

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
June 8, 2023
7 pm
Via Zoom Conference

Attendees:

Committee Members

James Catacchio

Aaron D'Elia

Victor Liang (departed prior to FinCom candidate interview)

Lynne Lipinsky

Melissa McMorrow

Other:

Barney Arnold, Select Board Chair

Ryan McLane, Town Administrator

Betsy Fell, Mosquito Reporter/ Editor

Craig Leelman, FinCom member candidate

1. Meeting Roll Call

A meeting with the Town of Carlisle's Finance Committee was conducted via Zoom conference. Attendance was taken by roll call.

2. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

The May 8, 2023, minutes were reviewed. After a motion that was duly made and seconded, the minutes were approved, with James Catacchio abstaining.

3. General Feedback on FY23 Budget Process by FinCom and Town Administrator

Ryan McLane stated that the Select Board is gathering feedback on the budget process at this time to have it during summer strategic planning. Overall, it was his impression that the bigger departments generally liked the process; the smaller ones gave feedback that they were not aware of the process and would like more communication. He stated that he was better able to assist FinCom and the Select Board once he got a sense of their overall goals, which allowed the process to have a framework for decision making and priorities.

Barney Arnold felt very informed and felt that there were very good discussions on budget matters – the best in a while. The Assistant Town Administrator plans to reach out to the smaller boards during their onboarding process to inform them of the budget process and their responsibilities in it.

James Catacchio stated that the Select Board was the most involved in the process this year in his experience on FinCom. Some other committee members concurred. Committee members noted that the financial information was more organized and accessible this year and were generally positive on the process.

Aaron D'elia agreed that the process was 90% good. The one recommendation he had was that the budget process should begin earlier because the time period was too compressed.

Melissa McMorrow agreed. She noted that the later timing does not synch up with the budget development process for the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District (CCRS). Because the warrant in Concord generally closes on January 1st, the CCRSD budget generally is wrapped up by that time. She noted that the consensus in Carlisle was to try this process, despite this issue. One reason for delaying the timing was to wait for announcements of state aid, but she stated that it is worth revisiting the timing given that the share of budget that is from state aid in Carlisle is so small.

Ms. McMorrow ad two additional recommendations. First, she noted that it remains important to coordinate among relevant Town and regional committee leadership and professional staff – in the case of school budgets, making sure that school committee members are part of the discussion and making sure that there is coordination in terms of outreach and information sharing. She stated that it takes more work, but in her view it produces a better outcome. Second, she noted that it is still important for FinCom and Select Board to be in direct conversation. The information provided improved with the Town Administrator's involvement, but sometimes things got lost in the translation when the two bodies were not in direct communication and were relying on information being relayed (e.g., depiction of two separate budgets prior to direct conversations regarding priorities).

Ms. Lipinsky also stated that coordination and communication is important.

Mr. McLane shared that his initial charge of simply gathering budget information shifted at times during the process. Ms. McMorrow noted that she felt the shifting sands from the initially announced roles and that clarity of roles in the process is important.

4. Timing and Plan for new Health Insurance and Capital Planning Committees

Based upon feedback from FinCom during the FY23 budget process, Mr. McLane plans to create a working group to assess the Town's health insurance offering. He also plans to start a capital planning committee to get a better handle on all the capital needs that will feed into the expected budget forecasting model. Melissa McMorrow noted that when the long-term caps committee was in existence, it served a similar function with the committee including representatives from FinCom and the School Committee, which fostered communication across town bodies and departments on this topic.

5. Town Administrator Update on Financial Policies and Fall Town Meeting

Mr. McLane noted that that there are still financial policies that need to be adopted that are always at the top of the list of items noted by the auditor. He recommended that the committee not spend a lot of time reviewing policies because they don't have to be perfect, and that they are boilerplate policies that he wants put into place that could be reviewed after they are adopted. Ms. McMorrow cautioned against that approach as boilerplate does not mean one size fits all. She requested that FinCom members receive the policies for discussion a few days prior to the meeting rather than receiving them on the day of the meeting, then FinCom members would have time to review and consider them prior to the meeting. A lot more progress on the policies could be made so that they would be close to

perfect, and then the committee would not have to spend time going back and reviewing the policies after they have been adopted.

Ms. Lipinsky and Mr. McLane noted that there are two additional FY24 costs that have arisen: (1) a student attending Minuteman Regional High School has moved into Carlisle and Carlisle is responsible for the payment of tuition and transportation and (2) insurance costs are higher than expected by about \$5,000.

Mr. McLane noted that the only financial impact item being discussed for the fall town meeting is the CPA discussion. He also stated that other items for the fall town meeting are matters that affect general and zoning bylaws, without noting specifics. Ms. Arnold explained that one of the general bylaw potential items is the recommendation of the Town Governance Task Force regarding the Finance Committee and the budget process. Ms. Arnold stated that both the FinCom and the Select Board should consider whether they support the recommendation or not. Mr. D'Elia noted that he and Ms. McMorrow were involved in those discussions and that his impression after experiencing the FY24 budget process is that the bylaw amendments are not needed. Ms. McMorrow agreed.

Mr. D'Elia also recommended that the town make sure that it is familiar with the opportunities available because of the federal Inflation Reduction Act legislation.

6. Finance Committee Member Candidate Interview

The committee then interviewed Craig Leelman. Mr. Leelman was recommended to FinCom by his neighbor and Select Board member Kate Reid. Mr. Leelman originally is from Lexington, MA and moved to Carlisle in recent years. He is a CPA with public accounting experience, who is now engaged in financial planning and analysis. He does not have municipal finance experience, but is looking for a way to contribute to the Town. The committee asked questions of and invited questions from Mr. Leelman. At the end of the discussion Mr. Leelman departed and the consensus of the committee was to recommend that the Select Board appoint him to FinCom, subject to either Victor Liang or Heidi Sjoberg asking the Committee to hold another meeting to discuss the candidacy after meeting with him individually.

7. Next Meeting and Motion to adjourn.

The committee discussed the possibility of two dates for a joint meeting with the Select Board – June 27 and July 11.

Mr. Catacchio recommended that the Committee check the terms of members to determine expiring terms and any steps that need to be taken. Ms. Lipinsky noted that she is working with Town Hall on that.

A motion to adjourn was duly made and seconded. Roll call with unanimous approval. The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 pm.

Melissa McMorrow recorded the minutes for the meeting. Minutes were reviewed and approved unanimously by FinCom on July 24, 2023. Roll call was taken by Lynne Lipinsky, James Cattachio, and Heidi Sjoberg, Victor Liang, Aaron D'Elia.