

Finance Committee
July 13, 2021
Ipswich Town Hall
Meeting Room A

With a quorum present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:37pm.
Finance Committee members present: Michael Dougherty, Walter Hartford, Janice Clements-Skelton, Robert White, Jamie Fay, Michael Shaaf, Joe Bourque, Christopher Doucette, Emilie Smith

1. Citizens Queries - Michael Dougherty

Joe Bourque asks if this meeting should have been provided by zoom, where if board members, presenters or the public have access. The state had extended the ability and legality to allow meetings to use zoom, so is it optional a matter of functionality or equipment?

- Mr. Dougherty answers that there is an option, like in the past to dial in, if someone is physically unable to attend a meeting.
- Tony Marino- Town Manager, also mentions that there could be a hybrid model, which Meeting Room A will be set up as, but getting supplies has been difficult due to a few reasons. Once it is installed will have the option for the hybrid model, and people can participate via Zoom.

2. Meeting Minutes Review/Vote for dates 4/6, 4/13, & 6/8

Minutes for April 6, 2021-

Walter Hartford- Motion moved

Robert White- 2nd

Joe Bourque makes an amendment in regard to a few edits that need to be made.

Motion passes 9-0

Minutes for April 4, 2001-

Robert White- Motion Moved

Joe Bourque - 2nd with same regards to a few edits to be made

Motion passes 9-0

Minutes for June 8, 2021-

Walter Hartford- Motion Moved

Robert White-2nd

Joe Bourque- would like to hold off on the vote, until the minutes can be reviewed further with the whole committee. Will be reviewed next meeting.

Motion fails 9-0

3. Reserve Fund Transfer-Sarah Johnson, Finance Director

Ms. Johnson is unable to join this evening.

Town Manager Tony said that the agenda item is no longer needed and will be skipped

4. “ReSource Ipswich” Discussion – Dylan Lewellyn, Customer Service Manager ELD

Mr. Lewellyn, who handles all customer service-based process within the utilities department along with sustainability programming, or the ReSource program, explains that the ReSource Program is a new program launched at the beginning of the year, with the help of efficiencies auditors, will evaluate an individual’s home by looking at windows, insulation, appliances and things along those lines, then give suggestions and feedback on efficiency and decarbonization efforts that can be made into a ReSource Action Plan. There has been a longer-term history and effort to provide customers with incentives with these typed of programs previously offered with the joint action agency MMWEC, who is our main vendor who supports our power purchase. They also helped put together the HELPS program, about 15 years ago which was focused on energy conservation and offer incentives for items like clean heating and cooling or energy star appliances. Now the focus has shifted from pure energy efficiently to carbon with its impacts on the environment. In recent years, the town has not gotten as much help from the HELPS program because of the change of focus on decarbonization, now there needs to be programs that are focused on more than just energy efficiently, like changing an old heating system over to a new more efficient system that can run off of electricity, solar, wind or hydro. This program is our way of having an in-house program that is nimbler and create a solution that better fits the needs and focus of our community. This program also looks at additional information like substantiable waste, like composting. This takes a holistic approach compared to the very narrow energy and conservation focus, which allows a focus on waste and water, which also have impacts down the line. The short comings of the HELPS program are what inspired the new program, and the ultimate goal of this is to put a price on carbon and connect the efforts they will be making.

Question or Comments:

Jamie Fay mentions that he had a HELPS audit done and can understand the limited focus they had. Mr. Fay then asks if there are any metrics within the program, or any way to track on whether the program is successful or not. **Robert White** asks **Mr. Lewellyn** answers that they have objectives that are specifically focused on sustainability. As for specific goals, we can say the HELPS program had 100 audits last year, gave customers so much money for energy efficiency, but it’s hard to measure, and the ultimate goal of this program is to put a price on carbon, that we can translate every metric ton of carbon saved is a specific dollar amount. Where this is a new program it’s hard to put an exact number on it. **Robert White** asks what is the overall budget is? What do you expect to rebate? What percentage of houses get an audit and what needs to improve to improve the number of audits this program will do? In 2022, do you see this new program expanding? **Mr. Lewellyn** responds that regarding the size of the program, there are variety of funding sources with multiple grants and partnerships with other departments like the Water Department. We also have a sustainability fund that allocates 265,000 dollars a year which is dedicated to enable these types of programs. As for money spend last year it was about 340,000 dollars between administrative, incentives for customers and special projects. As for expanding it’s hard to say, we can project our spending, but it varies depending on the customers. **Christopher Doucette** asks **Mr. Lewellyn** if in 2020 there was a “typical” house, because there is a good amount of new construction in town, which already has those types of efficacies built into it. As houses get older and technology changes, is this going to be a sustainable program for the town knowing that every year there is going to be a demand from a

different pocket? **Mr. Lewellyn** responds that it's common for utilities to offer these types of programs, where it is focused more on carbon reduction, it will continue to drive this program for a decade if not longer and drives the expansion beyond Ipswich.

5. Town Manager Update- Tony Marino, Town Manager

A. *American Rescue* - We have received some guidance on it, we do not have the funds in house yet. What we have found out it looks like they are going to give it to us in two separate payments, one being hopefully this year and the second half made next year by June 30th.

Ipswich's allotment is 4,118,044. The governor's office is working with the accounting and finance office to see how the funds will trickle down. Some of the things it can be used for would be:

- Support public health expenditures,
- COVID mitigation efforts,
- Vaccine clinics
- Public help and safety staff
- Negative economic impact caused by public health emergency
- Replace loss public sector revenue
- Provide premium pay for essential workers

What most of this money will be spent on is invest in water and sewer and broadband infrastructure. We will be meeting with the select board shortly and will get a breakdown for the use of the funds. We will be getting two payments of 2,059,022 all within this fiscal year

Question or Comments:

Jamie Fay asked Tony how the decision-making work for the expenditure? Whose authority is required. **Tony** answered based on the towns charter it would be the select board, the CARES Act money had a direct purpose with COVID, but this has a broad reach so we want to let this be a community decision with the select board and community input. **Christopher Doucette** asks Tony if he knows the short fall of the meals tax or excise tax. Tony says it wasn't much, he doesn't have the numbers in front of him but he can get them, but it wasn't a huge impact.

Michael Schaaf asked what about public expenses like tents? Tony answered that it will all be paid out of this money. The town had expended its CARES act because the town was told they had to spend it before December 31st, but then extended it out a year after it was spent. Expenses that occur after March related to COVID; this allotment can be used for those costs. **Michael Schaaf** mentions that this will be part of major capital investments which water and sewer need to address with ongoing issues, that it would make sense that before any final commitments that FINCOM can visit the proposed budget. **Michael Dougherty** and **Tony** agree and mention having a tri-board meeting would make the most sense and be more beneficial all around.

B. Building Reuse- Winthrop, Police & Fire -

Tony says that there is not too much to report other than it came up at a select board meeting, and they would like to set up a committee to look at it. The question that keeps

coming up is what is going to happen to the buildings that they will be leaving, which that committee will focus on. It has not been set up yet but will be set up shortly. Tony asked if FINCOM would like to have representation on this committee, which **Michael Dougherty** answered yes.

Question or Comments:

Christopher Doucette asked if this would be done by fall town meeting? Tony answered that he didn't know, but they are working on it. **Michael Dougherty** brings up that the Winthrop school had been mentioned as potential public safety building but wasn't sure if it would be folded into this conversation. **Jamie Fay** mentions the public safety committee to have the architect evaluate the Winthrop school as a possible reuse as police or fire, to outline the issues. Schools have been reused as condos, senior centers etc. but nothing we could find where a school being reused as police or fire. Also, after seeing the new building in Beverly, how to match the security would be very challenging. **Michael Dougherty** asked FINCOM if they would like the chair of the public safety subcommittee to come to one of our meetings before the fall town meeting? **Jamie Fay** asks that questions be written down ahead of time so they can be addressed. **Michael Dougherty** mentions that due to everything coming down the pike skipping the August meeting wouldn't be beneficial.

C. Fall Town Meeting Schedule-

- Select board opened the warrant at their last meeting, which will stay open until Friday August 13th, closes at noon.
- Monday August 23rd- Select board will hold their warrant meeting for special town meeting
- Tuesday August 24th- they will send that to the Finance committee
- Tuesday September 7th- Vote on articles (Select Board)
- Tuesday September 14th- Finance Committee Warrant Hearing
- Thursday September 16th- Second night for Finance Committee Warrant Hearing

D. Market Street Proposal-

National Grid came to us wanting to replace all the gas lines on Market St a few years ago, and we figured we could repave and get the rest of the work done (water and sewer pipelines and storm water drains). Now with COVID and the success of the outdoor dining is it worth looking at different options for the downtown area, including turning it into a one way. Issue with that is it becomes narrow, loss of parking spaces, diverting traffic and business owners are not in favor of it. It can always be left as is with come cleaning up, new curbing, trees and minor improvements. The Select Board is going to have a public meeting about this on the 19th and the public is more than welcome to join.

Question or Comments:

Michael Dougherty asked how much it cost to do the preliminary study? Where does the Select Board fall on this or are, they waiting for a public meeting? Lastly if nothing

changes what would the timeline look like for that re-paving project? Tony answers it cost about 5,000 dollars, which we used our engineering funds for. As for the Select Board they are waiting for the public hearing. As for the timeline it would be this fall, maybe a little later because there is a movie production that wants to shoot downtown in the beginning of September, so we would need to shut down Market street for a bit. We are also getting compensated for this as well.

Janice Clements-Skelton asks **Tony** if he could walk through how the decision is going to be made, expressing that it is a poor use of time, money and intellectual capital. Is this a Select Board decision? Tony responded that if its minor changes, it will be the Select Board, but for any major changes would have to go to town meeting.

Jamie Fay expressed support for the Town Manager taking the initiative to explore these creative options in a timely way and bringing them forward for public discussion and debate.

E. 911 Feasibility report-

Tony brings up that the Select board asked the State for a 911 Feasibility Study on what it would look like if the town switched over to the State 911 Board. That report is complete, and they will be presenting it at a special Select Board meeting on August 2, 2021, In-Person. A lot of other communities have switched over with no cost to them, though there has been push back for a few reasons.

Robert White asked **Tony** with this being the July meeting and Sarah being out, if he has a feel for any big money moves between the department or free cash after the year closes. Tony answered that he does not have a number on free cash but turn backs are looking the same. We didn't know what COVID was going to look like, so we were conservative again this year.

6. Sub Committee Assignment s- Michael Dougherty

Michael Dougherty reviews the other committees which FINCOM Members sit on. It is asked if there anyone looking to drop a subcommittee they are currently on. Michael Dougherty offers his seat on the Water & Waste Water committee if anyone would like to take it over, but will remain on if no one is interested.

- o Strategic Planning Working Group- Robert White
- o Public safety Building Committee-Jamie Fay
- o Water &Wastewater Committee- Michael Dougherty
- o Electric Committee- Michael Shaaf
- o Audit Committee- Walter Hartford takes over for Robert White
- o Climate Resiliency Committee- Christopher Doucette
- o Paying Grant- Robert White

7. New/Old/Other Business

No New/Old/Other Business

8. Adjourn

Motion: Christopher Doucette

2nd: Robert White

Motion Passes 9-0

Meeting Adjourns at 9:40pm