

**RECEIVED**

**By Town Clerk at 8:34 am, Mar 27, 2024**

LYNNFIELD FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2024

MERRITT CENTER

Present: Chris Mattia, Steve Riley, Sarah Kelley, Chris Caprio,  
Julie Mitchell, Nick Connors, Joe Gallagher

Not Present: Tom Kayola, Gene Covino, Brian Moreira,  
Alexis Leahy

Guests: John Tomasz, Russ Boekenkroeger, Abby Porter,  
Fran Richard, Pat Campbell, Curtis Craffey,  
Faith H. Coakley, Maria Fernandez-Donovan,  
Gerri Karonis, Richard Mazzola, Linda S. Casey,  
Jennifer Welter, Richelle Meland (press), Leon Glickman  
Dan Abenaty, Jeana Tecci, Kerri Brown (spelling of some  
names determinant of sign-in sheet legibility)

**Notification of Upcoming Meetings**

Friday, March 1, 2024, Zoom, 8:30 a.m.  
Monday, March 25, 2024, School Central Offices, 7:00 p.m.  
Thursday, March 28, 2024, Public Budget (time tbd),  
Monday, April 1, 2024, Merritt Center, 7:00 p.m.

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Chairman Mattia called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**DPW Budget Presentation**

DPW Director Tomasz summarized his operating budget requests as similar to last year, with the exception of four driving distinctions; increase in trash collection/recycling, increase in bus costs, increase fuel costs, increase labor step/longevity contract.

Director Tomasz informed FinCom of his usual procedure for tracking expenses (one-time or ongoing expense). Director Tomasz highlighted his snow and ice budget, which continues to be a struggle estimating New England weather.

Director Tomasz addressed his staffing, stating he is not expecting any new hires, but mentioned his aging workforce is a concern.

FinCom questioned the financial efficacy of the ESCO project. Director Tomasz explained with the public safety building project, it is a dynamic assessment, which is tough to judge, but he feels comfortable forecasting savings after the winter numbers come in. Director Tomasz reminded FinCom this project has built-in guaranteed energy savings, adding mechanical maintenance is in very good shape as a result of this project.

Director Tomasz summarized his capital budget requests, listing two trucks (one pickup truck, one dump truck/sander). Director Tomasz informed FinCom of his ongoing efforts to maintain his existing equipment to extend longevity.

Director Tomasz explained his annual program for addressing road paving, adding this year will be pretty aggressive starting next week on Walnut Street.

Director Tomasz is requesting custodial equipment to make their job easier, which he believes is important.

Director Tomasz addressed his request for the wastewater systems at both middle school and high school, stating both locations have twenty-year-old systems. Director Tomasz believes in a proactive approach to maintaining these systems in a timely manner, both on an efficiency and financial basis.

FinCom questioned how the rail trail project will affect the DPW's future budgets and what additional equipment will be needed. Director Tomasz listed fire protection equipment and a smaller vehicle, but does not foresee time/labor or equipment from DPW is anticipated (potential weekly maintenance checks).

FinCom requested an update on the high school septic system; whether more maintenance is required.

Director Tomasz explained his rating system for which streets get re-paved and his patching routine, which is different for each area in town, adding there is no perfect solution for temporary repairs.

FinCom inquired about intended plans for present and future fields maintenance. Director Tomasz explained his yearly procedures for grooming turf and maintenance, adding pickle ball courts will be available at the middle school (estimated date 3-15-24, depending on the weather) Director Tomasz explained his revolving fund allocation system.

Chairman Mattia thanked Director Tomasz for his time and efforts.

### **Library Budget Presentation**

Library Director Abby Porter informed FinCom she is requesting an eight percent increase in her operating budget (settled union contract in March), adding state certification mandates a sixteen percent materials requirement of the operating budget, as well as a yearly increase in NOBLE membership.

Director Porter addressed her capital budget requests; new phone system (current aging system failing) outdoor sound system (outdoor summer concerts, expand outdoor programming, sharing system with surrounding communities).

Chairman Mattia thanked Director Porter for her time and efforts.

### **Library Building Committee Presentation**

Mr. Russell Boekenkroeger presented an updated slide show to inform FinCom of the proposed changes since October Town Meeting.

Mr. Boekenkroeger stated in January 2024, the Building Committee requested and received an extension from MBLC (Mass. Board of Library Commissioners) until April 30, 2024 to provide information regarding whether or not the Town will be able to accept the library grant, which was voted down in October.

Mr. Boekenkroeger provided his assessment of the intrinsic value a new library would have to the town, including a gathering space, enhanced library experience, enhanced programming.

Mr. Boekenkroeger addressed the changes he believes will effectuate a two-thirds vote at a special town meeting, including funds to improve the existing library, some code and ADA compliance issues.

Mr. Boekenkroeger provided a breakdown of the Reedy Meadow site demolition and remediation on the proposed new library site, additional golf parking spaces, new landscaping, and preservation of the First Tee Program, adding for the duration of the project, golf operations will be maintained.

Mr. Boekenkroeger presented the proposed changes in design and layout to the new building as a result of public forums and listening sessions, as well as a newly created cost estimate, updating initial cost estimates for 2024 and onward.

Mr. Boekenkroeger stated, at present, the appearance of the building may still be changed, and the detailed design of the building will only be commenced if and when the project is undertaken, and emphasizing there will be time for appearance and cost assessments, with no desire to build a "super expensive" building, while using traditional methods for bidding and project development.

Mr. Boekenkroeger explained the process in moving forward; Planning Board recommendation, FinCom recommendation, adding he hopes these boards will defer their decisions and allow the opportunity for the town to again vote at a special town meeting on whether or not they want a new library.

Mr. Boekenkroeger provided the proposed schedule for obtaining cost estimates from Tappe, Joint Library Building and Library Trustees formal voting, Planning Board's formal vote, Select Board and FinCom formal vote.

Mr. Boekenkroeger addressed the debt exclusion/tax increase, but components are still being validated, adding he hopes the new estimates will be lower than the previous announced rates.

Mr. Boekenkroeger stated the special town meeting will be March 15, 2024; if project passes by two-thirds, the ballot vote will be at a special election on April 9, 2024 to approve the debt exclusion.

Mr. Boekenkroeger provided a summary from the community forums, both good and bad, including design changes and cost, new floor plan, change in orientation of structure, value engineering changes.

Mr. Boekenkroeger summarized the major cost escalations and percentages and resulting amounts, as well as contingencies, adding it's still less expensive than October and will remain until 2026, which is identified by the town as the earliest construction start date, adding if the project fails, renovation of the existing library will not start prior to 2026, either.

Mr. Boekenkroeger stated he believes the current staffing levels will be sufficient in the new building (eleven full-time, twenty-four part-time), but additional custodian staff will be necessary (DPW staff).

FinCom inquired on several issues, including parking lot lighting and security, potential traffic remediation/study, meeting rooms capacity, site lines, mechanical components, soil samples.

Mr. Boekenkroeger informed FinCom that if the project obtains approval, the responsibility for the project development and delivery moves from the Library Building Committee to the Town.

FinCom questioned if discussion of competing projects (potential options for existing library building) will be addressed at the special town meeting, and what protocol will be utilized if this situation arises.

Chairman Mattia thanked Mr. Boekenkroeger for his time and efforts.

### **Public Comment**

Several residents addressed issues, including appropriating funds from one project to address issues in another, the dissatisfaction of the Library Building Committee's preparedness to address potential site work questions, inability to allow options to be debated at special town meeting, ability to retrofit the existing library (parking).

Several residents appeared in favor of the proposed new library and shared personal antidotes.

### **Subcommittee Reports**

Chairman Mattia updated FinCom on future scheduled department presentations for both Select Board and FinCom.

Chairman Mattia informed FinCom of the refusal/inability of other boards to conduct joint budget presentations, and this subject continues to be an ongoing frustration for FinCom.

Chairman Mattia updated FinCom on Fire Chief Davis' updated capital request priorities.

Chairman Mattia informed FinCom the GIC rates will be an average nine and a half percent increase, as opposed to the previous average of three and half percent, which is an aggressive increase and will substantially affect the Town's budget.

FinCom discussed the anticipated school budget presentation.

### **Adjournment:**

Steve made a motion to adjourn. Gene seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Debbi Mallett, FinCom secretary