

Winthrop Finance Commission Minutes

Date: Thursday, May 29, 2025, at 6:00pm
Attendees: TOW: ~~Steve Calla~~ (SC), Robbie Powers (RP), *SARAH Johnson*
FC: Karin Chavis (KC), William Gault (WG), Matt Gorzkowicz (MG), Hannah Belcher (HB), John DaRos (JD), Shannon Poulos (SP), Joe Hanlon (JH), Max Tassinari (MT), John Macero (JM)
Absent: Shannon Poulos, Brent Farrell
Other: Jim Letterie (JL), Suzanne Swope (SS), Sarah Johnson (SJ), Erin Barcellos (EM)

Meeting called to order at 6:014 pm by MG.

Roll call vote completed by KC. All present except individuals noted above.

Motion to approve the minutes of the 5/22 meeting by MT
2nd by JD
All in favor except one abstention by JH

MG: Agenda for tonight is open to discuss recommendations to make to the Council; sent out draft memo based on last year's memo with relevant updates/new deliberations etc.

KC: need to update in memo that Cheryl McCormick here 2x, Council on Aging, Vets; Override vote was April (not March)

MG: Memo reviews maintenance level budgets/level service funding in depts.;

- includes information on 2 ½ override and how those funds are allocated to school – cures structural deficit left by ARPA funds
- Points out that insurance (GIC) increases are still an issue (9% last year, 15% this year)
- Solid Waste fund – structurally better due to anticipated fee increase (allows lower general fund contribution/less reliance on retained earnings)
- Harbormaster reorganization into WPD

KC: Question regarding Pauline St. Revolving fund (for gym) – how do we pay for electrics, etc. with lost revenue while gym is out of commission due to old middle school construction?

SJ: Will look into it

MG: requests table of revolving funds & balances from SJ

MG: recommendation for GIC commission to be established to look into upcoming renewal, contribution ratios, etc.

SJ: Public Employee commission deals with rates, reps from labor unions; largest unions have weighted votes

KC: HR did study on comp in other municipalities, many are 75/25 split; would only apply to NEW employees

MG: School budget

- More detailed than prior FYs
- Should include vocational schools amounts to show total cost of education

JH: Can we get more detail on "OTHER" expenses?

MT: Does TC vote on trash fee increase?

HB: No, TM has authority

MG: General notes for memo

- Aim for more multiyear forecasting; will help explain education stabilization fund
 - o JM: that money can be REQUESTED by schools, but needs to be approved by TC
 - o JL: hoping for financial policy update to put 3% of free cash to Ed. Stabilization
 - o JM: if \$1.4M in stabilization isn't touched, it doubles +3% over time
 - o JL: Override \$ HAS to go to school for 1st year, stabilization fund amount HAS to go every year

MG: Should look at projections for stabilization to see when drawdown should happen

MT: Do projections show the double-digit increases in expenses?

MG: yes

MG: Will highlight that school override lifts some pressure from the town budget

SJ: investment earnings stay with relevant funds

MG: Update on fire house as it relates to finance?

JL: may start to borrow but won't hit until 2027; OPM paid in stages (\$1M), demo & asbestos mitigation (\$1.5-\$1.8M)

MT: Senator Edwards put in earmark for \$2M for demo; only \$1M is tied to housing

JM: Tony can touch base with Lydia to check on this

MG: Dept. of Public Health – large dollar amount to identify if grants were not successful

KC: Meredith said she is hopeful but won't know for sure until July

SP: State is prioritizing DPH

HB: even if we can't identify the full amount, should find what could be used to close gaps; should include percentage of grant funding for relevant departments

MG: focus on IT needs

- Should be more centralized/coordinated approach to IT across departments
- AI for service delivery?
- JD: seems that depts are at different stages of digitization; would have potential cost savings

KC: IT committees have been started in the past but are not fruitful

HB: Could make push from the administrative side

JM: Agree, should come from both town and school

SP: Many issues with receiving school budget in preferred format are IT shortfalls – system should be able to 'tag' teachers by subject, rather than steps & lanes; need to look holistically

JD: need metrics to determine point at which IT investment 'pays off'

KC: TC should direct TM to take action

JM: tech committee should drive initiatives

MG: have we looked regionally for tech needs?

BG: need hard data to identify forecasted cost savings

JD: Can look at ROI year-over-year

MG: Departments seem adequately funded, no large holes/gaps

JD: Should identify potential gaps in grant fundings and potential need to look into stabilization/reserve funds

MG: will highlight uncertainty in economic landscape

MT: highlight that schools are still at level service

KC: was good to see newer dept. heads; no one asked for additional money for their dept.

MG: Next steps are to finish memo by weekend and present to TC on Tuesday

JD: Motion to adjourn, 2nd by BG

Adjourned at 7:54