

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
March 18, 2021

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2021 JUN 18 A 8:13

Present: Mr. Brian Eagle, Chairman; Ms. Sara Walsh, Vice-Chairman; Mr. Scott Feely; Mr. Walter Wilk; Mr. Michael DeSantis; Mr. Michael Flaherty; and Mr. Jack Cooney, Clerk

MANSFIELD
MASSACHUSETTS

Also Present: Mr. Kevin Dumas, Town Manager and Mr. Barry LaCasse, Assistant Town Manager and Finance Director

Not Present: None

1. Call the Finance Committee meeting to order and review the agenda

Chairman Eagle called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

2. Specific Agenda items- See Minutes summary below

- Budget update and implications of America's Recovery Act Plan
- Update on sale/ use of town owned properties, including Main St. Fire Station, West St, Police Station, and tax title properties
- Update on PFAS/ Well efficiency properties
- Discussion of Select Board economic development strategy (reflecting vote from SB's Previous meeting)
- Timing of budget conversations and bringing before this committee in April
- Committee updates

3. Items not known within 48 hours

- None

4. Audience Q&A

- None

5. Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn the Finance Committee meeting of March 18, 2021 at 8:57 p.m.
(Feely/Cooney)

Pass 6:1

John Cooney
Finance Committee Clerk Signature



Date

6/18/21

Minutes Clerk Signature

Date

Minutes Prepared by Jack Cooney

FinCom 3/18 mtg summary: Mansfield will get \$2.4M from federal stimulus and be eligible for more, funding that will help close budget gap. Assistant Town Manager analyzing Covid-related revenue loss to assist in process. Town slowly moving forward on potentially \$1.2M in proceeds from sale of tax title property after years of procrastination. Sale of Fire Station moving forward while an update on Police Station coming soon. Town received grants and 0% funding on first phase of PFAS treatment effort and is working to secure additional state support for next phase. Mansfield needs to be more aggressive in pulling companies to town, not just relying on them finding us. Select Board's economic development target list was reviewed as part of this discussion. As a reminder, this summary reflects my own views and notes, not those of the Committee as a whole.

The Finance Committee, Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager discussed likely receipts from the Americas Recovery Plan and how best to use it. Mansfield will receive \$2.4M directly, likely be eligible for \$4.7M as our portion of \$109.6M for Bristol County, while our schools receive separate funding of between \$500,000 - \$1M (estimated). We have until December 2024 to use non-school funds; schools have until 2023. Mansfield may also be eligible for a portion of Covid-19 testing (\$207M) and capital project (\$174M) funding sent to Massachusetts. While the Act has few rules on permissible use, the Town Manager is taking a wait and see approach for guidance from the state. One permissible use is to offset revenue loss related to Covid; in preparation, the Assistant Town Manager is comparing FY '19 and FY '20 revenue to identify our loss. The Town Manager and Assistant Manager stated they're likely to recommend we use our \$2.4M portion this year to offset those losses. Later in the meeting, there was a budget update outlining our existing \$2.2M deficit. Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager are diligently working with department heads to close this gap, to minimize reliance on federal funds. This effort will help Mansfield avoid creating a funding cliff where our budget relies on federal support, creating a problem when those funds disappear. FinCom expects to hear from the School Committee on their budget in mid-April, when more data is available and when the state budget process is farther along. In a separate financial note, the Assistant Town Manager will look into federal cybersecurity grants that the Finance Committee identified.

In what will become a regular portion of FinCom agendas, we discussed town owned properties - tax-title lots, Main St. Fire Station & West St. Police station - and their disposition. The Town Manager informed us the 5 properties in the Norton grove area should be ready for sale in the next few months. The process getting them ready has been labor intensive, more than was expected. Another 3 parcels will be done after land-use/lot size issues are resolved. When asked by FinCom if these lots are worth \$100-150,000 each with zoning, the Town Manager revealed that amount was a floor and they could be worth more. There was discussion amongst FinCom about the lack of town urgency in selling these properties that could generate \$1.2M in immediate revenue, with additional revenue later from building permits and placement on the tax rolls. FinCom appreciated ongoing effort, but at a time when we have a budget deficit, expressed support for devoting time and resources to this effort. The Committee stressed this is an issue we've pushed since the original sale 3 years ago. FinCom offered to provide funding from our reserves to help expediate the property; the Town Manager appreciated the offer but said it was an internal process. At FinCom's urging, the Assistant Town Manager is close to finalizing a tax-title disposition process for future efforts, and will present that to the Select Board in the near term.

The Town continues to work through due diligence and normal negotiation efforts on the sale of the Fire Station. The Town Manager will be presenting a draft disposition policy to the Select Board on the Police Station in early April, as that property remains in limbo. Later in the meeting it was mentioned the police station property continues to deteriorate and we need to come to some decisions quickly.

The Town Manager covered the state aid Mansfield is receiving for use in our PFAS/well water efficiency projects at Cate Spring. This includes \$200,000 in grants for engineering and plan efforts and 0% interest funding for the construction phase. This comes as Mansfield is ahead of many other towns in our efforts to

address this problem and will lead to significant savings on the project itself. The Town Manager and team are diligently working on applying for grants and funding support for the next stage at the Walsh well. The Town continues to believe we will not exceed the funding authorization approved at the last town meeting. The Town Manager continues to look for additional funding support, including potential monies available from the federal stimulus bill. There is no update on the origination of the problem, but the town is evaluating options to pursue contributors when identified.

The Finance Committee discussed the business target list the Select Board approved at a recent meeting. The motion stated "We are trying to target companies that add value to the Town and do not draw a great number of services. Companies that utilize a great deal of electricity that can save an incredible amount of money due to Mansfield low electricity rate. Biotech companies, box stores and specialty stores like in the Mansfield Crossing. Businesses in the Downtown, businesses wanting to go into industrial park and businesses that were noted in the Master Plan by residents." FinCom agreed this is more a broad economic target list/vision than a strategy, but that may have been the motion's intent. The Town is taking good steps, including retaining Penta Communications, but must be more aggressive in reaching out to prospects and pulling them here, rather than relying on companies finding us, as has been the case with many over the past year. The key is to find reoccurring revenue to create a strong commercial & industrial tax base for the town rather than increasingly placing the tax burden on residents. All agreed that we (IDC, FinCom, Select Board, etc.) are working to get better and move forward as a group.

In closing comments, FinCom Members agreed we should meet with the IDC and the new town Assessor (separately) after budget season. Some FinCom Members volunteered to draft a piece on the budget and how it affects residents' taxes. The Committee also spent time reviewing progress on our committee goals and will seek to place our Goals Report on the Town website.