



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

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**Brookline Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, November 16, 2020**

1 \*Meeting Held Virtually Under Emergency Order #12\*

2  
3 Committee Attendance: Brian Rater, Matthew Mailloux, Dennis Comeau  
4 Meeting held jointly with Brookline Selectboard.

5  
6 **Meeting called to order: 7:07pm**

7  
8 Brian Rater (BR) – Welcomed finance committee members to the joint meeting with the  
9 Selectboard. BR announced that the meeting was being held under the provisions of Emergency  
10 Order #12. Under this emergency order each member in attendance is required to announce the  
11 reason for attending virtually, their location, and if anyone other than themselves is in the room.

12  
13 BR- Attended virtually due to social distancing guidance, BR is the only person in the room.  
14 Matthew Mailloux (MM) - Attended virtually due to social distancing guidance, MM is the only  
15 person in the room. Dennis Comeau (DC) Attended virtually due to social distancing guidance,  
16 MM is the only person in the room.

17  
18 BR reiterated the requirement that all votes must be recorded by roll call under the emergency  
19 order provisions.

20  
21 **BR turned control of the meeting back to the Selectboard, which invited Tad Putney (TP)**  
22 **to speak to materials provided to the committees earlier in the day.**

23  
24 TP spoke to the 3 documents including the updated town operating budget and warrant articles.  
25 TP stated the projected topline appropriations between the town operating budget and the  
26 warrant articles, excluding the to be updated police union contract, is 2.4%.

27  
28 TP stated that the 7 operating budget line items encased in boxes have been updated since the  
29 last draft. These changes offset each other leaving the year over year operating budget increase

30 still projected at a 6.4% increase. Of this increase, 3.9% is attributable to the fire truck lease  
31 approved at 2020 town meeting.

32  
33 Dana Ketchen asked the finance committee to weigh in on the revised budget projections.

34  
35 BR spoke to the finance committee's process to date, which has not included in depth  
36 independent meetings as of yet. BR pointed to the 2021 tax rate decrease as a positive sign for  
37 the process thus far.

38  
39 MM said that the fundamentals of the proposed budget were strong, applauded the town for  
40 seeking state funds to offset COVID-19 costs, and pointed to the 2.4% increase in overall  
41 appropriations as a strong starting point with more work still to do.

42  
43 DC said that so far, he has found the department head presentations helpful, concurred with BR  
44 and MM, and agreed there was more work to do in certain areas of the budget.

45  
46 **TP continued to review the proposed 2021 warrant articles.**

47  
48 TP recommended a \$15k increase, from \$10 to \$25k for the Facility Capital Reserve Fund,  
49 stating that the original intent behind the Facility Fund was to amass a \$30k balance.

50  
51 MM asked if Tad could recommend a commensurate reduction to another warrant article to make  
52 this change budget neutral. TP said he did not have a recommendation for the same.

53  
54 The Selectboard discussed potential changes to the fire department structure via a warrant article,  
55 which will hinge on timing considerations and on-going discussions.

56  
57 **The Selectboard turned to a discussion of the Budget Study Committee's final report,**  
58 **which was previously presented.**

59  
60 Ron Olsen (RO) stated that he would like to see this board be made up of self-selected  
61 volunteers, hoping to increase participation. Drew Kellner replied that the statute is very  
62 particular in how the seats can be filled, through moderator appointment or election. BR  
63 confirmed the statute was clear in which options would be available should the town choose to  
64 enact a budget committee.

65  
66 Ed Arnold (EA) commented that recruitment for the current finance committee has been a  
67 challenge in past years and was concerned about a potential expansion to a 5-member board due  
68 to these recruitment challenges. EA continued to say that he does not see any concerns with the  
69 current town structure, and that the data doesn't point to an expected tax rate change.

70  
71 Dana Ketchen asked if the committee has finished its work. Drew Kellner confirmed it was  
72 finished but was willing to help prepare warrant articles as necessary.

73  
74 Dana Ketchen proceeded to ask whether the study committee members would state their  
75 opinions on the merits of the change. Drew Kellner responded that the committee has mixed

76 opinions broadly speaking but did ultimately recommend this article go before the voters. MM  
77 concurred that the committee had mixed views.

78 Brendan Denehey (BD) stated after reading the report it seems that, in other towns, the  
79 perception of the Selectboard's performance is correlated with support for a change in budget  
80 structure. BD said he is leaning against bringing this forward as a warrant article.

81  
82 Drew Kellner responded that based on the discussion at 2020 Town Meeting and the committee's  
83 work, a warrant article should come forward for the voters to decide. MM concurred saying that  
84 the study committee was unanimous in its support for the voters to have the final say on this  
85 proposal.

86  
87 BR agreed that the town has a responsibility to bring the warrant article forward for the voters to  
88 decide but said that in light of the COVID-19 pandemic this was not an urgent issue, and  
89 recommended waiting until the 2022 Town Meeting.

90  
91 Drew Kellner said the town should prepare to bring it forward in 2021 but can make the decision  
92 later based on the pandemic and the challenges to host a traditional town meeting next spring.

93  
94 Dana Ketchen mentioned that she further reviewed the report and can't find the "it" factor for the  
95 recommendation, but agreed the warrant article should go forward, but with considerations for  
96 the pandemic.

97  
98 DC agreed there may be merit on holding off on major items that are not time-sensitive during  
99 the pandemic. DC stated that the study fulfilled the voters' request for more information and that  
100 given the lack of a compelling argument in either direction, it is an issue of governing  
101 philosophy that is solely for the voters to determine.

102  
103 **There was no further discussion.**

104  
105 TP mentioned that the committee should look forward to the December 14<sup>th</sup> Selectboard meeting  
106 for further warrant article development.

107  
108 **MM moved to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting; DC seconded the motion. The**  
109 **motion passed 3-0.**

110  
111 **Adjourned 8:07pm.**