



**Special Joint meeting of the Town Council and Finance Committee of the
Town Council**

July 15, 2020, 1:30 p.m.

Virtual meeting

Minutes

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, this meeting of the Finance Committee was conducted via remote participation.

Finance Committee Members Participating Remotely: De Angelis, Griesemer, Schoen, and Steinberg

Non-Voting Finance Committee Members Participating Remotely: Robert Hegner and Marylou Theilman

Finance Committee Members Absent: Pam

Non-Voting Finance Committee Members Absent: Sharon Povinelli

Councilors Participating Remotely: Bahl-Milne, DuMont, Ryan

Councilors Absent: Brewer, Hanneke, Pam, Ross, Schreiber, and Swartz

Others Participating Remotely: Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Finance Director Sean Mangano, Comptroller Sonia Aldrich, Police Chief Scott Livingstone, Clerk of the Council Athena O'Keeffe

1. Call to Order

Steinberg declared the presence of a quorum of the Finance Committee, called the meeting of the Finance Committee to order at 1:35 pm, and confirmed committee members could hear and be heard, and announced audio and video recording.

President Griesemer called the meeting of the Council to order at 1:37 pm, and confirmed that Councilors could hear and be heard.

Steinberg spoke briefly about the agenda and indicated public comment will be taken up later in the meeting.

2. FY21 budget: Discuss feedback from public hearing

Steinberg spoke briefly about the public comments regarding reducing the Police Department budget received at the previous meeting.

Schoen spoke about cutting the Police Department (APD) budget by reducing two vacant positions.

Members discussed potential cuts to the APD budget, and that the Council cannot reallocate funds cut from one department for another use.

Members discussed how the budget drives the tax rate for the year. If later in the year there was a need for additional funds, those would have to come from reserves.

Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Comptroller Sonia Aldrich and members discussed state law regarding the budget and funding sources.

Ryan commented that there is a need to hear from the Chief about what cuts would look like for APD.

Ryan spoke about the need for APD in terms of COVID-19 enforcement of guidelines, and with students returning to the area there will be an increased need for APD support.

De Angelis commented that the UMass police can help with on-campus enforcement, and expressed discomfort with discrimination between the public health crisis of COVID-19 and the public health crisis that people of color face in daily life.

Bahl-Milne spoke about a resolution passed in a city in North Carolina regarding reparations as a model that Amherst could consider, a Community Reparations Commission, and in Amherst, there is a need for a radical shift of what safe policing looks like.

Griesemer spoke about a meeting with residents, several Councilors, the Police Chief, and local efforts to defund APD. Griesemer spoke about the need for more time to develop a plan and the constraints of the budget deadline.

Schoen spoke about concerns from residents about students returning to the area and not abiding by social distancing and mask guidelines, and asked about how different action can be taken to enforce guidelines.

Bockelman spoke about how enforcement is different during the pandemic.

Ryan stated that we need to know the impact of a hiring freeze on APD.

Griesemer spoke about the upcoming Council meetings, and that policing and public health are related; the impacts of cuts to the APD budget must be well understood by the Council and the community before action is taken.

Members discussed contact tracing and other efforts to enforce guidelines locally.

Chief Livingstone spoke about expanding the role of community policing to other officers to compliment the one officer who serves in that function now.

Members asked about the effect of a hiring freeze on APD.

Livingstone spoke about potential effects of reductions in funding.

Members discussed reducing the APD budget by 52% as many residents have urged.

Members discussed the potential reduction in the size of the police force, and impact on how policing might change.

Members discussed the committee recommendation and potential vote to recommend the budget to the Council at the next meeting.

Members discussed a potential hiring freeze, and the timing of potential reduction to the APD budget this fiscal year or next year.

3. Review draft report

Steinberg spoke about the uncertainty of revenue in the coming year.

Aldrich asked about Council orders for borrowing.

Members reviewed the Council orders that are awaiting Council action.

Members discussed what should be included in the Finance Committee report and recommendation to the Council.

4. Budget review and recommendation process

5. General public comment – None

6. Items not anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance

Steinberg declared the Finance Committee meeting adjourned at 4:06 pm.

Griesemer declared the Town Council meeting adjourned at 4:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Athena O'Keeffe".

Athena O'Keeffe

Clerk of the Council

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented

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