

**Finance Committee DRAFT Minutes for 6:30, Friday,
April 9, 2021
Via: Zoom Teleconference due to Covid**

1. Call to Order at 6:32. Those present included members Deb Andrew, John Redeker, Todd Dubreuil, Jackie Walsh, and Jim Burnham

2. Approved minutes from Feb. 9 and Feb. 11 joint meeting with Mohawk reps and March 12 meeting

3. New Business:

a. Questions about process, etc., from new members

Jim Burnham has spoken to Town Administrator Terry Narkewicz about how the annual town budget gets put together.

b. Liaison assignments -- Deb Andrew, schools

Deb talked a bit about the best time for us to talk in future years to the school committee about the proposed annual budgets. Now it is passed and we won't change it. She also talked about the school district's proposed capital projects, which address long-neglected needs. "My concern is due diligence," she said. The determining of which projects should be put forward lacked due diligence, she said. For example, the school administrators wanted to replace all the school fire alarm systems, even though Colrain's is state-of-the-art. Deb spoke to the right people and got that off the list.

4. Old business

a. Mohawk operating budget:

Shelburne is being asked for 4.7 percent more money for FY22. We will be meeting with school officials with the Selectboard later in the month to talk about this. Jim said our number one question needs to be why that much of an increase. He also noted that last year's budget was a complete fluke because of Covid, hybrid learning and spending on making the schools Covid-safe. There was a revised school budget in August. If you look at the increase from the last normal year -- FY20 -- there is a 1.5 percent increase in the proposed budget.

John noted that our spending on school accounts for ½ of the town's spending and so a nearly 5 percent increase in school spending is a lot of money.

Deb objects to the filling of a vice-principal position at BSE, which used to operate without a vice principal. Deb noted that the Green Street School in Brattleboro, which has a similar number of students, has two certified teachers and two aides in each class. And the students learn French.

She noted that former School Committee member Bob Hines has effectively argued for years that the Mohawk district is very heavy on administration.

b. Highway/police capital spending.

Jim wondered if the highway department needs a replacement for a pickup truck used to clear intersections of snow (the current truck is rusted out, etc), which it is requesting. Can't other pickup trucks the department has be used for that? Also, why does the police department need a dumpster? he wonders.

5. Items not anticipated before 48 hours of the meeting

- a. Windfall -- Jim reported he read in the newspaper that Mass towns will be getting a windfall, and for Shelburne it will be about \$537,000. He would like the town to consider how the money could be spent to make a lasting impact.

6. Next meeting date

We agreed to meet at 6:30 on Thursday, April 22 (it was later changed to 6:30 on Friday, April 23)

7. Adjournment at 8 p.m.