

# Town of Williamsburg

## Minutes of the Finance Committee

### In Person (Town Hall)/Virtual Meeting 28 April 2022

Members Present: Paul Wetzel, Charles Dudek, Julia Peters, Lisa Sheehy, Charlie Heath (virtual)  
 Members Absent: Gil Loud, Eric Cerreta, Linda Rowley, Richard Kisloski  
 Town Administrator, Nick Caccamo and Melissa Zawadzki were also present

At 6:30 Meekins Library representatives Joan Coryat, Ken Bordon, Charlotte Merryman, Pat Billingsly, Robert Stinson, and Beverly Bullock arrived to give a presentation on salary analyses for two library positions and answer questions. They left after their presentation.

The meeting was called to order by P. Wetzel at 6:08 p.m.

N. Caccamo informed the Committee that the Smith Vocational tuition rate increased to \$19,622 for non-resident students. Tuition for students with special education plans (SPED) cost an additional \$2,500. Students enrolled in FY23 were determined to all live in the Town of Williamsburg. In FY22 there were 34 Williamsburg students attending Smith Voc; in FY23 28 students will attend the school. For budget purposes the Smith Voc expenses are:

28 Students x \$19,622	= \$549,416
SPED costs known	= \$ 15,933
SPED costs unknown	= \$ 17,500 (7 * \$2500)
Transportation costs	= Unknown

Known and potential tuition costs are \$582,849, and the Committee decided to budget \$600,000 to cover any potential transportation increases. This is an overall decrease of \$95,605 in the budget from last year. N. Caccamo presented a revised cash analysis with Smith Voc. changes:

#### **FY 23 TAX RECAP**

Total amount to be raised	8,450,108
Total estimated receipts	1,755,756
FY23 tax levy limit	6,830,848
Amount under levy limit	136,496
2% COLA increase	20,698

#### **CASH ANALYSIS**

10% operating budget	845,011	
Stabilization	457,662	
Free cash	863,419	
Total Reserves	1,321,081	
Flex free cash	476,070	(rese
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End Loader - DPW	140,000	
Safety Complex Interest	80,000	
Town Offices	60,000	
Contribution to budget	0	
250th Anniversary	4,000	
Medicare Payment	4100	
FY21 expense	200	
Contribution to Stabilization	187,770	
Rescue Truck - Fire Dept.	240,000	

J. Coryat, Friends of Meekin Library Chair, requested a salary increase for two positions, Assistant Director/Children's Librarian (ADL) and for the Technical Services Librarian (TSL). An analysis of 2020 salary data of these two positions in towns with populations under 50,000 in western Massachusetts was presented. For the ADL position the Board found that the current Meekins ADL wage is \$4.71 less than the average hourly wage in western MA. For the TSL position the current wage is \$4.09 less than the average hourly wage in western MA. The Board requested a salary increase to the average hourly wage over the next two years [ADL increase of \$2.36/hour, \$4,295/year each year; TSL increase of \$2.05/hour, \$3,731/year].

The Committee noted that many of the communities used to calculate the averages were much larger than the population of Williamsburg, casting doubt on whether those towns were comparable with each other. It was suggested that the salary increases be made over three years instead of two. It was noted that the Town is in the process of having a wage study done. Discussion continued and eventually the Committee decided to take up the request at its next meeting.

Town Clerk, Brenda Lessard, put a request to the Committee to increase her salary. She did an analysis of town clerk salaries in towns with similar sized populations as Williamsburg, finding her salary ~\$6,000 less than the average. The Committee discussed her request. P. Wetzel moved to increase the Town Clerk's salary \$2,000. E. Cerreta seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Wetzel advised the Committee that he met with Principal Stacey Jenkins and Williamsburg School Committee Chair, Matt Wilhelm. They were concerned that the Finance Committee did not give the regional school budget the same scrutiny as it gave the local school budget. Chair Wilhelm sent a letter to the Committee that is reproduced below:

Dear Williamsburg Finance Committee,

At our last meeting on April 14th, the Williamsburg School Committee voted to accept the Williamsburg school budget as presented by Principal Jenkins at our meeting on March 16th, which many of you attended. This budget included a .77% overall increase - which equates to a .81% (\$18,783) increase to the town assessment. Just before our April meeting, Principal Jenkins received a request from your Chair, Paul Wetzel, to reduce our budget between \$10,000 to \$20,000 to help ensure the town's overall budget will fall below the levy ceiling. As you are aware, Principal Jenkins left our April 14th meeting early to meet with your committee about this request to reduce the budget and answer any questions from your committee. Principal Jenkins also came to the meeting prepared with ideas on how we could delay some proactive technology replacement and rethink some other decisions we had discussed as a committee in order to bring the budget down within the range given by Mr. Wetzel. During your meeting, Principal Jenkins was questioned about staffing numbers, whether she verifies that all students meet the residency requirements to attend Anne T. Dunphy, and about specific line items on the school budget. I am writing to inform you that we will be discussing and possibly voting on the \$11,000 reduction to the school committee budget that Principal Jenkins has proposed at our May meeting. While I will certainly be informing our committee of other suggestions made by the finance committee, I do not believe there will be further reductions beyond the \$11,000.

As the chair of the Williamsburg School Committee, I am concerned that it seems like there was not the same scrutiny applied equitably across all town departmental budgets. For example, it concerns me that the same scrutiny was not applied to the presentation from Hampshire Regional High School, whose assessment request was an increase of 4.66%, \$75,301. Our school committee and administration appreciate how the Town of Williamsburg supports education and that appreciation translates into the time and thoughtfulness that is put into any initial budget request. The Williamsburg School Committee and administration have always been transparent and communicative with the town and finance committee about the local school's budget and have understood the reality that the elementary school's budget translates to a significant portion of Williamsburg's budget. I would hope that these efforts would result in a scenario of mutual respect rather than leaving the elementary school budget vulnerable to inequitable scrutiny.

Thank you for your time and we will update Mr Wetzel with the results of our May meeting.

Sincerely,

Matt Wilhelm  
Williamsburg School Committee, Chair

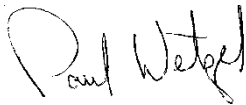
Some Committee members expressed concern over damaging the working relationship between the school committee and the finance committee. One member pointed out that Hampshire did reduce its assessments planned for two social worker positions by funding those positions from their reserve fund. The Committee decided to cancel its request to reduce \$11K from the FY23 budget. The reduction of the Smith Voc. line nearly allowed a level funded Town budget and the Committee's assumption was that next year's budget with the full cost of the Safety Complex added will create a much different budget situation.

The Committee discussed Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) for Town Employees. E. Cerreta moved to give employees a COLA increase of 5%. C. Dudek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be held on 12 May 2022 at 5:00 p.m. virtually and in person.**

There being no further business before the Committee, E. Cerreta moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by C. Dudek. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Wetzel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul R. Wetzel