on Thursday, March 2 from 5:00pm – 6:30pm at the Orleans Senior Center. Ms. Bruneau noted that the panelists scheduled for this session will represent Friends Market, the Rail Restaurant, and Gibson Sotheby Realty.

Mr. Athanassiou also noted that Fin Comm will meet at 7PM on the evening of March 2.

(5:00) Review / Approval of Finance Committee Mtg Minutes – 2/09/23, 2/16/23 if available.

- 2/09/23 – the minutes were not yet available.
- 2/16/23 – Ms. Baird noted one spelling error to be corrected. **Ms. Bruneau moved to approve the minutes as drafted, with Ms. Baird's correction; Ms. Baird seconded. The vote was 6-0-1 with Mmes. Baird, Bruneau and Kremer and Messrs. Athanassiou, Counihan and O'Meara all voted "aye" by roll call vote. Mr. Mahoney abstained as he was absent from the 2/16/23 meeting. Mr. Kanaga had not yet logged into the 2/23/23 meeting to join the vote.**

(7:00) Review / Continued Discussion of FY24 Budget Reviews

Ms. Bruneau provided updates on a number of budget review meetings, noting that the draft budget reviews had been forwarded to Committee members earlier in the week and were posted to the Fin Comm Drop Box:

- 2/3/23 - Fire/Rescue (220) and Emergency Management Departments (2291) - meeting with Fire Chief Geof Deering and Deputy Chief Tim Gula (Fin Comm - Nick Athanassiou, Chris Kanaga, Lynn Bruneau)
- 2/7/23 - Treasurer/Tax Collector (145) - meeting with Scott Walker (Fin Comm - Nick Athanassiou, Chris Kanaga and Lynn Bruneau)
- 2/7/23 - Water Department (650) - meeting with Water Department Supervisor Todd Bunzick and Assistant Supervisor Sue Brown (Fin Comm - Ed Mahoney, Lynn Bruneau)
- 2/14/23 - Telecoms (123), Media Ops (124) and MIS (155) - meeting with MIS Director Peter Van Dyck and Mia Baumgarten (Fin Comm - Tim Counihan and Lynn Bruneau)
- 2/15/23 - Facilities (653) and Building & Facilities Stabilization Fund - meeting with Building & Facilities Manager Ron Collins and DPW Director Tom Daley (Fin Comm - Nick Athanassiou and Lynn Bruneau)
- 2/15/23 - "Other DPW" - meeting with DPW Director Tom Daley to briefly discuss budgets for Town Office Building (192), Tree Warden (294), Shellfish/Harbormaster (295), Highway (421), Streetlights (424), Jonathan Young Windmill (649) and Parks (654) (Fin Comm - Nick Athanassiou and Lynn Bruneau)
- 2/17/23 - Planning Department (175) and Zoning Board of Appeals (176) - meeting with George Meservey (Fin Comm - Nick Athanassiou, Elaine Baird and Lynn Bruneau)

The 2/3/23 meeting w/ Fire Chief Scott MacDonald and Principal Account Clerk Jill Hull was reviewed at the 2/16/23 Fin Comm meeting, as was the 2/8/23 meeting w/ Town Clerk Kelly Darling.

Ms. Bruneau discussed the new Fire Station progress (pending Select Board action at present), as well as the SAFER Grant that the Fire Department is applying for (for 8 additional firefighters/paramedics). There was discussion about staffing issues in the Department, particularly as it related to the recent fatal fire at an apartment-in-a-house in town, as well as regarding the housing issues facing Town employees and residents. The Fire Department Budget also includes a Warrant Article for a new aerial/ladder truck (\$1.6M debt exclusion). Ms. Bruneau referred to recent "regionalization" discussions at Select Board meetings, with OFD and OPD focus on most likely opportunities such as training and vehicle maintenance.

Treasurer/Tax Collector – Ms. Bruneau discussed the credit card fees for processing transactions with the Treasurer/Tax Collector's office. Fees vary by transaction type with different vendors supporting different on-line transactions. For many, the fee includes a percentage of the fee, where using a bank/ACH transfer typically costs 40 cents and writing a check is "free". The Treasurer is interested in improved physical security for his department with that discussion recently restarted. Mr. Walker also provided a copy of 2 proposed Warrant Articles which would provide for adoption of MA GL, allowing for an additional \$1k in compensation for the Treasurer and the Assessor if/when they were awarded specific certification by their MA professional organizations.

Water Department – Ms. Bruneau noted that the change in the electricity budget, discussed at this week's Select Board meeting, is due to a change in how solar credits are "awarded" to the Town. New practice - a check is written to the Town. Previously - the Water Department could "take the

credit" directly from its own electric bill. Currently - 3 vacancies in the Department, including one for a recently retired supervisor who had been with the Water Department for 36 years. Mr. Counihan discussed the need for succession planning when looking ahead at filling vacancies that will arise in the future. More than 20 properties had burst pipes during the recent "arctic" weather (2/3-2/4). Residents are encouraged to sign up for "Eye on Water" and to ensure that someone has access to their property if/when they are away. Ms. Bruneau also reviewed the Water Dept. fee structure and noted the need to keep the fees current with infrastructure costs. She also suggested that highly regulated departments such as the Water Dept. should likely be exempt from the same Budget Policy limitations, particularly "self-funding" departments like the Water Dept.

Telecoms/MIS/Media Ops - the phone system installed at the new Wastewater Treatment Facility is routed through the DPW facility, supporting phone needs as well as alarm systems. The COA request for a new phone system (est. \$15k) is listed as part of the FY24 "Motor Vehicle & Durable Equipment" budget and thus was not on MIS Director Peter Van Dyck's radar. Last year Media Ops redesigned and implemented a new Town website (working w/ a vendor); however, it wasn't clear whether much additional work is being done to further improve the website. Media Ops also upgraded camera and audio equipment in the Skaket and Nauset meeting rooms in Town Hall last year (\$50k Warrant Article) and going forward, would like to install broadcast equipment in the Town's Emergency Operations Center at the Police Station. The updated contract with Comcast was also discussed, with follow-up due back from Mr. Van Dyck re whether Comcast funds still fully cover the Media Ops budget. The focus of MIS has been/will continue to be the \$1M "Laserfiche" project - archiving the Town's paper records. Several departments have already begun the "prep" work - with various strategies - under the guidance of Mia Baumgarten. A recent topic has been the perceived inconsistency between/among various Town databases (eg, property records, Building Department records, etc.). No decisions on a way forward yet.

Facilities/Building & Facilities Stabilization Fund - position of "Assistant Facilities Manager" is still open. Discussion re the possibility of electric vehicle charging stations at Nauset Beach w/ the idea supported by the Climate Action Committee. Cost w/be \$10k/unit plus installation costs, electric line, re-paving and O&M - and the unknown re hardiness of units in the Nauset Beach environment. Also likely that these stations w/not be self-sustaining - and should the taxpayers subsidize this convenience? Review of Stabilization Fund budget - primary question as previously - why have any/many \$100k-\$200k projects in this \$350k annual budget instead of focusing on "day-to-day" care/maintenance of the Town's buildings/facilities? Why \$50k/year for landings in this budget and not in Moorings Enterprise Fund? These questions might be addressed by the not-yet-formed Long-Term Capital Planning Committee. Brief update on the traffic light on Eldredge Park Way - still waiting for parts at the time of our discussion; however, project completed 2/23.

"Other DPW" - salaries largely driven by union contracts; most individual line item operating expenses have not increased substantially over the past 4-5 years. Several job openings with additional concern about retirements in the next 3-5+ years (Trudeau this year; Daley and Bunzick in 2026+; mechanic in 2025+; Sue Brown in 2028+). Fuel costs up substantially - county-wide procurement program renegotiated periodically. Tree Warden - "department" relies on Highway Department for resources. Shellfish/Harbormaster - 30% of salary budget is allocated to Moorings Enterprise Fund. Department description claims responsibility for repair/maintenance of town landings and/or dock and pier repair/construction but no funding here for that. Highway takes care of 60+ miles of town roads. Funding also from Chapter 90 (State) funds and Pavement Management Stabilization Fund. Select Board suggestion that last of Streetlights be converted to

LED to save operating cost. Windmill request for \$5700 to re-hire part-time docent for “tours” of windmill operations. Parks maintains Town parks, playing fields and other grounds and helps w/ Conservation properties. Town is getting smarter about what is planted where to simplify O&M and cut down on irrigation. Snow Removal - state rules allow for deficit spending if needed; budget flat for past 6+ years. Most spending for sand and “salt”.

Planning Department - position of “Assistant Town Planner” is still open; had hoped this individual w/ be able to focus on “Economic Vitality” following completion of last year’s study. Department coordinates w/ many Town Boards/Committees and oversees Building and Conservation Departments. Studies last year - Gov. Prence; Community Center and Economic Development/Vitality. Focus now on planning for updating the Town’s 2006 Comprehensive Plan, likely modeled on the Cape Cod Commission’s “lite” approach. Two Warrant Articles submitted for consideration for May 2023 - both focused on Water Quality projects - total \$223k.

Library and COA - Mr. Athanassiou noted observations by Ms. Baird and Mr. Counihan from their discussion with Library and COA Trustees that the Town routinely seeks funding from both the Library and the COA Trusts to support operating needs. It seems inappropriate that funds donated for programming are used instead for maintenance or to offset planned Town expenses. People aren’t generally inspired to pay for electric bills or repair a boiler. If the Town insists on using funds this way, it likely would impact future donations. Perhaps the Library and COA Trustees should develop policies re the use of their Trust funds.

(1:50:00) May 2023 TM “Warrant Watch”: Discussion of Warrants proposed and / or expected (possible invitations to others for updates)

Ms. Bruneau provided an update on today’s Wastewater Management Advisory Committee meeting, anticipating at least one Warrant Article for Town Meeting, focused on a “Phase 3” sewer project in/around Crystal and Pilgrim lakes and connected to the soon-to-start Meetinghouse Pond project.

(1:53:00) Updates

Update of Select Board Meeting discussions / decisions

Ms. Bruneau noted that the annual Standard & Poor’s Credit Rating report was received by the Town in late December 2022 and recently forward by the Finance Director.

There was no Select Board meeting this week.

Liaison Reports as appropriate – Mr. Kanaga left the meeting.

Mr. Athanassiou discussed the joint Affordable Housing Committee and the Affordable Housing Trust meeting. There was discussion about possibly expanding the scope of funding beyond 200% of AMI; how to fund those with needs beyond 100% of AMI, and increasing the existing annual appropriation of \$275,000 to the Affordable Housing Trust – possibly to \$500,000.

The School Committee budgets will be discussed at the Select Board meeting on March 15, 2023.

(1:59:00) Review Schedule and Items for Future Agendas

Mr. Athanassiou reminded the Committee that the FinComm meeting next week will begin at 7pm.

(2:00:00) Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 8:15 pm by Mr. Counihan and seconded by Mr. Athanassiou. The vote was 7-0-0 with Mmes. Baird, Bruneau and Kremer and Messrs. Athanassiou, Counihan, Mahoney and O'Meara all voting "aye" by roll call vote. Mr. Kanaga had left the meeting a few minutes before adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Courtney Butler, Secretary

The documents listed below are all in the Finance Committee Drop Box except as noted:

1. February 23, 2023 Finance Committee meeting agenda
2. Finance Committee Budget Review Write-Ups for the following Departments:
 - 2/3/23 - Fire/Rescue and Emergency Management
 - 2/7/23 - Treasurer/Tax Collector
 - 2/7/23 - Water Department
 - 2/14/23 - Telecoms/Media Ops/MIS
 - 2/15/23 - Facilities/Building & Facilities Stabilization Fund
 - 2/15/23 - "Other DPW" - Town Office Building, Tree Warden, Shellfish/Harbormaster, Highway, Streetlights, Windmill and Parks
 - 2/17/23 - Planning
3. Standard & Poor's Credit Rating Report (December 2022)