



**FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Town of Grafton**  
30 Providence Road  
Grafton, MA 01519  
(508) 839-5335 x 1201  
[www.grafton-ma.gov](http://www.grafton-ma.gov)

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**Finance Committee**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Saturday, March 11, 2023**  
**8:30AM**  
**Conference Room A**  
**AND**  
**via Zoom**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 8:32am by Chair Mark Haddad. In attendance were Chair Mark Haddad, Vice Chair Greg Marr, Skip Currier, Dan Cusher, Victoria Duckworth, Heather McCue, Nick Rioux, and Sue Robbins. Staff in attendance were Town Administrator Evan Brassard, Finance Director Mary Lauria, and Administrative Assistant Amber Diffenderfer.

**Review the FY24 Departmental Budgets with Staff and Finance Committee Members**

Paul Cournoyer, Director of Public Works, spoke about the **Engineering** budget for FY24, which included an increase in Professional & Technical costs largely due to the Town's MS4 permit.

Mr. Cournoyer presented the FY24 **Highway/DPW** budget and noted that under personnel, a separate line item was created for the Highway Superintendent.

Mr. Brassard and Mr. Cournoyer described plans and funding options for the George Hill Road project.

Daryl Roberts, Superintendent of Cemeteries and Parks, spoke about the FY24 **Cemeteries & Parks** budget, which is level-funded except for the union salary increases.

Mr. Cournoyer reviewed the **Sewer Department** budget and highlighted the increases in energy costs and chemical supplies costs.

Mr. Cournoyer presented the FY24 **Fire Department** budget with a decrease in total salary and an increase in Repair & Maintenance for equipment and vehicles.

Mr. Haddad called for a 5-minute break at 9:08am.

Ms. Lauria stated that the **Town Accountant, Assessors, and Treasurer/Collector** expenses were all level-funded and highlighted the new **Revaluation** departmental budget for the Assessors.

Mr. Brassard spoke about the **Human Resources** budget and the addition of a Benefits Coordinator position.

Mr. Brassard stated that the decrease in the **Information Technology** budget for FY24 was due to an improved rate from a 3-year contract for services.

Mr. Brassard noted that the **Copiers** budget is level-funded, but they were able to save money on the leases and add two new machines.

Mr. Brassard presented the **Municipal Center** budget and noted that the 18% increase in Communications was for mail-in ballots and would be moved to the Election budget.

Mr. Haddad, Mr. Brassard, and Ms. Lauria discussed the **Unclassified** budget.

Robert Berger, Inspector of Buildings, presented the FY24 **Zoning Board of Appeals, Farnumsville Fire, South Grafton Community House, Inspector of Buildings, Gas Inspector, Plumbing Inspector, and Wiring Inspector** budgets, which were all level-funded except for the commitments to salary increases. Mr. Berger spoke about the money brought in for inspections and permits in FY23 and his projections for upcoming years.

Mr. Berger explained that the **Cable TV** operational costs are covered by the contributions from Charter and Verizon. He described plans to upgrade Conference Room F to allow for overflow attendance at public meetings in other locations and make audiovisual improvements for Town Meeting.

Normand Crepeau, Chief of Police, reviewed the FY24 **Police Department** budget. He noted that the decrease in administrative personnel salaries is due to a change in the dispatchers' schedule.

Mr. Brassard gave an update on the grant process and inter-municipal agreement to establish a regional dispatch center with Westborough and Southborough. Chief Crepeau and Mr. Brassard highlighted the communications upgrades that would be covered by the grant for this project.

Chief Crepeau resumed his presentation of the budget and spoke about the costs and procedure to hire a new officer. He noted that energy is the expense with the most significant increase. He stated that the increase in conference/seminar fees is for promotional exams. He and Mr. Haddad discussed the rising price of cruisers.

Mr. Haddad called for a 5-minute break at 10:49am.

Jen Andersen, Recreation Director, presented the **Recreation** budget. She and Ms. Robbins discussed efforts to recruit lifeguards for the summer. She explained that the Professional and Technical budget was for program registration software and some of the summer concert costs. Ms. Andersen stated that they brought in over \$500,000 in recreation fees in 2022 and presented the following summary:

#### GRAFTON RECREATION 2022

- Events: 19
- Program Offerings: 200+
- Event Attendees: 6,000+
- Program Participants: 5,000+
- Seasonal Employees: 40
- ADA Transition Plan Completion: 90%

Shannon Smith, Director of Council on Aging, gave her presentation on the **Council on Aging** budget, which also included information about the mission, services, program participation, and future goals of the Senior Center. She noted that the only increases in the budget were for staff education and programming. She and Mr. Haddad discussed the Senior Center's transportation services, the Friends of Grafton Elders' contributions, and the formula grant.

The Finance Committee and Mr. Brassard agreed to raise the salary in the **Town Moderator** budget from \$150 to \$1,000.

In the **Select Board** budget, Mr. Brassard stated that the 26% reduction in salary was due to the Affordable Housing Trust funding a portion of their administrative assistant's wages, and the Expense Allowance was for a phone stipend. He noted the creation of a line item for Follette Well.

Mr. Brassard presented the **Town Administrator** budget and stated that there is a three-year plan to give the Assistant Town Administrator a more reasonable salary for the area. He highlighted the new line item for the Veterans Advisory Committee.

The Finance Committee reviewed the level-funded **Finance Committee, Reserve Fund, and Legal** budgets with Mr. Brassard.

Regarding the **Conservation Commission** budget, Mr. Brassard stated that the Field Inspector salary was deleted because they were unable to fill the position.

Mr. Brassard presented the **Planning Department** budget and noted that the Department Head salary decrease was for the newly hired Town Planner. He explained that they could not fill the Assistant Planner position but may bring it back into the budget in FY25 or later. He stated that the department currently has a planning consultant helping them.

Mr. Brassard spoke about the **Economic Development** budget, which did not have any changes from FY23 except for a salary increase.

Mr. Brassard and Ms. Lauria reviewed the **Debt Service** with the Finance Committee. Mr. Brassard highlighted Ms. Lauria's use of the account numbers to express the dates the debts were issued and the dates they will roll off.

Kandy Lavallee presented her request for a 24% increase in salary as **Town Clerk**. She spoke about her responsibilities in the role and gave the Finance Committee copies of the 2019 Salary Survey. Mr. Haddad, Ms. Robbins, Mr. Rioux, Ms. Duckworth, and Mr. Cusher expressed interest in seeing the updated salary survey and considering an increase in phases. The Finance Committee discussed the differences between elected and appointed positions with respect to competitive salaries.

Mr. Brassard stated that the Assistant Town Clerk position will be open soon, and the salary was increased to be more competitive. Ms. Lavallee explained the difference between the Assistant Town Clerk and Administrative Assistant's roles.

Ms. Lavallee reviewed the **Election & Registration** budget with the Finance Committee and appreciated the election workers' efforts.

Mr. Haddad stated that the Finance Committee would continue their review of the Town Clerk's budget and look at the updated salary survey at their meeting on March 15.

Ms. Lavalley agreed to submit a Reserve Fund Transfer request for the March 15 meeting to purchase additional poll pads for the next election.

Mr. Brassard stated that the **Fuel/Gasoline** budget was raised to more closely match the amount spent.

Mr. Currier spoke about the **Nelson Library** budget and the intention to begin leasing the space to the Recreation Department.

Mr. Brassard stated that the 1.75% increase in the **Sanitation** budget was due to a contractual increase.

Mr. Haddad noted that the **Snow and Ice Control** and **Streetlighting** budgets were level-funded.

Mr. Brassard explained that the decrease in the **Health Department** budget was due to a balance applied over five years from the Worcester County coalition. He stated that this balance exists because the coalition could not staff all their positions.

In reviewing the **Veterans Services** budget, Mr. Brassard announced that Jeff Farrell was hired as the new Veterans Agent.

Mr. Haddad summarized that the total budget is \$74M with a 6% increase. Mr. Brassard stated that the levy capacity is currently \$232,000 and agreed to present the five-year revenue projections to the Finance Committee on March 15.

The Finance Committee and Mr. Brassard reviewed the **Sealer of Weights and Measures, Emergency Management, Animal Control, and Animal Inspector** budgets with the only change being to the Professional and Technical budget of Animal Control for additional hours.

## ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned by Mr. Haddad at 12:27pm.

Meeting materials are available at: <https://www.grafton-ma.gov/AgendaCenter/Finance-Committee-6>

A recording of this meeting is available at: <https://youtu.be/MH8l1-9NuLg>