

Weston Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

March 02, 2023

A meeting of the Finance Committee of the Town of Weston, which was duly called and posted in compliance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, was held on Thursday, March 02, 2023, via a Zoom video conference. It was broadcast live and recorded by Weston Media Center. There being a quorum present, the meeting was called to order at 7:05pm.

Present for the meeting were:

Finance Committee: Lisa Reitano (Chair), George Berbeco, Jonathan Harris, Zachary Sadek, John Sallay, Latha Seshadri, Bharath Venkataraman, Karen Meslin, Matthew Seltzer

School Committee: Kenneth Newberg (Chair), Attia Linnard, Jeff Lucas, and Maija Gooch

School Administration: Midge Connolly (Superintendent), Sheri Matthews (Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations)

Also Present: Leon Gaumond (Town Manager), Susan Kelley (Finance Director)

George Berbeco was appointed to serve as Secretary pro-tempore and charged with keeping the minutes of the meeting. The Zoom video conference meeting was recorded by Weston Media Center and will be available on-line.

1. As this was a joint Finance Committee/School Committee meeting, Chair Newberg called their meeting to order.
2. There were no resident comments.
3. Ken Newberg gave introductory comments and Midge Connolly described the budget process and presented their proposed school budget, which has not yet been approved by the School Committee. The two largest increases are in utilities and out of district costs. There was a discussion about personnel changes/reductions and how it affected programs. PE is no longer required of juniors and seniors who do school sports, and an additional AP course was added. The large unknown is that the teachers' contract has not been settled, and the town is entering mediation. Lisa Reitano referenced the fact that the Finance Committee has taken a position on negotiations which she had read to the School Committee at their budget hearing in February. The School Committee portion of the joint meeting was adjourned.
4. The minutes of the meetings of February 9 and February 15 were unanimously approved.

5. The Finance Committee needs to prepare a FY24 report for the Town Meeting warrant book. The FY23 report was sent to all members and any comments/suggestions for changes should be sent to Lisa Reitano. The committee voted unanimously to have Lisa, Bharath Venkataraman, and Jonathan Harris work as a subgroup to draft next year's report.
6. Leon Gaumond presented proposed warrant articles for discussion and possible vote. The Select Board has not yet voted to include these although they are expected to, nor have the article numbers or order been set either:

ARTICLE 4: APPROPRIATE TO OTHER POST EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS (OPEB) TRUST FUND

Unanimous vote to support

ARTICLE 5: ACCEPT CHAPTER 90 ROAD IMPROVEMENT FUNDS

Unanimous vote to support

ARTICLE 7: APPROPRIATE FISCAL YEAR 2024 WATER ENTERPRISE BUDGET

Unanimous vote to support

ARTICLE 8: APPROPRIATE FOR WATER MAIN REHABILITATION

Unanimous vote to support

ARTICLE 10: APPROPRIATE FISCAL YEAR 2024 RECREATION ENTERPRISE BUDGET

Unanimous vote to support

ARTICLE 11: APPROPRIATE FISCAL YEAR 2024 BROOK SCHOOL APARTMENTS ENTERPRISE BUDGET

Unanimous vote to support

ARTICLE 12: APPROPRIATE FISCAL YEAR 2024 PUBLIC ACCESS OPERATIONS

After question about whether they have enough funds to operate, Leon explained yes, and also they are fundraising. Unanimous vote to support

ARTICLE 14: EASEMENT TO VERIZON AT LAND'S SAKE FARM (90 WELLESLEY STREET)

There was a discussion regarding a permanent easement since the Land's Sake Farm has a lease for about 25 years, although an Eversource easement was approved at prior Town Meeting. Majority vote approved to support, 6 to 3

ARTICLE 26: APPROPRIATE FOR COMMUNITY HOUSING – REGIONAL HOUSING SERVICES OFFICE & HOUSING TRUST STAFF SUPPORT

Unanimous vote to support

**ARTICLE 27: APPROPRIATE FOR OPEN SPACE – CASE ESTATES – RHODODENDRON
GARDEN REVITALIZATION**

After much discussion, unanimous vote to table until a later meeting

A motion to adjourn was made, duly seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
George Berbeco



Weston Public Schools

FY'24 Recommended Budget

Weston School Committee
Finance Committee Presentation

March 02, 2023

School FY'24 Budget Planning and Budget Process

- Strategic Plan
- Budget Guidelines
 - Excellent Instruction
 - Safe and Secure Facilities
 - Fiscally Responsible
- Enrollment Projections
 - Class Size Policy
 - Federal, State and Special Education Mandates
- Superintendent Proposes Budget
- Updated Budget with Public Review and Refinements
- **Finance Committee Meeting (March 2, 2023)**
- School Committee Vote (Possibly March 13, 2023)
- Town Meeting Vote (May 8, 2023)

Collective Bargaining Obligations for FY'24

- TBD WEA Weston Teacher's Association
- 1.50% WAPA Weston Aides and Paraprofessionals
- 2.00% WEAAA Weston Admin Assistants Association
- 2.00% SABG Weston Buildings/Grounds Association
- 1.75% SABD Weston Bus Drivers Association
- 2.00% SAFS Weston Food Services Association

<i>FY'24 Updated Recommended Budget</i>	<i>FY'23 Budget</i>	<i>FY'24 Updated Budget</i>	<i>FY'24 Increase</i>	<i>Percentage Change</i>
Salaries	\$37,823,551	\$38,345,539	\$521,988	1.38%
Non-Salary Expenses	\$9,166,885	\$10,162,065	\$995,180	10.86%
State Aid and Offset Accounts	(\$2,079,000)	(\$2,476,000)	(\$397,000)	19.10%
	\$44,911,436	\$46,031,604	\$1,120,168	2.49%

Main Components of Increases	<i>Sub-Total Percent Change</i>
Salary Increases	1.38%
Non-Salary Expenses	
Utilities (Gas, Electricity, Water)	4.77%
Contracted Services, Supplies and Other	(0.56%)
Increase in Out of District Tuitions	6.63%
	\$1,517,168

FY'24 Anticipated Offsets	FY'23 Offsets	FY'24 Offsets	Difference
Grant/Revolving Salary Offset	(\$560,000)	(\$560,000)	\$0
Grant/Revolving Non-Salary Offset	(\$416,000)	(\$416,000)	\$0
Circuit Breaker Offset	(\$1,103,000)	(\$1,500,000)	(\$397,000)
	(\$2,079,000)	(\$2,476,000)	(\$397,000)

Increase in Circuit Breaker

FY'24 General Fund Updated Budget Overview



- 2.49% increase over FY'23 reflects:
 - Known and unknown contractual obligations
 - Moved some instructional technology costs to the ESSER III Grant
 - Reduction in instructional supplies, professional development, and other operational costs
 - Staff reductions at the secondary level
 - Funding of special education out-of-district costs

FY'24 Budget Summary

Category	FY'23 Approved Budget	FY'24 Updated Budget	FY'24 Variance	% Change
Salary and Other Compensation	\$37,823,551	\$38,345,539	\$521,988	1.38%
Instructional and Supply Materials	\$1,630,120	\$1,623,004	(\$7,116)	(0.44%)
Contractual Services	\$1,225,059	\$1,334,873	\$109,814	8.96%
Contractual Student Services	\$4,138,500	\$4,746,307	\$607,807	14.69%
Utilities	\$1,477,717	\$1,904,132	\$426,415	28.86%
Equipment and Vehicles	\$695,489	\$553,749	(\$141,740)	(25.60%)
State Aid and Offset Accounts	<u>(\$2,079,000)</u>	<u>(\$2,476,000)</u>	<u>(\$397,000)</u>	<u>19.10%</u>
Total General Fund:	\$44,911,436	\$46,031,604	\$1,120,168	2.49%

School Costs Managed by Town



Administrative

Debt Service

Health Care

Retirement (Staff Only)

OPEB

Bus Maintenance

Facility & Grounds

Maintenance

Insurance

✓ Unemployment

✓ Workers' Compensation

✓ Property

Minuteman Vocational

School

✓ Tuition

✓ Transportation

Questions / Discussions



Preliminary warrant articles: Please note that the Select Board has not yet voted to included these articles to the warrant however placement is expected. Also, the article numbers and the order of the warrant is not set either.

ARTICLE 4: APPROPRIATE TO OTHER POST EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS (OPEB) TRUST FUND

To raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds a sum of money to the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund, to be used to pay the costs of post employment benefits; or take any other action relative thereto.

Article 4 Explanation: This article allows the Town to continue to fund its future liability for other post employment benefits (retiree health insurance) for Town of Weston retirees, which amounts to approximately \$50 million. Currently, the Town has an approximate market value of \$32 million in this Trust Fund as of 1/31/2023. The amount expected under this vote is \$2,377,749.

ARTICLE 5: ACCEPT CHAPTER 90 ROAD IMPROVEMENT FUNDS

To authorize the Select Board to permanently construct, reconstruct, resurface, alter or make specific repairs upon all or portions of various Town Ways and to authorize the expenditure of such sums of money as may be received for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2023 provided or to be provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the Massachusetts Department of Transportation; or take any other action relative thereto.

Article 5 Explanation: Massachusetts law requires that Town Meeting approve the use of funds received from the Commonwealth for road construction purposes, including engineering or addressing traffic improvements. It is expected that Chapter 90 funds will be level funded for FY24. In fiscal year 2023, the Town is expected to received \$467,408.

ARTICLE 7: APPROPRIATE FISCAL YEAR 2024 WATER ENTERPRISE BUDGET

To raise and appropriate and transfer from receipts and retained earnings the following sums of money to operate the Water Division of the Department of Public Works during fiscal year 2024, under the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 44, section 53F½:

	<u>Expended</u> FY21	Expended FY22	Appropriated FY23	Recommended FY24
Salaries	\$317,429	\$331,749	\$343,589	\$359,943
Expenses	\$258,708	\$286,265	\$265,850	\$281,850
MWRA Assessment/Water Purchases	\$2,400,081	\$2,842,806	\$2,446,100	\$3,134,200
Debt Service (non-exempt)	\$617,067	\$671,442	\$701,512	\$745,338

Capital Outlay+	\$59,249	\$73,056	\$65,000	\$75,500
Total	\$3,652,535	\$4,205,318	\$3,822,051	\$4,596,831

Or take any other action relative thereto.

Article 7 Explanation: Debt service includes amounts for previously approved projects and the water main rehabilitation project to be considered under Article 8. The operating expenses for the Water Division are entirely funded by water fee revenue.

ARTICLE 8: APPROPRIATE FOR WATER MAIN REHABILITATION

To appropriate a sum of money to pay costs of laying and relaying water mains of not less than six inches but less than sixteen inches in diameter, and all incidental and related costs, to be spent under the direction of the Town Manager, the money so appropriated to be raised by borrowing under the authority of G.L. C.44, §8, or any other enabling authority, and to authorize the Town Treasurer, with the approval of the Select Board, to issue bonds or notes for this purpose; and further, that any premium received upon the sale of any bonds or notes approved by this vote, less any premium applied to the payment of the costs of issuance of such bonds or notes, may be applied to the payment of costs approved by this vote in accordance with G.L. c.44, §20, thereby reducing by a like amount the amount authorized to be borrowed to pay such costs; or take any other action relative thereto.

Article 8 Explanation: This request is part of an ongoing program to replace old cast iron and asbestos transite cement water mains. This material is no longer used to construct water mains. This appropriation is to replace roughly 700 linear feet of transite water main on Brook Rd. and 980 feet on Legion Rd. that was installed in 1959. The design for this project will be completed by the DPW's engineering division. The amount to be requested under this article is \$425,500, to be funded by borrowing. A two-thirds vote of Town Meeting is required for approval of this article.

ARTICLE 10: APPROPRIATE FISCAL YEAR 2024 RECREATION ENTERPRISE BUDGET

To raise and appropriate and transfer from receipts and retained earnings the following sums of money to operate the Recreation Department during Fiscal Year 2024 under the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 44, section 53F½:

	Expended FY21	Expended FY22	Appropriated FY23	Recommended FY24
Salaries	\$818,204	\$1,219,172	\$1,385,201	\$1,450,740
Expenses	\$229,843	\$385,598	\$491,655	\$507,900
Community Center	\$54,604	\$70,826	\$96,375	\$101,325
Capital Outlay+	\$30,743	\$0	\$180,000	\$25,000

Total	\$1,133,394	\$1,675,595	\$2,153,231	\$2,084,965
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Or take any other action relative thereto.

Article 10 Explanation: Program fees cover approximately 70% of the salaries and expenses for this department; the remaining 30% is funded by property taxes. In addition, there will be a contribution of \$49,046 from the Council on Aging budget to the Recreation Enterprise fund to support the cost of operating the Community Center, in which the Council on Aging is housed.

ARTICLE 11: APPROPRIATE FISCAL YEAR 2024 BROOK SCHOOL APARTMENTS ENTERPRISE BUDGET

To raise and appropriate and transfer from receipts and retained earnings the following sums of money to operate the Brook School Apartments during Fiscal Year 2024, under the provisions of Chapter 76 of the Acts of 2009 and M.G.L. Chapter 44, section 53F½:

	Expended FY21	Expended FY22	Appropriated FY23	Recommended FY24
Salaries	\$178,391	\$190,559	\$207,142	\$201,643
Expenses	\$300,504	\$332,329	\$413,933	\$429,985
Payments in Lieu of Taxes	\$25,162	\$25,791	\$26,436	\$27,096
Debt Service	\$247,873	\$239,353	\$231,399	\$93,550
Repairs & Replacements+	\$129,112	\$141,912	\$196,407	\$208,192
Capital Improvements+	\$49,161	\$60,177	\$100,000	\$100,000
Total	\$930,202	\$990,120	\$1,175,317	\$1,060,466

Or take any other action relative thereto.

Article 11 Explanation: Funding for the operation of the Brook School Apartments comes from rental income and the Community Preservation Fund, which is covering the cost of the debt service for construction of thirteen affordable units completed as part of the expansion project in 2004.

ARTICLE 12: APPROPRIATE FISCAL YEAR 2024 PUBLIC ACCESS OPERATIONS

To see if the Town will transfer from the PEG and Cable Related Fund a sum of money as a grant to Weston Media, Inc. for Cable Access and PEG purposes for FY2024, and to authorize the Town Manager to enter into a grant agreement with Weston Media, Inc. upon such terms and conditions as the Town Manager deems appropriate, or take any other action relative thereto.

Article 12 Explanation: The Commonwealth established rules governing the method by which cable franchise fees are used to support public access operations in the state. This article follows guidance from the Commonwealth by accepting a provision of the law designed for this purpose and transfers to the account franchise fees collected by the Town and intended for public access operations.

ARTICLE 14: EASEMENT TO VERIZON AT LAND'S SAKE FARM (90 WELLESLEY STREET)

To authorize the Select Board to grant and convey to Verizon New England Inc, permanent utility easements on a portion or portions of the Town-owned property known as 90 Wellesley Street, Weston, described in a deed recorded with the Middlesex South District Registry of Deeds in Book 16775, Page 411, currently subject to a lease to Land's Sake Farm, on such terms and conditions as the Select Board deems appropriate, which portion or portions of the Town-owned property are approximately shown on the plan of 90 Wellesley Street depicting the approximate location of said easements, said plan on file with the Town Clerk, and further to authorize the Select Board to enter into such agreements and execute such documents and instruments as necessary to effectuate the purposes of this article; or take any other action relative thereto.

Article 34 Explanation: Similar to the article from Fall Town Meeting (2022), the Town is seeking to bring telephone service to the property commonly known as Land's Sake Farm at 90 Wellesley Street. This article will authorize the Select Board to execute said documents to establish an easement for this permanent service. An easement document is on file at the Town Clerk's office showing the limits of the easement. A majority vote of Town Meeting is required for approval of this article.

ARTICLE 26: APPROPRIATE FOR COMMUNITY HOUSING – REGIONAL HOUSING SERVICES OFFICE & HOUSING TRUST STAFF SUPPORT

To appropriate a sum of money for community housing purposes under the Community Preservation Program in order to provide funds needed to participate in a regional housing services office and for staff assistance for all community housing activities authorized by G.L. c.44B, §5(b)(2), as most recently amended; to be spent under the direction of the Town Manager, and as funding therefor, to transfer said sum from the Community Housing allocation of the Community Preservation Fund; or take any other action relative thereto.

Article 26 Explanation: Weston collaborates with the Towns of Acton, Bedford, Concord, Lexington, Lincoln, Maynard, Sudbury, and Wayland to provide a regional housing services office ("RHSO"). Professional staff with expertise in affordable housing offer a variety of services related to lottery, monitoring, administration of the subsidized housing inventory, and consultation on specific projects. In addition, staff support is provided through the RHSO for the Weston Affordable Housing Trust. The amount to be requested under this article is \$42,000.

ARTICLE 27: APPROPRIATE FOR OPEN SPACE – CASE ESTATES – RHODODENDRON GARDEN REVITALIZATION

To appropriate a sum of money for **open space purposes** under the Community Preservation Program for the initial design of the Rhododendron Garden Revitalization at Case Estates, including all related incidental costs; to be spent under the direction of the Town Manager, and as funding therefor, to transfer said sum from the **Unallocated allocation** of the Community Preservation Fund; or take any other action relative thereto.

Article 27 Explanation: The Rhododendron Garden at the Case Estates is in an approximately 1.5 acre area west of Louisa's Wall and adjacent to the Legacy Trail near its start on Alphabet Lane. Still thriving here amid weeds and invasives are rhododendrons planted by the Case sisters around 1910. In the 1980s the New England Rhododendron Society and the Arnold Arboretum added to the Case sisters' plantings with more rhododendrons, azaleas, birch trees and ground covers. Together they maintained a woodland garden there until the 1990s when Harvard decided the Case Estates would be sold. This feasibility study will evaluate the cost to rejuvenate the rhododendron garden including new plantings, paths, and sitting areas. The study will seek input from interested groups including the schools, the Council on Aging and garden clubs. Importantly, the analysis will be estimating the annual cost to maintain the garden and Louisa's Wall and seek donations and commitments to offset those potential future yearly expenses. The study will include an environmental evaluation, a detailed survey and a schematic landscape design which together will yield both the construction and maintenance cost estimates. This is a feasibility study only and any implementation will require future board and committee approvals and another Town Meeting vote. The amount to be requested under this article is \$20,000.

Note: I will need to confirm with SUSAN and CPC as to the proper pocket but lets use this for the time being.
