

**Town of Deerfield
Finance Committee
Minutes of the Meeting of February 23, 2025**

Online Meeting

Members Present: Beth Brown, James Cambias (*secretary*), Julie Chalfant (*chair*), Margaret Nartowicz, John Paresky

Also Present: Liz Bouchard (Franklin Tech Business Manager), Holly Drake, Christopher Dunne, Blake Gilmore, Tim Hilchey, Rick Martin (Franklin Tech Superintendent), Trevor McDaniel. Joint meeting with Select Board.

Documents Presented:

- Franklin Tech MSBA Community Forum Slide Show
- Franklin Tech 2027 Community Assessments document
- Franklin Tech draft 2027 budget
- Deerfield IT Hardware proposed 2027 budget (account #155-5400)
- Contracted Services proposed 2027 budget (account #159-5410)
- Town Office Expense proposed 2027 budget (account #192-5430)
- PEG Access (Public Education and Governmental Access) Capital proposed 2027 budget (account #155-5800)
- Planning Board proposed 2027 budget (account #175-5400)
- Historical Commission proposed 2027 budget (account #691-5400)
- OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) proposed 2027 allocation (account OPEB)
- FRCOG (Franklin Regional Council of Governments) Core Assessment proposed 2027 allocation (account #830-5400)

Ms. Chalfant called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, February 23 via Zoom. (Meeting was conducted online due to heavy snow.)

Mr. Martin gave a presentation about the proposed Franklin Tech construction project. He noted the increasing costs to keep the existing building open, which will likely require \$103 million or more in the next few years. That would have to be funded with a 15-year bond at a higher rate of interest.

The MSBA (Mass. School Building Authority) is offering a grant of \$120 million toward a \$238 million project to build an entirely new building for the school, which can be financed over 30 years.

Finance and Select Board members asked number of questions about the cost, size of the building, design, and financing. Deerfield's assessment will depend on population and EQV. The project will require approval by a vote of the people in the school's district in October.

Next discussed the Franklin Tech operational budget. Total cost increases by about \$600,000 or 3.6 percent to \$16,769,792 total. Deerfield assessment is

\$589,669; this does not cover our share of capital costs which would be \$18,708.17. This draft budget will not be final until March 11. No action taken.

Mr. Cambias moved to accept the corrected Minutes of the February 9 meeting. Mr. Paresky seconded the motion. The motion passed, 4-0-1.

Ms. Nartowicz moved to recommend the sum of \$6000 for IT Hardware (account 155-5400). Mr. Cambias seconded the motion. This is level funding from last year and Mr. Dunne indicated it will likely all be spent outfitting the new Town offices. The motion passed, 5-0-0.

Ms. Nartowicz moved to recommend the sum of \$271,597 for Contracted Services (account 159-5410). Mr. Cambias seconded the motion. This is an increase of \$1507 or 0.56% over last year, with increases in broadband and wireless expenses and software offset by suspending file digitization and professional development expenditures this year. The motion passed 5-0-0.

Ms. Nartowicz moved to recommend the sum of \$14,000 for Town Office Expense (account 192-5430). Mr. Paresky seconded the motion. This is \$2000 less than previous year, or a -12.5 percent drop, mostly from savings in printing costs and town reports. The motion passed, 5-0-0.

Ms. Nartowicz moved to recommend the sum of \$4000 for PEG Access Capital (account 155-5800). Mr. Paresky seconded the motion. This had been tabled at a previous meeting. The motion passed, 5-0-0.

Mr. Cambias moved to recommend the sum of \$2000 for the Planning Board (account 175-5400). Mr. Paresky seconded the motion. This motion had been tabled at a previous meeting. According to Mr. Dunne the Planning Board has indicated they can get by with less.

Mr. Paresky moved to reduce the recommendation to \$1000. Mr. Cambias seconded the motion to amend. The amendment to \$1000 passed, 5-0-0. The amended motion passed, 5-0-0.

Mr. Paresky moved to recommend the sum of \$1175 for the Historical Commission (account 691-5400). Mr. Cambias seconded the motion. This is level funding from 2026. We had tabled it previously because of questions about how much was actually needed, but apparently they have projects to fund. The motion passed 5-0-0.

Ms. Nartowicz moved to recommend the sum of \$51,176 for OPEB (account OPEB), Ms. Brown seconded the motion. This motion had been tabled at a previous meeting because of questions about South County Senior Center and SCEMS contributions. This sum represents an increase of \$4529 or 9.71 percent. The motion passed, 4-1-0.

Ms. Nartowicz moved to recommend the sum of \$42,000 for the FRCOG core assessment (account 830-5400). Ms. Brown seconded the motion. This is an increase of \$537 or 1.3 percent. Mr. Dunne had new figures from FRCOG which may change our contribution figure. Ms. Nartowicz withdrew the motion until new figures arrive.

Discussion of future meeting dates and times.

Mr. Paresky moved to establish a road work stabilization fund. Mr. Cambias seconded the motion. After some discussion Mr. Paresky moved to postpone discussion until more information is available. Ms. Nartowicz seconded the motion. The motion to postpone passed, 5-0-0.

Mr. Paresky moved to adjourn. This motion was seconded by several members at once. The motion to adjourn passed, 5-0-0, and the meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.