



**TOWN OF  
BROOKLINE, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
FINANCE COMMITTEE**

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**Brookline Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, May 20, 2020**

1 Meeting Date: 5/20/20 at 7pm via Zoom

2  
3 \*Meeting was held virtually under Emergency Order #12\*

4  
5 Committee Attendance: Brian Rater, Dennis Comeau, Matthew Mailloux  
6 Public in attendance: None

7  
8 **Meeting called to order: 7:00pm**

9  
10 Brian Rater (BR) – Welcomed all attendees to the May meeting of the Brookline Finance  
11 Committee. BR announced that the meeting was being held under the provisions of Emergency  
12 Order #12. Under this emergency order each member in attendance is required to announce the  
13 reason for attending virtually, their location, and if anyone other than themselves is in the room.

14  
15 BR- Attended virtually from home due to social distancing guidance, BR is the only person in  
16 the room.

17 Dennis Comeau (DC) - Attended virtually from home due to social distancing guidance, DC is  
18 the only person in the room.

19 Matthew Mailloux (MM) - Attended virtually from home due to social distancing guidance, MM  
20 is the only person in the room.

21  
22 BR reiterated the requirement that all votes must be recorded by roll call under the emergency  
23 order provisions.

24  
25 BR asked if there was any public input at this time.

26  
27 **There was no public input.**

28  
29 BR reviewed the meeting agenda and asked if there were any adjustments to the published  
30 agenda. The Committee reviewed the agenda.

MM asked if everyone had received his email with a draft letter earlier in the day. The Committee confirmed it had.

**There were no other adjustments.**

BR moved to approve the minutes from the April 21 meeting. BR asked if the Committee had any changes to the draft minutes.

MM mentioned a typo in the first page under meeting called to order, and asked to change “in in” to “is in.”

**BR entered the voting mode and voted yes. DC voted yes. MM voted yes. The motion carried 3-0, and the minutes from April 21 were approved.**

BR advanced to a review of town expenses and revenues.

BR mentioned that the town has provided the numbers earlier in the day, comparing the current year to 2019 numbers for Jan-April. BR said that on the revenue side the town is tracking closely to last year at this time, a little bit down but not terribly.

BR said that total income from Jan to April was approximately \$1,039,000 compared to last year’s roughly 1,072,000. Nothing really jumped out necessarily upon his initial review.

BR asked the other committee members if they had time to review the numbers and if they had any other observations.

MM said that he had reviewed it and had questions on a couple line items.

DC mentioned that he had briefly reviewed the numbers as well but did not have comments at this time.

MM said that he noticed the workmen’s comp line on page 4, item number 4196.91 has increased considerably year over year.

BR mentioned that the item was variable quite a bit but would need to do more research with the town to investigate why the numbers have fluctuated in this particular case.

MM continued to page 6, pointing out item 4442, direct assistance.

BR explained that there are several aspects of welfare in the town, including the soup kitchen and food pantry below the town hall. The Direct assistance line is for people to ask the town for specific needs, including potentially gas money or heating and electric bill assistance. The Town maintains a certain amount of money to assist with those types of expenses on a case by case basis. Usually the town see small amount charged in most years, but in an economic downturn the expenses increase considerably. BR anticipated a significant expense this year.

77  
78 MM said it represented the tip of the iceberg for what's to come this year.

79  
80 BR mentioned his intention to review the numbers in more depth prior to the next meeting. BR  
81 asked committee members to any questions to him in case he needs to contact town officials for  
82 additional information.

83  
84 BR asked if the committee had time to review the comparative numbers for 2020 expenses in  
85 percent terms.

86  
87 MM said that he noticed that the seasonally warm winter and low fuel prices were a boon to the  
88 town's budget expenses year to date.

89  
90 BR said the committee will continue to review expenses at the next meeting. BR mentioned that  
91 he had reached out to Tad for an update on state revenues coming into the town but is still  
92 waiting to hear back. BR asked if there was anything else on expenses and revenues at this time.

93  
94 **The committee agreed to continue reviewing these items at the next scheduled meeting.**

95  
96 BR advanced the meeting to a discuss of school expenses and busing contracts.

97  
98 BR asked if any of the Committee members had been able to attend the recent Brookline School  
99 Board meetings and if they could update the board.

100  
101 MM said that he attended the most recent meeting where the Board discussed the potential for  
102 unexpended funds at the end of the fiscal year and a renegotiated busing contract given the  
103 impacts of the covid-19 pandemic and the switch to remote learning.

104  
105 MM apologized for technical difficulties with his connection and continued attending the  
106 meeting in audio only mode.

107  
108 MM mentioned that the Board had tentatively forecasted approximately \$400,000 in unexpended  
109 funds for the current fiscal year, subject to change as purchase orders are finalized or closed out.  
110 MM mentioned the Board is looking at the potential of rolling some funds forward into the next  
111 fiscal year but was not well apprised of the details for such a transfer. MM said that the Board  
112 was looking to position the district in the best position heading into the fall.

113  
114 MM continued to discuss the busing contract that the School Board had discussed renegotiation.  
115 MM described that there were both fixed and operational costs connected to the contract. MM  
116 said that originally the bus company had proposed a 55-45 cost share for the contract. The Board  
117 had agreed to a 70/30 cost share cap that would cover the fixed costs that were still incurred  
118 during the pandemic. This agreement was more favorable to the town. Operational cost savings  
119 had come in the form of fuel savings and wages, given that drivers were able to claim  
120 unemployment insurance from the state as well as federal funds available under the CARES Act.

MM described this as a positive development that help the district preserve the existing vendor relationship as well as achieving cost savings.

BR thanked MM for providing the update and mentioned that he had reviewed the draft letter on this topic. **See Final Letter in Attachment A.**

BR mentioned that the letter was encouraging and personally like the way it was worded. BR asked if DC had reviewed the letter.

DC said that he had and agreed it was a nice gesture identifying good fiduciary policy on behalf of the town. DC recommended a grammatical change to the “elected officials steering the Brookline School District” to better reflect the intent of the sentence.

MM and BR agreed to make the change to avoid misinterpretation.

**BR agreed to send the letter to the School Board from the committee as the chairman.**

DC said the letter was a thoughtful gesture and one way to show the Board that the Finance Committee is paying attention. DC mentioned that he was glad to see the Board push back on the initial proposal.

BR asked MM to provide an update on the Budget Committee “BudCom” Study Committee.

MM provided an update saying that the BudCom Study Committee had met once thus far, electing Eric Pauer as Chairman and MM as Vice-Chairman. Gaylord Sledge was elected as Secretary.

MM said that the Study Committee has its first substantive meeting on May 22 at 4:30pm. MM said that the meeting agenda includes a review of RSAs and mapping resources available to support the Study Committee’s efforts. MM said that he looks forward to providing more updates at the next Finance Committee meeting.

BR provided an update on the Department of Public Works (DPW) Study Committee saying that the DPW Committee has met twice, once via Zoom and once in person at the Town Hall auditorium. BR said the in-person meeting was to review draft prints of the building and site plans and that social distancing guidelines were followed.

BR said that the DPW committee will be meeting weekly on Tuesdays, which is why the Finance Committee meetings have been shifted to Wednesday nights. BR thanked the Committee for its flexibility in making the change.

BR said the DPW committee is looking to finalize work that had begun last year to get a “Guaranteed Maximum Price” and was doing cost estimates for the necessary equipment to properly equip the building. BR said that there is an existing contractor doing the cost estimation and that the plans are now available to finish the task.

BR discussed the DPW Committee's interim report for the Selectboard due this summer and was working to prepare materials for public education to answer questions that will likely arise. BR said that once cost estimates are received the DPW Committee will look to see if any areas need to be scaled back to achieve a palatable dollar amount. BR said that the cost estimates will be vital in determining the committee's next steps.

**BR asked if the Committee had comments on anything else going on in town related to the Finance Committee.**

DC mentioned that town residents have been actively discussing the potential for excess school revenues to be refunded to taxpayers this year online and in other mediums. DC mentioned that the Finance Committee will need to stay apprised of these developments and should be prepared to answer questions.

BR mentioned the School District uses a fiscal year that ends on June 30<sup>th</sup> and as the date approaches there will be more certainty. BR said that the Finance Committee should plan to provide input on this issue at the next School Board meeting.

DC mentioned that he will attend the next meeting of the School Board.

MM mentioned that including numbers for the HB COOP would be useful for the Finance Committee to speak knowledgeably about the full scope of the issue.

BR mentioned that he serves on the HB COOP Budget Committee and will provide information as it becomes available.

MM mentioned the Planning Board is meeting tomorrow to discuss two different site plans along the Route 13 corridor and that he was planning to attend the meeting.

DC mentioned he had noticed Facebook chatter about the potential for a retail space development.

BR stated that he was not specifically aware of this proposal but noted that the Economic Development Committee had previously worked with the State to obtain economic modeling that small office space and/or retail developments may be well suited for a town of Brookline's size. A small office may be a boon for a local business to obtain a physical location and offer the potential for future growth.

BR asked if there was any other discussion or action items for next meeting. BR mentioned that it is still early on the year, while the budget process picks up considerably in the fall.

**There was no other discussion.**

**BR asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. MM moved to adjourn; DC seconded.**

213 **BR entered the voting mode and voted yes. DC voted yes. MM voted yes. The motion**  
214 **carried 3-0.**  
215  
216 **The meeting was Adjourned at 7:34pm**

**ATTACHMENT A:** Finance Committee Letter to the Brookline School Board.

May 20, 2020

Honorable Members of the Brookline School Board,

In the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the effects of our decisions concerning town expenditures are critical to ensuring that the Town of Brookline remains on strong financial footing.

We understand the challenges of preparing for the future in the midst of unprecedented uncertainty. It is impossible for any one of us to fully understand the economic impacts that will become reality in the next year and beyond.

The Finance Committee would like to commend the Board's efforts to revise secure contracts that are in the best interest of the town's students and taxpayers alike.

The proposed 70-30 share of expenses for the bus company contract is a promising development. These revised terms are favorable for the town and will help to preserve the existing relationship into the future. By continuing to uphold our share of fixed expenses, while deferring or forgoing operational expenses, this revised contract passes muster both on a short- and long-term basis.

The Finance Committee hopes that all Town Boards will look for similar opportunities, no matter how big or small, to achieve similar savings. Your efforts have set a positive example in these trying times.

Sincerely,

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Brian Rater  
Chairman

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Matthew Mailloux  
Secretary

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Dennis Comeau  
Member

cc:  
Superintendent Andrew Corey  
Brookline Selectboard