



Planning Board Meeting Minutes Thursday, April 27, 2023, at 5:30 pm – Remote and In Person Participation

PB Members Present: Diab Jerius, Chair
I-Ching Scott
Sally Dale, Vice Chair/Clerk
Nicholas Rossettos

PB Member Absent: Keri Layton

FinCom Members: Hafiz Adamjee Megan Blackwell Jeffrey Calabrese
Stefan A. Carp Ioannis Evrigenis Lauren Hermann
Kathryn Hughes Patrick Matterson John Miller (Vice Chair)
Vincenzo Rascionato Derek Ross Nicole Soto
My Linh Truong (Chair) Brian Vernaglia

A quorum being in attendance, Chair Jerius calls the Winchester Planning Board (PB) meeting to order at 5:35 pm joining the Finance Committee (FinCom) Meeting. Roll call of PB members: Rossettos, Scott, Dale, Jerius in attendance; Layton absent.

1. Discussion with FinCom the PB Budget FY24:

Chair Jerius: Concerned about the Finance Committee's cuts to the requested PB budget.

Both groups presented and discussed their position.

FinCom's Summary:

- Original FY24 PB budget request for total Other Expenses was \$88,400 (\$80,000 for Professional Services + \$8,400 for miscellaneous Other Expenses.)
- The \$80,000 for Professional Services was \$35,000 more than the FY23 budget of \$45,000: a 65% increase over the FY23. The PB noted these additional funds would be used to fund consulting services for the Holton St. and North Main St. projects.
- FinCom noted that a 65% increase in Professional Services from FY23 to FY24 (from \$45,000 to \$80,000) was extraordinary when the Town is struggling to balance budgets.
- FinCom voted to reduce the total Other Expenses \$88,400 amount by \$52,500, comprised of \$17,500 (one-half of the \$35,000 Professional Services increase) plus a further \$35,000 from Professional Services that they recommended be deferred to a future year after the Town Planner position is filled. This resulted in a FinCom total Other Expenses budget of \$35,900: \$27,500 for Professional Services + \$8,400 for Other Expenses.
- Their reasoning was that the request for funding for the Holton Street project has happened for three years, yet detailed plans, timelines, or results have not happened, and that when the new Town Planner is hired, he or she can shift priorities.

PB's Summary:

- The PB clarified that the Town Planner does not set Planning priorities. The PB sets priorities for Planning initiatives and for the Planning Department each year.
- Regarding the reduction comment in Article 19 on the Professional Services line that reads, "\$17.5K due to an error in the original budget; \$35K General Services Professional Services request deferred while new Town Planner comes on board and assesses specific need."
- The PB clarified that there was not a \$17,500 error in the PB Budget Request.
- The PB clarified that, in their first Budget Meeting with FinCom on March 14, the stated \$80,000 budget request for Professional Services mistakenly only added up to \$70,000, an error caused by a \$10,000 omission from the detailed breakout. The \$80,000 requested amount for

Professional Services was correct. This funding pays for services that advance Planning work that needs to be done whether or not a Town Planner is on board.

- Cutting the Professional Services budget hinders the PB's ability to serve the Town, by worsening the capacity of an already understaffed but crucial municipal function.
- This reduction would defund at least one of two long-defined priorities of the PB in the area of land use analysis and planning; key deliverables that are directly tied to the Master Plan.
- The PB is mid-process on these projects for North Main Street and for our Light Industrial zone and adjacent neighborhoods in the Holton, Swanton, and Cross Streets area. Defunding one or the other interrupts an active project, shelves data collection already underway, defunds needed follow-on community outreach and data collection, and delays by a year or more the Board's expected recommendations on zoning and other measures for these areas.
- The PB requests to reinstate the \$52,500, to restore the full \$80,000 Professional Services budget.

At 5:50 pm, the PB left the FinCom meeting and continued the PB meeting (in a new location), discussing this PB budget.

Ms. Scott moved to propose at the Monday, May 01, 2023, Town Meeting, to amend Motion 12 of Article 19 of the FY24 Operating Budget Motions, under General Government: the Planning Board Budget for FY'24. Ms. Dale second the Motion. Vote: Dale, Scott, Rossettos, Jerius in favor. Motion passes 4-0-0, with Layton absent.

2. Adjourn:

Mr. Rossettos moved to adjourn the PB meeting of April 27, 2023. Ms. Scott second the Motion. Vote: Rossettos, Scott, Dale, Jerius in favor. Motion passes 4-0-0, with Layton absent. The meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Sally Dale, Clerk

Nancy Polcari, Recording Secretary