

TOWN HALL 3 EAST MAIN ROAD PERU, MA 01235

BOARD OF SELECTMEN/FINANCE COMMITTEE JOINT MEETING MINUTES:

April 29, 2024, 6:00 P.M.

Town Hall Meeting Room

Verne Leach, Chair Selectman/ACO
Doug Haskins, Selectman/Fin Com
Ed Munch, Selectman
Terry Walker, Town Administrator
Bruce Cullett, Police Chief
Justin Russell, Highway Superintendent
Paul Hickling, Chairman Finance Committee
Sam Haupt, Fin Com
Robin Wadsworth, Fin Com
Bonny DiTomasso-School Committee

Public Attendees: Mitch Lacker- Renatus Solutions, Inc

Item 1: Call to order: 6:00 P.M.

Item 2: Roll Call: Chairman Leach present, Selectman Munch present

Roll Call Finance Committee: Chairman Paul Hickling present, Sam Haupt present, Robin Wadsworth present, Doug Haskins present, Jesse Pelkey absent

Item 3: State Recording status: Selectman Leach recording under Exemption E and Fin Com Member Robin Wadsworth

Item 4: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag: Led by Selectman Leach

Item 5: Review and Approve BOS Meeting Minutes for 4/17/2024:

Selectman Leach motion to approve 4/22/2024 minute, Selectman Munch second, 2-0

Fin Com Member Haupt motion to approve Finance Committee minutes for 4/10/2024 meeting, Selectman Haskins second, 4-0

Item 6: Update of Departments:

Fin Com Chairman Hickling mentioned:

- LLData Design quote for Town Clerk software for Dog database, Boards and Commissions database, and Public Records database request for \$7,800.00. It was decided this would be discussed under Item 7. (FY25 budget).
- Chairman Hickling also mentioned that there are 9 vocational students for the upcoming school year.
- Stipend for the fire fighters was also mentioned.

Police Chief Cullett:

- Bi-annual firearms training for the Police Department is scheduled for Saturday, May 4, 2024
- Performance reviews will be completed by Chief Cullett for all officers.
- Shared Streets Grant has not been awarded this time. This grant was written for updating traffic warning devices such as flashing lights.

Highway Superintendent Russell:

- Top priority is grading and patching roads.
- Bid opening for August Smith Road and Curtin Road will be held on May 6, 2024
- Pierce Road project will be completed in the near future

School Committee member-Bonny DiTomasso:

- The Regional School Agreement was voted on by the School District on April 22, 2024, and sent to all towns
- The next step is for the voters to vote on the Regional School Agreement at Annual Town Meeting
- The last official School Agreement was approved in 1958.

Town Administrator Walker:

- TA Walker presented the updated Cemetery Rules and Guidelines that will be voted on at ATM. The board agreed to have an article on the ATM warrant for the updated Rules and Guidelines.
- Fire Chief Cawthron was not able to attend. TA Walker presented the contract to the Board to be signed which is acceptance of the Fire Department Grant. Selectman Leach motion to sign contract, Selectman Munch second, 2-0
- Selectman Leach motion to accept Dufour bid for Vocational Transportation, Selectman Munch second, 2-0
- TA Walker also mentioned that a 3rd Expression of Interest was accepted by One Stop which is part of the MassWorks Grant Application. This EOI was for the removal of old guardrails and installation of guardrails on Route 143.

Item 7: Discuss FY2025 Budget with Finance Committee: Mitch Lacker from Renatus Solutions gave a detailed presentation on updating computers and replacing some computers at town hall. Mitch mentioned that there is a \$200,000 Community Compact IT Grant that may assist the town on updating some of the following:

- Cameras
- Wiring and Switches
- MIIA Phishing Training
- EDR Detects viruses.
- .Gov for the town emails
- MIIA Insurance requires enhanced security
- CJIS Security requirements
- Upgrade the firewall

The Total FY25 Budget request for Renatus is \$29,000. Mitch also mentioned that Windows 10 will be obsolete by October 2025.

Chairman Hickling motion to approve \$29,000 for IT account, Fin Com member Wadsworth second, 4-0.

Selectman Leach motion to approve \$29,000 for IT account, Selectman Munch second, 2-0. Mitch will give TA Walker any assistance needed to help with the \$200,000 Community Compact IT Grant application.

Selectman Leach mentioned that using Free Cash to lower the taxes is one option. Selectman Munch mentioned that using Free Cash to pay off the Fire House was another option. Fin Com Member Wadsworth mentioned that the town has uncollected taxes totaling over \$400,000. The uncollected taxes are a liability and deducted from our Free Cash.

Therefore, certified Free Cash was only \$359,000. Ms. Wadsworth mentioned that if uncollectable taxes were put in tax title, then it would remove the liability from the town. Selectman Haskins mentioned he is against using Free Cash to reduce the tax rate. Selectman Munch asked Fin Com Member Wadsworth if she thought using Free Cash to lower the taxes was a good idea. It was agreed that \$50,000 should be used to reduce the tax rate.

Fin Com Chairman Hickling and Board of Selectmen finalized and voted on all line items on the FY25 Worksheet. All items without an amount were filled in except Medicare:

- Town Administrator Salary: Selectman Munch motion to raise the salary to \$36,000 which is comparable to surrounding towns. Then Selectman Munch then motioned to raise the salary from \$30,900 to \$35,000, Selectman Leach second 2-0. Fin Com Chairman Hickling motion to raise salary to \$35,000, Fin Com member Haskins second, 4-0.
- Administrative Assistant Salary: Selectman Leach motion to decrease the salary from \$5,500 to \$3,500, Selectman Munch disagreed with decreasing anyone's salary. Fin Com member Haskins recommended decreasing the salary from \$5,500 to \$2,500. Terry Walker asked if the job description and her duties would change. At present she does minutes for all boards plus accounting duties as part of the Administrative Assistant duties. Selectman Haskins mentioned that the reason for the decrease is because the Selectboard may only meet every other week. Fin Com member Wadsworth felt that accounting duties should be part of her TA duties. Fin Com member Haupt felt that Terry will be needed to also take minutes for the Planning Board since there will be several meetings concerning updating Town by-laws. Fin Com Chairman Hickling stated that these two positions should be treated separately even though one person holds both jobs. Selectman Leach motion to set the salary at \$3,500.00, Selectman Munch did not support but agreed, 2-0. The Finance Committee voted 4-0 in favor of reducing the Administrative Assistant salary from \$5,500 to \$3,500.00.
- Fin Com Chairman Hickling read all line-item appropriations from the FY25 Worksheet and all line items were voted unanimously with very little discussion. TA Walker will calculate Medicare line item and will have ATM warrant available for review at the Selectmen's meeting on Monday, May 6th.

FREE CASH:

- IT account \$5,000
- Interest on Loans \$15,000
- South Cemetery \$1,800 flag pole
- South Thompson Burial Ground re-establishing boundaries \$\$2,981.00
- North Cemetery resetting headstone \$1,800.00.
- Highway Dept. Sandblasting 2009 International \$7,958.
- Highway Department Sandblasting Ford 550 \$ 6,992.30
- Highway Department Plasma cutter \$2,200
- Future Equipment \$100,000
- Reducing Tax Rate \$50,000
- Police Communication \$ 31,500
- Bullet proof vest matching grant \$1,500
- Town Clerk Software- LLData Design \$3,100
- BRPC updating zoning by laws 5,000
- Town Hall Assessment \$50,000

Fin Com Chairman Haskins motion to adjourn Fin Com meeting, Fin Com Member Haskins second, meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m. 4-0

Roll Call Board of Selectmen at 8:27 p.m.: Selectman Leach present, Selectman Haskins present, Selectmen Munch present.

Item 8: Discussion and possible vote to approve transfer of funds from the Reserve Fund to various accounts that may run over budget: Approved by the Finance Committee

Item 9: Review and sign the Annual Town Election Warrant: Selectman Leach motion to approve the Annual Town Election Warrant, Selectman Munch second, 3-0

Item 10: Discuss and vote to request letters of support – Study of Municipal Safety Needs in the Woodlands Partnership Region: Selectman Leach motion to sign letter of support for the Study of Municipal Safety Needs in the Woodlands Partnership Region, Selectman Munch second, 3-0.

Item 11: Discuss and vote on the posting for a hearing on MassWorks Grant: Selectman Leach motion to accept and post the public hearing notice for the MassWorks Grant, Selectman Haskins second, 3-0

Item 12: Update on mold issue in the Community Center per Health Inspector's Report: Selectman Haskins will discuss the mold remediation issue with Jay Jewell and get back to the board. Selectman Haskins reported on what his findings were in the basement: totes, blueprints, arts and crafts, and some old furniture. He wondered if the arts and crafts could be donated to nursing homes. Coralee Pelkey asked if she could help clean out the area. Selectman Leach instructed Coralee Pelkey that the items will be disposed of by professionals, and she cannot assist. Selectman Leach mentioned that most of the items are trash and will be put in the dumpster. Highway Superintendent Russell mentioned that if the moldy area in the basement is sealed airtight then the mold will come upstairs. Coralee Pelkey wondered what type of mold it is. Selectman Munch mentioned that the board received the report last week and they are uncertain what kind of mold is in the basement.

Item 13: Public Input: none

Item 14: Review and approve Accounts Payable, Treasury Warrant and Payroll Warrant: V22-2024, 24-22P

Item 15: Adjourn: Selectman Leach made motion to adjourn the 4/29/2024 BOS meeting, Selectman Munch second, Vote 3-0. The 4/29/2024 BOS meeting adjourned at 8:49 P.M.

Articles used:

Warrant: V22-2024, 24-22P
FY25 Budget Worksheet
Reserve Fund Transfers
Town Election Warrant
Woodlands Partnership letter of support
Public Hearing Notice for MassWorks Grant
Fire Department Contract-Grant
LLData Design quote
Renatus Solutions quote
Cemetery Rules and Guidelines
Terry Walker TA Salary request


Terry Walker
Town Administrator

Verne Leach, Chairman



Doug Haskins, Selectman

Ed Munch, Selectman



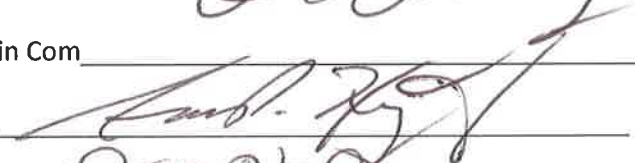
Date Approved: 7-22-24

Paul Hickling, Chairman Fin Com

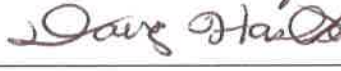


Robin Wadsworth, Fin Com

Sam Haupt, Fin Com



Dove H Asker Fin
Date approved:



Received July 22, 2024, Kim Leach, Town Clerk