

TOWN OF IPSWICH
Finance Committee Minutes
Meeting of January 10th, 2023
Ipswich Town Hall, Meeting Room A
25 Green St. Ipswich, MA

With a quorum present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30.

Finance Committee members present: Michael Dougherty, Emily Smith, Walter Hartford, Jamie Fay, Michael Schaaf, Ken Swenson, Joseph Bourque, Rob White, Robert Chambers

1. Citizens Queries – Michael Dougherty

- No citizens queries.

2. Meeting Minutes Approval – Michael Dougherty

- No minutes to approve.

3. Finalize FY2024 Budget Hearing Schedule – M. Dougherty

Michael said he circulated the list of hearing dates. In addition to what is listed in the email, the School Committee will have three nights in March. Mike said Sarah will be there for some of the nights but not all of them, and Stephen will also be there for some but not all. The tri-board meeting next week is going to be a bi-board meeting instead. It is a regularly scheduled Select Board meeting. The School Committee won't be there because their budget isn't finalized yet. Michael S. asked if we would have revenue projections at that meeting, Michael D. said yes. Sarah and Stephen will also be there. Michael S. brought up the Energy Savings Performance Contract, which is authorized by MA general law and is a method of procurement where a municipality can contract with a qualified entity to undertake modernization efforts related to asset management, with an emphasis on energy considerations. They obtain their fee through the savings that are obtained through the buildings. Michael S. asked why it isn't going to be in the bi-board meeting. Michael D. said he was told it wasn't ready yet, but it was on the original agenda. Michael S. said it is a big deal.

4. Subcommittee Reports – ALL

Emily said the town Government Study Committee is still continuing with their research of the statewide ELD's, despite the ELD director role being better defined. Jamie said it would be interesting to know how many of the ELD's are elected vs. run by a Select Board. Emily said they are including that as a part of their research. Whether they are appointed, elected, and what their town government looks like. Michael S. asked why they are looking into this. Emily said there was an article on the table that was withdrawn, but it seemed like there was a good reason for the article and seemed like it's going to be addressed again in the future. They wanted to be prepared for when this comes up again. Michael D. asked if they have had any other requests from the Select Board to look into anything else, Emily said no.

Joe said he was out of town for the December meeting of the Water and Wastewater Sub-Committee, but there is a meeting next week. Part of it includes an overview of the budget. Jamie asked Walter if he could see a copy of the audit and Walter said he would ask for an electronic copy and send it to FinCom.

Jamie gave an update on the Public Safety Facilities Committee. Construction escalation and building features pushed them way out of line from what they could afford within the budget. The architect reduced the size of the building by 10% and changed some things about the building. On the basis of the changes, the committee voted to authorize the architect to go to the next phase of the development. This will go out publicly soon. Jamie said they are trying to get it back on track because for about every month of delay is about a 1% increase. Joe asked if any of the functionality was deleted in the building revision's. Jamie said we certainly aren't getting the same thing we had before but a lot of that is efficiencies like conference rooms and offices being shared, less room for expansion in the future, and guys will sleep two to a room vs. one to a room. The biggest difference is they lost one bay, and they are trying to figure out a way to add that back in. Michael S.

said the Inflation Reduction Act provided substantial incentives that were formally not available to public buildings for various green energy sources. He asked if the committee has considered those matters and if so what is the discussion. Jamie said the committee has considered the whole issue of sustainability very strongly from the beginning. Jamie reached out to the Sustainability Committee and asked them to participate in the meetings, which they did. They made several presentations about this building and how it can help us to achieve our sustainability goals. The sustainability director has attended all of the meetings and she has provided a lot of expertise on the funding sources that could be available. Their commitment is to do a carbon free building, with the exception of diesel generators. We might need to find some funding to achieve that. Some of the architect's concerns are trying to heat the building on really cold days with all air-to-air heat exchangers. It can get expensive, whereas it can be very cost effective to have 3-5% of the heating done by carbon-based fuels.

Emily said last time we had talked about reinvigorating the Strategic Planning Committee and she asked Michael if he had spoken to Stephen about that. Michael said he had a call with him and Willy and they discussed refocusing our energy on the long term. We spent money on these surveys and these tools for long-term planning, and we need to make sure we stay on top of those things. They will spend the next few weeks focusing on the budget, but they plan to talk about it on their next call so that they can keep it in mind during the budget process.

5. New/Other Business – Michael Dougherty

- Michael S. said a group of citizens have put forward a financial plan regarding the development of elementary schools in the town. Their idea is to reconvert the town hall building into an elementary school, redevelop with MSBA assistance, the Doyon School, and move town hall to the Winthrop School. They allege that this is going to save the town \$40M. Michael said his concern is that they have quality numbers and financial data from the School Committee so the town's people can have a solid understanding of the facts. Michael said he is concerned that people may not have quality information as we are proceeding. There are no numbers behind this plan and we don't know if this is quality information. Michael D. said the School Committee has their own finance department, but they want them to know that the Finance Committee is happy to jump in, help them out, go through information, and eventually make a recommendation for people to vote. Michael D. said he doesn't think the School Committee is at the point where they want the Finance Committee to do anything yet. They are trying to get as much data and public opinion as possible before they release anything to the public. Michael D. said he thinks this group of people should meet with and present their plan to the School Committee. Joe said he thinks this is a time we need to be having more collaboration between the community and the boards, and we have been having less collaboration. They haven't been having frequent tri-board meetings, and now even at the next one it's just quickly being squeezed into another meeting. He said the community needs to talk and understand each other and then all be willing to make some concessions. A lot of the elderly people in the town are willing to have tax increases for the school because they want what's best for the community. But they don't want to see crazy things being added and a school that is so above and beyond. It may need to be a little more bare bones, like the Public Safety Facility.

9. Adjourn – Michael S. Dougherty

- Motion to adjourn made by Rob W. and seconded by Emily.
→ *Motion passed unanimously, 9-0*

Respectfully Submitted By
Alyson von der Esch
1-17-22