

**Town of Deerfield  
Finance Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting of October 11, 2023**

Joint meeting with the select board; hybrid in-person/Zoom meeting.

**Members Present:** Mark Brennan, Beth Brown, James Cambias, Julie Chalfant, David Sharp (via Zoom).

**Also Present:** Tim Hilchey, Brenda Hill, Christopher Nolan, Carolyn Shores-Ness, Kayce Warren (via Zoom)

**Documents Presented:**

- Revised draft Warrant for the Special Town Meeting of October 23.
- "Debt Thoughts 2023-10-09" Spreadsheet by Julie Chalfant
- "Deerfield Planning Board Public Hearing on Proposed Zoning Bylaw Revisions" document.
- Chapter 179 Proposed Zoning Revisions
- "3600 Conservation Subdivision Design — Town Meeting Version"
- "Deerfield Floodplain Bylaw Section 4300, Town Meeting Version With State DCR and Counsel Commentary"

Ms. Chalfant called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m. at the town offices, 8 Conway Street.

Ms. Shores-Ness reported that a mosquito carrying West Nile disease was identified in Old Deerfield, and urged everyone to take precautions.

Mr. Cambias moved to accept the Minutes of the October 3 meeting. Mr. Brennan seconded the motion. No discussion. The motion passed, 4-0-0 (Ms. Brown not having arrived yet).

Discussion of Town Warrant Article 10: Ms. Shores-Ness asked the Committee to reconsider the recommendation of \$2,000,000 for road work resulting from the summer flooding. The town is applying for grants from various sources but may not get it for 12-24 months, and we will need the money sooner, so the Select Board wants authority for \$5 million.

Ms. Hill reports from Kevin Scarborough that the Town Highway Department has already committed to 2.6 million in expenditures for road repair and materials. She also mentioned that the town is currently dipping into cash accounts for other departments to cover the bills.

Ms. Chalfant presented a spreadsheet ("Debt Thoughts 2023-10-09") analyzing debt payments and their impact on household tax bills over the next twenty years if we borrow \$5 million.

Mr. Brennan expressed his concern that the cost will likely be much higher than 5 million, especially since trying to do it cheaply will only lead to more expenses in the future.

Mr. Sharp commented that the \$2 million limit has already been passed so we have to raise our estimate.

Mr. Cambias commented that between the amounts already spent and the estimated cost of engineering and permitting, the amount is already about \$5 million.

Mr. Cambias moved that the Committee recommend borrowing up to the sum of \$5 million. Mr. Sharp seconded the motion.

Additional discussion about what the 5 million would actually be spent on: temporary repairs or engineering work for a permanent fix.

Mr. Cambias moved to call the question. Ms. Chalfant seconded the motion. The motion failed, 2-3-0.

Additional discussion followed about doing long-term mitigation rather than simple repairs.

Mr. Hilchey mentioned that the town already has 4.7 million approval from the state for deficit spending to cover these costs.

Mr. Sharp asked if borrowing might affect our chance of getting state grants. The Select Board thought it unlikely.

Ms. Chalfant called the vote. The motion passed 4-1-0.

Discussion of Town Warrant Article 4: shifting the Assistant Town Clerk from Grade C to Grade E on the payroll schedule. Ms. Hill said this makes the Assistant Clerk the equivalent of the Assistant Treasurer and Assistant to Board of Assessors.

Mr. Brennan moved to recommend Article 4, Ms. Brown seconded the motion. No further discussion. The motion passed, 5-0-0.

The Select Board meeting adjourned.

Discussion of Town Warrant Article 6: purchasing former St. James Church property on North Main St. for \$420,000, as approved in the 2023 Annual Town Meeting for \$570,000 using Community Preservation Act funds. Ms. Warren said there is a signed agreement.

Mr. Cambias moved to recommend the article. Mr. Sharp seconded the motion. The motion passed, 4-0-1.

Discussion of Article 11: acquiring Snowberry Circle and Gray Lock Lane as Public Ways under town ownership. Mr. Brennan moved to recommend the article. Ms. Brown seconded the motion.

Ms. Chalfant asked Ms. Hill and Ms. Warren how this might affect maintenance and plowing costs. They did not have exact figures but said Mr. Scarborough had taken it into account for the coming year. Mr. Brennan explained that this is the usual practice for new development streets.

The motion passed, 5-0-0.

Ms. Brown moved to recommend Town Warrant Article 5, changing the dog licensing fees and related bylaws. Mr. Brennan seconded the motion. Light discussion about the exact wording of the new bylaw. The motion passed, 5-0-0.

Ms. Brown left the meeting.

Discussion of Town Warrant Article 7: addresses inconsistencies and wording of the Zoning bylaws overall. (Articles 8 and 9 focus on specific sections broken out for separate approval because they involve compliance with federal and state requirements.)

Some comments and questions about unclear wording in the corrected bylaws.

Mr. Cambias asked if any changes impose additional costs beyond Federal and State requirements which might affect development in Deerfield. Nobody had definite information.

Mr. Cambias moved that the Finance Committee make no recommendation on this Article. Mr. Brennan seconded the motion. Mr. Sharp asked if any of the changes would require new hiring. Ms. Warren said no. The motion passed, 4-0-0.

Discussion of Article 8: Zoning bylaw section 3600, on Conservation Subdivisions.

Mr. Cambias asked if there is any reason to apply for a Conservation Subdivision rather than regular development. Ms. Warren did not have any data on that. No motion was made. It was decided to see if we can meet with the Planning Board to learn more about the topic.

Discussion of Article 9: amending Zoning bylaws section 4300, on the Floodplain District.

Ms. Chalfant asked if there is a current floodplain map. Ms. Warren said that probably won't be available for another couple of years. Ms. Chalfant about subsection 4307, removal of item f, which seems to require removal of buildings previously allowed.

No motion was made. The Committee agreed to meet with the Planning Board for more information.

Mr. Brennan moved to adjourn. Ms. Chalfant seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.