

Finance Committee Meeting

Town Hall, 3 East Main Rd. Peru, MA

Wednesday, April 10, 2024 @ 6:00 P.M.

1. **Call to order:** Finance Committee Chairman Hickling called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. **Roll Call Finance Committee:** Finance Committee Chairman Hickling present, Finance Committee members Haskins present, Sam Haupt present, Robin Wadsworth present, Jesse Pelkey present.
3. **State recording status:** Robin Wadsworth recording
4. **Pledge of Allegiance:** Led by Fin Comm Chairman Hickling
5. **Review and Approve March 27, 2024 Finance Committee Minutes:** Town Administrator Terry Walker requested two clarifying edits; minutes approved pending corrections by unanimous vote
6. **Review FY 2025 budget continued:** **Library** – Budget presented by Ruth Calaycay with Trustee Sharon Greule also present. Discussion included concerns about the Library building itself: lead paint issues are putting repainting the outside on the back burner, with foundation concerns more important at this point. There was also conversation about the possible addition of handicap ramp. Sharon discussed salary request for Librarian, having reviewed Board of Library Commissioners statistics for 2023 and averaging minimum salaries for similar population libraries. **Cemetery Commission** – Budget presented by Jim Kenney. There are a few one-time expense items that can be funded with Free Cash. It was decided that the expense account could be lowered to \$500. **Vocational Ed Transportation/Tuition:** Finance Committee Chairman Paul Hickling stated that as of April 1st report from CBRSD, we will have 8-9 students. Based on past experience, we will use the cost of 10 students as a placeholder until final numbers are determined. **Animal Control:** FC Chairman Paul Hickling spoke for Verne Leach (not present). There were questions about the number of calls and need for a specific vehicle or need of an animal crate. Paul will follow-up with Verne. The Expense account has not been being used, possibly reduce it to \$500. **Fire Department:** Finance Committee member Sam Haupt spoke for the department: Expense can be level funded. Cost of Defibrillator pads (for use by all emergency services) will be a free cash item. Discussion on possible stipend for Assistant Chief and volunteers was deferred to the Select Board, as there are more costs involved by making them town employees. **Chairman Paul Hickling** suggested that we determine what department heads should be at the next meeting: Jesse Pelkey asked that Caryn Wendling be there, TA Terry Walker stated the Board of Health and Sam Haupt stated the Assessors, Collector and Treasurer. Robin Wadsworth stated that she would be absent for the next two weeks and not available until the first week of May. Robin stated that the minutes should reflect the fact that previously requested joint meeting with Select Board, Assessor, Tax Collector/Treasurer did not happen and that the Select Board stated there would be no joint meeting until after the Finance Committee had voted on the budget and turned it over to them. Doug Haskins explained that he (having been absent from the last meeting) did not think there should be a joint meeting yet. Robin further explained that the questions she has (of the Assessors, Tax Collector/Treasurer) involve the Select Board who are accountable for the overall bad situation the Town is in and stated that she would ask the questions at the annual town meeting. **Free Cash:** Chairman Hickling stated that member Jesse Pelkey had requested the opportunity to discuss. Having done research, Jesse is concerned about the \$400,000 owed in back taxes, which show on the town's free cash certification calculation. Jesse stated comparisons of other towns that are nowhere near the amount in Peru. Member Robin Wadsworth explained the free cash calculation and how the \$399,193 of uncollected taxes impact free cash. The uncollected tax amount refers to taxes that are uncollected which have not been put through the tax title process. The undesignated fund balance on last year's free cash calculation of \$779,916 is reduced by liabilities, one of which is uncollected taxes (not in tax title), leaving available free cash of \$322,652. Processing Tax Titles is a function of the Tax Collector and review of the Tax Title Expense account shows

nothing being paid out. There are questions that must be answered by the Tax Collector and Robin suggested that it wasn't fair to continue conversation without her present, thus the reason for her request to have everyone in the room. It was decided that we would go through the rest of the worksheet, filling in what we could, level funding where there seemed no need to increase and placing all salary increases at 3%. There was another brief discussion about the Administrative Assistant salary, anticipating additional need of minutes taking for various boards, the amount was placed at \$4,500. Discussion on the Postage account suggested an increase to \$4,000. Central Berkshire Regional School District numbers will be placed into the worksheet, along with all other "to be determined" fixed amounts (insurances, employment, etc...). Next meeting date of May 1, 2024 is mutually agreed upon.

7. Public Input: None

8. Adjourn:

Fin Com Chairman Hickling motion to adjourn at 8:10 p.m. Motion seconded, unanimous vote to adjourn 5-0

Items used:

Town Administrator email dated April 3, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Wadsworth
Finance Committee Member

Douglas Haskins, Fin Com Member 

Samuel Haupt, Fin Com Member 

Paul Hickling, Fin Com Chairman 

Jesse Pelkey, Fin Com Member _____

Robin Wadsworth, Fin Com Member 

Date Approved: 4/29/24

Received April 29, 2024, Kim Leach, Town Clerk

RE: [External Sender]Joint meeting

From: Town Administrator (townadmin@townofperuma.com)

To: j.pelkey76@gmail.com

Cc: selectman@townofperuma.com; dhaskins@townofperuma.com; kinderhaus1@verizon.net;
robbiej01235@yahoo.com; sammyrna@aol.com; paul.hickling@briencenter.org

Date: Wednesday, April 3, 2024 at 10:13 AM EDT

Update: meeting with BOS, Fin Com, Assessors, Tax Collector/Treasurer

At the Board of Selectmen's meeting on April 1st, all Selectboard members agreed that there would not be a joint meeting on April 8th.

In addition, the BOS agreed to have joint meetings after the Fin Com members vote on the budgets.

Terry Walker
TA Peru

From: j.pelkey76 <j.pelkey76@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 3, 2024 9:36 AM
To: Town Administrator <townadmin@townofperuma.com>
Subject: [External Sender]Joint meeting

Good morning I am following up about the joint meeting that was asked for between the assessors, tax collector/ Treasurer, finance and selectboard. Thanks much Jesse