

**Town of Deerfield
Finance Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting of January 29, 2024
(amended)**

Hybrid meeting; Joint meeting with the Deerfield Select Board.

Members Attending: Mark Brennan, Beth Brown, James Cambias (*secretary*), Julie Chalfant (*chair*), John Paresky, David Sharp

Also Present: Tim Hilchey, Brenda Hill, Trevor McDaniel, Margaret Nartowicz, Kayce Warren (*via Zoom*).

Documents Presented: Multiple budget pages, including Moderator (account 114-5100), Finance Committee (account 131-5400), Personnel Board (account 152-5400), PEG Access Capital (account 155-5800), Conservation Commission (account 171-5400), Open Space Committee (account 172-5400), Planning Board (account 175-5400), Zoning Board of Appeals (account 176-5400), Agricultural Commission (account 179-5400), Energy Committee (account 182-5400), Inspections Dept Payroll (account 241-5110), Inspections Dept Expense (account 241-5400), Council on Aging (account 541-5400), ADA Coordinator (account 549-5400), Recreation Department Director Salary (account 634-5110), Historical Commission (account 691-5400), Veterans Day/ Memorial Day Expense (account 692-5800).
"Community Comparison" spreadsheet by Julie Chalfant (modified 1/29/24)

Ms. Chalfant called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. on January 29, 2024 at the Town Offices in South Deerfield.

The Committee members introduced themselves to potential new member, Margaret Nartowicz.

Mr. Cambias moved to accept the Minutes of the October 23, 2023 meeting. Mr. Paresky seconded the motion. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. Paresky moved to accept the Minutes of the January 22, 2024 meeting. Mr. Brennan seconded the motion. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. Brennan moved to recommend the sum of \$500 for the Town Moderator budget (account 114-5100). Ms. Brown seconded the motion. The budget has gone from \$400 to \$500, due to the cost of extra meetings which have become routine. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. Paresky moved to recommend the sum of \$500 for the Finance Committee (account 131-5400). Ms. Brown seconded the motion. These funds typically go for training or seminars. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. Brennan moved to recommend the sum of \$500 for the Personnel Board (account 152-5400). Ms. Brown seconded the motion. This represents a reduction of \$250 from last year. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. Cambias moved to recommend the sum of \$4000 for Public Education Government (PEG) Access Capital. Ms. Brown seconded the motion. Mr. Paresky asked if this money will actually be spent, since nothing was used in 2023-24. Ms. Hill explained that the contract with Comcast does require allocating this sum for capital expense. Ms. Warren pointed out that it may disappear in 2027. The motion passed unanimously 6-0-0.

Mr. Paresky moved to recommend the sum of \$2000 for the Conservation Commission (account 171-5400). Mr. Cambias seconded the motion. This is level funding from last year. Mr. Brennan asked about the postage increase from 2023 to 2024, and Ms Hill reports that cost has continued. Ms. Nartowicz asked what the wetlands protection funding could be applied to. Ms. Hill explained what we use it for. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. Paresky moved to recommend the sum of \$250 for the Open Space Committee (account 172-5400). Mr. Cambias seconded the motion. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. Cambias moved to recommend the sum of \$2000 for the Planning Board (account 175-5400). Mr. Paresky seconded the motion. This is level funding from last year. Ms. Hill explained that much of the expense goes for postage. Ms. Nartowicz asked about funding for master plan expenses. Ms. Warren explained that the Board has not yet begun a new master plan. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. McDaniel arrived and called the Select Board to order at 5:27 p.m.

Mr. Cambias moved to recommend the sum of \$1000 for the Zoning Board of Appeals (account 176-5400). Mr. Brennan seconded the motion. This is level funding, again mostly for postage. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. Paresky moved to recommend the sum of \$100 for the Agricultural Commission (account 179-5400). Mr. Brown seconded the motion. Mr. Sharp asked if there is an Agricultural Commission and whether it ever spends anything. Ms. Warren suggested some Commissioners should be recruited. Mr. Cambias asked how many members the Committee has, but nobody was sure. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. Cambias moved to recommend the sum of \$1000 for the Energy Committee (account 182-5400). Ms. Brown seconded the motion. Minimal discussion. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. Paresky moved to recommend the sum of \$178,324 for the Inspections Department payroll (account 241-5110). Mr. Sharp seconded the motion. Mr. Brennan asked about overtime charges. Ms. Hill explained that is extra time for the department clerk. Ms. Chalfant asked how many full-time equivalents the department has. Ms. Hill noted that all this is covered by fees charged for inspections. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. Cambias moved to recommend the sum of \$4950 for Inspections Department expenses (account 241-5400). Mr. Brennan seconded the motion. This is level funding from last year. Mr. Brennan asked where ongoing software costs appear, and Ms. Hill responded that those come under Contract Services. Mr. Paresky noted that the expense budget has been higher than what was spent for several years, but Ms. Hill pointed out that travel and training costs are hard to anticipate. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. Brennan moved to recommend the sum of \$100 for the Council on Aging (account 541-5400). Mr. Paresky seconded the motion. This budget was formerly \$500. Ms. Hill did note that it hasn't been spent for several years, and Ms. Warren and Mr. McDaniel said it could easily be cut by half. Mr. Cambias asked if the Council on Aging overlaps with the Senior Center. Mr. Sharp asked if there would be much expense if extra funds are needed. Mr. Cambias asked if Community Preservation Act funds could be used for the Council on Aging.

Mr. Paresky called the question. The motion to call the question passed, 6-0-0. Mr. Brennan's original motion failed, 2-4-0.

Mr. Cambias moved to recommend the sum of \$400 for the Council on Aging. Ms. Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Ms. Brown moved to recommend the sum of \$250 for the ADA Coordinator (account 549-5400). Mr. Paresky seconded the motion. Mr. Sharp asked if this requires a separate line item when it never gets spent. Mr. Cambias asked if this is an expense budget for the Coordinator rather than a stipend but the answer is no. Mr. Sharp asked why this account is needed, and Ms. Warren argued in favor of keeping it. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. Brennan moved to recommend the sum of \$65,955 for the Recreation Department Director salary (account 634-5110). Ms. Brown seconded the motion. Ms. Hill explained that this is a step increase from last year, plus Cost-of-Living Allowance (COLA) adjustment gives a net of 4.5 percent. Mr. Sharp explained that Personnel Committee went with a 2 percent COLA, which more or less matches the increase for union positions. Kayce says she bases COLA recommendations on the CPI for the Northeast region. Ms. Nartowicz asked if contracts are available to the public. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Ms. Brown moved to recommend the sum of \$1175 for the Historical Commission (account 691-5400). Mr. Sharp seconded the motion. This represents level funding over the past five years. Ms. Nartowicz asked if the Historical Commission could be funded from Community Preservation Act funds. Ms. Hill said that would be for the CPC to determine. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Mr. Paresky moved to recommend the sum of \$2000 for Veterans/Memorial Day expenses (account 692-5800). Ms. Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed, 6-0-0.

Due to scheduling problem the Library director could not appear.

Ms. Chalfant re-opened discussion of Deerfield taxes relative to state and county, looking at the single family tax bill including fire and water district. We're in the 47th percentile for Massachusetts. For western Mass. we are 11th. For Franklin County we are the second-highest tax levy. Compared to eastern Mass. we are low. Among towns with a population of 4000-6000, we're low-middle.

Mr. Brennan moved to adjourn. Mr. Paresky seconded the motion. The motion passed, 6-0-0. The Finance Committee adjourned at 6:34 p.m., followed by the Select Board.