



Town of Orleans

Finance Committee

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MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, May 4, 2023 – 7:00 pm

This was a hybrid meeting of the Orleans Finance Committee, convened in the Nauset Room at Town Hall with remote participation provided by Zoom technology. Real-time public access was provided by Orleans Channel 18 on the Town website and cable television.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Finance Committee Chairman Nick Athanassiou. Also attending and thus constituting a quorum were Committee Clerk Elaine Baird and Committee members Lynn Bruneau, Constance Kremer and Tim Counihan, with Ed Mahoney and Peter O'Meara participating remotely. Chris Kanaga joined the meeting at 7:35pm. Alisa Magnotta was absent.

Guests: Peggy O'Sullivan from Media Operations provided technical support for this meeting.

(0:15) Public Comment:

There were no public comments.

(00:30) Announcements:

Ms. Bruneau reminded the audience of Town Meeting on Monday, May 8 at 6 PM. Copies of the Town Meeting Warrant, and the 2022 Annual Town Report are available in the Town Hall lobby and will be available at Town Meeting.

Ms. Bruneau also reminded the audience of the Town Election on Tuesday, May 16 at the Senior Center on Rock Harbor Road. Mail-in ballots can be dropped off at Town Hall, or mailed-in. Early voting is at the Town Clerk's office from Monday, May 8 through Thursday, May 12 from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

(2:30) Review / Approval of Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

- 4/27/23 – Ms. Baird moved to approve the minutes as drafted; Ms. Kremer seconded. The vote was 7-0-0 with Mmes. Baird, Kremer and Bruneau and Messrs. Athanassiou, Counihan, Mahoney and O'Meara all voting "aye" by roll-call.

(3:00) Consider FinComm TM Warrant Article Discussion Points; Re-Vote Any Warrant Articles as/if appropriate; finalize talking assignments for May Town Meeting

Mr. Athanassiou discussed Special Town Meeting Article #1: Pay Bills of Prior Years

Motion by Ms. Kremer moved to recommend Special Town Meeting Article #1 - Pay Bills of Prior Years; second by Mr. Counihan.

Mr. Mahoney asked if there was any information on the \$5,750 Transfer Station invoice from "Green Seal Environmental" - what was it for and why was the invoice so late. Another question - why was an Enterprise Fund expense being covered by free cash. Ms. Bruneau will follow up with DPW Director Tom Daley and get back to everyone before Town Meeting. There was further discussion, and the Fin Comm ultimately waited to vote until Town Meeting.

Ms. Kremer withdrew her motion and Mr. Counihan withdrew his “second”.

There was discussion about Article 11 – Sewers Operations Enterprise Fund budget, which Ms. Bruneau said will be adjusted to correct an error in the “Retained Earnings” number and corresponding adjustments to “Expenses”. It was interesting to note the apparently flexibility in the estimated “Expenses” - in the original budgeted “Expenses”. Fin Comm decided that there was not need to re-vote this Article.

Based on the latest information, it is understood that at least two Articles will be “indefinitely postponed” (aka, withdrawn):

- Article 18 - Fund Additional Costs for Phase II - Meetinghouse Pond Sewers (\$2.5M) - because the bids came in under the original estimate 40, 48 will be indefinitely postponed.
- Article 48 - Authorize Taking Route 6A Wastewater Easement by Eminent Domain (postponed until Fall Town Meeting)

There was further discussion about the Rental Registration Bylaw (Article 53). Ms. Baird said she will be changing her vote to in-favor after speaking with a member of the Fire Department staff. This Article will be re-voted by Fin Comm at Town Meeting, pending the availability of further clarification (eg, re the section on “Violations, Enforcement and Penalties”).

Further discussion for clarity re Article 62 - Resolution in Support of Special Legislation for Year-Round Housing Occupancy Deed Restriction, noting that Fin Comm had agreed that this Article, written as a resolution, has “no significant financial implication”. If the State were to take action, then the Town would have the opportunity to take further action which might/likely then have an impact - and a financial impact - on the Orleans and/or regional housing crisis.

Mr. Mahoney discussed his opposition to Article 56 - Convey Governor Prence Properties for Housing, primarily because of the lack of transparency re the cost of these properties to-date to the Town and taxpayers and the unknown/unstated potential costs to the Town and taxpayers re the subsequent development of these properties for housing.

Mr. Athanassiou reviewed the “talking point” assignments for Town Meeting and encouraged all speakers to be brief and focused. Ms. Bruneau agreed that in the interest of time and financial priorities at Town Meeting, she will not speak to the “no” votes on STM Article 3 - Free Cash Transfer unless questions are asked by the Town Meeting audience. Mr. Athanassiou plans to speak briefly at the beginning of Town Meeting to introduce the Fin Comm “process” for commenting on Warrant Articles.

(1:26:00) Review/Approval of any Reserve Fund Transfer requests if/as needed

Mr. Athanassiou said there have been no further requests.

(1:26:00) Updates

Update of Select Board Meeting discussions / decisions

Mr. Athanassiou discussed the Town Clerk’s presentation re numerous calendar 2024 elections. If any financial ballot questions could be identified as early as August of 2024, they could be included on a state-funded ballot - but the limit would be 3 such questions - and an August deadline w/be early for us, based on recent “history”. Otherwise, a late fall Town election for a post-Fall Town Meeting election would be fully funded by the Town.

Ms. Bruneau discussed the project for the athletic fields along Eldredge Parkway, based on Charlie Sumner's report to the Select Board.

Ms. Kremer discussed the continued lack of communications from Town Hall, particularly regarding the hiring of the new Town Administrator, Kim Newman and the anticipated timing of her arrival.

Liaison Reports as appropriate

-Ms. Bruneau noted that the Affordable Housing Committee is now focused on updating the Town's 2017 Housing Study with support from consultants. This week's meeting included a walk-through of the proposed approach for information/data gathering and focus as well as community outreach and an overall timeline.

Other general updates

The Fin Comm "response" to the Planning Board request for input to their update of the Town's 2006 Comprehensive Plan will be address at a subsequent Fin Comm meeting.

(2:01:00) Review Schedule and Items for Future Agendas

- May 8: 5:30 pm (NRMS Gym) – Fin Comm meeting prior to Town Meeting for any final voting on TM Warrant Articles
- May 18: 6:15pm – Town Meeting "post mortem"; agree on FinComm reply to Planning Board request for input

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Counihan; second by Mr. Kanaga. The vote was 8-0-0 with Mmes. Baird, Kremer and Bruneau and Messrs. Athanassiou, Mahoney, Kanaga, O'Meara, and Counihan all voting "aye" by roll-call. The meeting adjourned at 8:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Courtney Butler, Secretary

The documents listed below are all in the Finance Committee Drop Box except as noted:

1. May 4, 2023 Finance Committee meeting agenda
2. Draft April 27, 2023 FinComm Meeting Minutes
3. Warrant for the May 2023 Town Meeting
4. Warrant Index for the May 2023 Town Meeting w/ Select Board speakers noted
5. Select Board meeting packet for the 5/3/23 Select Board meeting (Select Board website)
6. Unpaid Bills Memo from Town Finance Director to Liana Surdut - 5/1/23

The minutes for the May 4, 2023 Finance Committee meeting were reviewed and approved at the June 1, 2023 meeting. **Motion to approve by Ms. Baird, second by Mr. Counihan. The vote was 6-0-0 with Mmes. Baird and Bruneau and Messrs. Athanassiou, Counihan, Mahoney and O'Meara all voting "aye" by roll-call.**