

**Town of West Boylston
Finance/CIB Committee
Meeting of February 27, 2023**

A meeting of Fincom and CIB was convened at 6:32 pm by Zoom. Chris Berglund read the required State Zoom meeting enabling statement. Attending Fincom and CIB members were Chris Berglund, Paul Bohannon, Ray Bricault, Bill Fay, Mary Foley, and Pete Murphy. Town Administrator Jennifer Warren-Dyment was in attendance.

Mary Foley moved, seconded by Ray Bricault, to approve the minutes of February 13 for Fincom and CIB. All voted in favor in a roll call vote, 6-0 for Fincom and 6-0 for CIB.

The Town Administrator informed Fincom that a transfer from the Fincom Emergency Reserve may be needed for the Assessors office. The Assessor, an employee of RRG Consulting, and the Assistant Assessor, a town employee, have both given notice. The Assessor worked one day per week and the Assistant was part time, 19 hours. RRG will provide new personnel, but that will likely exceed the \$384 per week in the budget. Training will also be required for the new Assistant. The total amount of overrun is unknown, so the formal transfer request will come later.

The Retirement Board request to the Select Board to approve an additional 2% COLA to town retirees was discussed again by Fincom. The cost impact to the town of the proposed additional pension increase is \$22,900 in the first year FY23, and \$308,838 over 10 years. Fincom discussed again the long term financial impact on the town, including the impact on union and salary negotiations with current town employees. Salary increase requests are expected to be at least 7%. The Town Administrator said information she received indicates many impacted towns will vote no. Fincom decided that this increase should wait until more information is available concerning the direction and amount of coming COLAs. Pete Murphy moved to recommend a no vote to the Select Board for this retroactive increase. Ray Bricault seconded and the motion was approved 5-0-1 for Fincom in a roll call vote. Bill Fay voted to abstain.

The Town Administrator warned that the operating budget process is difficult. There have been major price increases in common supplies and labor costs are expected to rise with new positions and negotiations.

The Town Administrator gave a list of capital project recommendations:

- Several building studies have been requested, but they will not be included in the budget this year.
- Schools - The Major Edwards boilers are the priority. The heating system has to be reliable. No State funding is available to reduce the \$300,000+ cost.
- DPW -A Flail Mower is needed for roadside brush, \$36,000.

- Fire - Turnout gear is a requirement due to safety and expiration dates, \$75,000
- Fire - New bottles for the fire air packs are needed in FY24 at a cost of \$97,500, to ensure the bottles are compliant and work correctly.

Pete Murphy had to leave the meeting early.

The Pride Park playground renovation project for ADA compliance was discussed. Weston and Sampson has been hired to develop a new park plan and prepare bid documents. Further inspection of the existing equipment and structures has revealed that nothing can be salvaged, it all must be removed. Final costs are expected to be very high.

Ray Bricault asked if ARPA monies were being considered as a funding source. The Town Administrator explained that Congressperson McGovern has advised that unspent ARPA monies may be subject to clawback by the Federal government. Final costs for the playground renovation are still undetermined. The first phase estimate was \$160,000 for new equipment, but this estimate is now 12 months old. Equipment leadtimes are at 24 weeks. No cost estimate has been received for equipment installation. Phase 2 renovation costs are also not available. If ARPA funds are used for playground funding, Ray Bricault offered that it is important that Town Meeting approve these expenditures, even though it is not required. Since the project was originally approved in Town Meeting, costs have significantly increased and completion has been delayed. The public should be informed of the changes and should approve proceeding further with the renovation.

Future in-person meeting dates with Department Heads were set. March 13, March 20, March 27, April 3 and April 10 were reserved for meetings at Town Hall at 6:00 pm to review operating and capital budgets. If meetings with departments were completed and later meeting dates were not required, they will be cancelled.

Ray Bricault moved to adjourn the meeting, Mary Foley seconded. All voted in favor in a roll call vote 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Pete Murphy
Secretary, Fincom and CIB