

TOWN OF WENHAM

Finance & Advisory Committee / Board of Selectmen

FY22 Budget Meeting of January 9, 2021

Town Hall 138 Main Street

Pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. Chapter 30 A, §§ 18-25, written notice posted by the Town Clerk delivered to all members, a meeting of the Finance & Advisory Committee (FinCom) and the Board of Selectmen (BOS) was held on Saturday January 9, 2021 at 8:30am. *Due to the COVID19 Virus pandemic, and restrictions concerning in-person gatherings ordered by the Governor, this meeting took place virtually on Zoom.*

Please be advised that this open meeting is being broadcast live and recorded by HWCAM for playback on Comcast channel 8 and Verizon channel 36. It will also be available for on-line, video on-demand viewing at hwcam.org.

All participants wishing to address the BOS during public comments must indicate so in the Zoom meeting chat. Public Comment will last for 10 minutes and each resident is allowed to speak for no longer than 2 minutes.

Call to Order

With a quorum present Mr. Purdy called the Finance & Advisory Committee meeting to order at 8:33am.

With a quorum present, Mr. Cheeseman called the Board of Selectmen meeting to order at 8:33am.

Present for the entire meeting:

Finance Committee members James Purdy, Chair; Carrie Jelsma Vice Chair; Alex Begin; Susan Mehlin; David Molitano

Selectman Gary Cheeseman, Chair/Clerk; John Clemenzi, Vice Chair

Town staff members Tom Younger, Interim Town Administrator; Yeimi Colon, Finance Director; Jackie Bresnahan, Director of Administrative Services; Nicci Roebuck, Executive Assistant Town Administrator's Office; Catherine Tinsley, Recording Secretary

Not present: Selectman Jack Wilhelm

Abbreviations used

FY Fiscal Year

COLA Cost of Living Adjustments

HW Hamilton Wenham

RSD Regional School District

Public Comment – Mr. Purdy recognized Carrie Jelsma, Finance Committee Vice Chair, who read a statement for the record, in which she asked Selectman Clemenzi if he would resign. Ms. Jelsma's statement is a part of these minutes. (page 7).

Ms. Mehlin spoke as a member of the FinCom and agreed that Mr. Clemenzi should resign.

Patrick Waddell, Great Pond Road, asked Selectman Clemenzi to resign.

The FY22 Budget presentation is available on the town's web site.

FY 22 Overview and Department Budgets

➤ A PowerPoint presentation overview of the FY22 budget was referenced for each department presentation.

➤ The agenda for the meeting:

- Department Overview
- Administrative Departments
- First Batch of Departments
- Second Batch of Departments
- Recap & Next Steps

● Overview

- Fy 22 Department Budget fully included in roll up, including capital requests
- All potential capital requests are included in the capital master summary
- All current contracts and agreements are included
- No COLA for any stipend
- HWRSD Budget as presented (Wednesday) is fully loaded at 2.8% increase.
- Reminder FY20 actuals were low in some cases based on spending freeze.
- FY21 had cuts due to COVID19 so some increases seem greater in context by returning to pre-COVID funding requests and each department head will address that as needed.
- Current revenue /expense spread sheet includes no use of free cash at this time for planning purposes.

- Budget Team Approach
 - Conservative revenue forecasting
 - Mindful of our obligations to contracts and soon to be retirees
 - Total Revenue - \$21,721,755
 - Total Expense \$22,390,339
 - Deficit \$662,584
 - Free Cash (estimate) \$975,000 (includes \$250,000 for reserve)

Additional information was available in the budget binders and included Department Mission Statement, Programs & Services, Department Overview, Organizational Chart, Budget Requests, FY2021 Accomplishments, FY2022 Goals & Initiatives, Personnel Chart, and budget charts,

All department budgets included salary lines with COLA and possible merit increases, capital requests, if any, and expenses.

Department Budget Presentations:

- Town Hall (Yeimi Colon, and Jackie Bresnahan)

An update on CARES Act funding will be on the next Finance Committee meeting agenda.

Ms. Bresnahan reviewed the following budgets, and noted that free cash can be used to fund capital requests.

- Board of Selectmen stipends - Chair \$4527.12; Vice Chair & Clerk \$3473.33
 - There is a data plan for the Selectmen's iPad at 15 per iPad. This will be confirmed if needed.
 - The Selectmen budget includes Town Administrator search \$10,000.
- Town Administration – Search for new Town Administrator is pending.
 - A 3% increase was included as a forecasting increase in the salary line at \$139,909.00.
 - The salary advertised for \$135,000 based on experience of the candidate to be negotiated.
- Town Hall budget includes Town Meeting expenses including some printing costs and now includes the entire budget for the Director of Administrative Services. The increase in utilities included a phone application to allow staff to forward town hall calls when working from home, and used for contact tracing.
- Information Technology (IT)- Ms. Roebuck noted IT updates are pending including software. Danvers is the town lead for shared IT services and is working on a Memorandum of Understanding.
- Town Counsel /Legal budget – Ms. Roebuck reviewed the legal budget has been increased 5% in previous years; in FY21 the budget was increased 12% and is already 51% expended. For FY22 the budget was increased 33% to \$100,000. A spread sheet was referenced for a breakdown of expenses. It was noted labor counsel for library union negotiations (shared with Hamilton), a complaint against a selectman, Salem Beverly Water Board, and Maple Woods were major drivers.

The FinCom requested that the FY20 legal expenses be added to the FY21 spreadsheet; this information will be provided to the committee in a follow up email and supplemental material for the binders.

- Annual Audit increased by \$1000.00 for contractual agreement with Powers & Sullivan.
- Reserve Fund – Funded at \$125,000 as has been funded previously.
- Municipal Audit – Increased a \$1,000 to \$25,000.
- Street Lighting- Level funded. The total savings by switching to LED lighting will be provided to the Finance Committee.
- Refuse Collection and Disposal - Refuse budgeted at \$469,656.50 including contracted rates with Casella (\$375,420) for collection, Wheelabrator (\$80,436) for trash processing, Brick Ends Farm (\$6,300) for organic processing, Waste Zero (\$5,000) for green Wenham trash bags (number of bags provided within the budget requested), and hazardous waste collection day (\$2,500) shared with Hamilton. The monthly revenue from Waste Zero will be provided.

Ms. Mehlin questioned a \$10 a ton discount possibly being offered to Hamilton by Brick Ends Farm.

Mr. Purdy referenced the increase in refuse collection and noted that discussions about trash fees will continue.

- General Insurance increased through MIAA 10% / \$15,000 used for the budget. The Town has a \$5,000 deductible for the town hall complaint. Increases in premiums are seen in the next FY bill issued May/June.

Mr. Purdy observed the town does not have a budget line for Human Resource services; this will be discussed on an upcoming meeting.

- Assessing Department (Steve Ozahowski)

Mr. Ozahowski spoke on the increase in new growth and surge of house sales in Wenham and noted that home assessments are being updated to reflect the fair market value. The overlay account report was a part of this review.

- Town Clerk (Dianne Bucco)

Ms. Bucco spoke on the budgets cuts made in the Town Clerk's office due to COVID and that the FY22 budget included bringing back the compensation for Election Officers and the hours for the Town Clerk Administrative Assistant at less hours with an increased rate from \$21.93 to \$24.00.

- Land Use (Margaret Hoffman, Planning Coordinator)

The Land Use Department consists of two part-time staff and covers the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Conservation Commission, and the Open Space & Recreation Committee. Ms. Hoffman noted that the Conservation Coordinator positions is currently open.

Ms. Hoffman applied for, and received, over \$50,000 in grants recently to update the zoning/ general bylaws and regulations.

Ms. Hoffman spoke on the on the need for a Master Plan to improve efficiencies and encouraged the Committee to support a Master Plan as requested in the FY22 budget. Planning Board members present were Ann Weeks, Chair, David Anderson, Peter Clay. Ms. Weeks spoke strongly in support of the Master Plan, citing the current 1960 Master Plan is not up to date and cannot be referenced for guidance by the Planning Board and how Wenham wants to go forward. Otherwise, staff and board members are the making impactful decisions for the entire town. She mentioned that grants opportunities are available to those towns with a Master Plan. Ms. Weeks added that a Master Plan usually takes more than 12 months and with ability to be flexible, the cost could be spread over a couple years.

Mr. Purdy noted the Town of Hamilton has funded a Master Plan and offered to include Wenham in their Master Plan activities and include Wenham with joint services.

Ms. Jelsma observed not having a Master Plan is broaching municipal mismanagement and long-term planning is needed.

Mr. Cheeseman agreed Wenham needs to move into the modern age of town management and a Master Plan to get access to state funding and allows the town to come to a consensus of what the town should look like in the future. He added a plan needs to be in place on how to go forward and to fund and create a Master Plan.

Ms. Mehlin opined by not having a Master Plan, the town is wasting time and money. She referenced the increased legal fees that could be used towards Master Plan, which is critical and needed immediately.

Mr. Younger stated a Master Plan was very important to control a town's destiny.

Ms. Bresnahan noted that this is a one-time capital cost that is not built into the operating budget and may be funded by free cash, if this is a project the FinCom/BOS wanted to include. The proposed capital subcommittee would work on funding strategies for the Master Plan and other capital.

There was general support for a Master Plan to be considered in the FY 22 budget.

A five-minute recess was called. The meeting reconvened at 10:55am.

- Council on Aging (Jim Reynolds, Director)

Mr. Reynolds spoke on a budget increase consisting of higher hourly wage rate for the marketing position and the van driver positions. The van service has operated safely during COVID to provide needed transportation.

The COA expense line includes utilities for the COA building and was level funded. Contract services include instruction programs through the COA.

- Joint Library (Kim Butler, Director)

Hamilton Finance Committee Chair John Pruellage participated in the Joint Library discussion with permission.

Ms. Butler stated the Library was a level funded budget. The union agreed to zero increase for FY22 due to the town's financial state.

The budget includes filling two of the four open part time positions at the library. The library received a grant from the Board of Library Commissioners to do a preservation study of local history collection, which included the recommendation a staff person with archival experience manage that collection; this is one of the part-time positions.

Ms. Bresnahan noted the revenue expense wrap up for the library will be updated to reflect the union contract negotiations.

Ms. Bresnahan gave an update on the proposed solar project at the library to install solar panels after the roof repairs.

Ms. Bresnahan noted that \$75,000 was budgeted in FY21 for Wenham's share of the library roof repairs but it was determined the original quotes did not include prevailing wages and the estimate was not sufficient to do the work. An in-depth presentation will be provided by the capital subcommittee, but in summary, the invitation for bid will include both the library and recreation building for possible cost savings of doing both roofs at the same time. The proposal is \$321,000 /\$110,00 Wenham's assessment. Additionally, Wenham needs to budget an additional \$80,000 for the project. The work would be scheduled to be done one summer to span over two fiscal years.

Ms. Mehlin encouraged the roof warranty be fully vetted, thinking 20 years is not a long time for the life of a commercial roof and also noted her concern that each year the project is delayed, prevailing wages increase.

The calculations of the cost to install solar panels to the benefits and cost savings were not analyzed to the satisfaction of the Finance Committee to support the panels at this time.

Mr. Begin was clear that the solar project was very much still to be determined pending the financials. The FinCom requested a copy of the roof assessment report (including photos) and the roof warranty.

- Cemetery (Bill Wilson, Chair Cemetery Commission)

Cemeteries in Wenham are located on Main Street, William Fairfield Drive, and the Iron Rail.

Mr. Wilson identified the positions associated with the Cemetery were a burial agent and administrative support. This year the budget includes tree removal, repointing granite walls, and monument repair. The request is for the town to fund 20% of total costs with the remainder to be funded through the Trust fund account.”

The Cemetery Commission has access to Cemetery Trust Funds for cemetery related expenses. The transfer of funds from the Sale of Lots Fund must be approved at town meeting.

The FinCom observed that the named accounts (Allen, Batchelder, Perkins, Wentworth) in both the expendable and non-expendable accounts had the same balance; Mr. Wilson cited this as an oversight and will provide updated account balances. The Cemetery fees were thought to have been updated in 2017.

- Permitting / Inspectional Services, Board of Health (Jackie Bresnahan)

Ms. Bresnahan noted that there are on-going discussions that Hamilton be the lead community for shared inspectional services for the next three years. Hamilton has a Human Resource position to facilitate this lead. There would be no changes other than administrative; Wenham would receive an assessment from Hamilton. This is a placeholder budget at this time.

At this time expenses are steady. There was no loss of service due to COVID. With the new software platform, the inspectional service department was fully operational when town hall was remote.

The inspectors’ salaries now include mileage pay. The department model is to have non-benefited part-time plumbing and electrical inspectors, with one full-time building inspector.

- Board of Health – The Public Health Nurse continues to operate under an amended job description due to COVID19.

This increase in responsibilities is mostly paid from the state emergency declaration Care Act funds. This budget includes the cost for flu clinics, Animal Inspector, Assistant Health Agent, and Health Agent. Ms. Bresnahan noted this was a busy year for inspections. The budget includes \$5000 for emergency management drills (Wenham has no emergency management lead position) this will be discussed in detail with Public Safety. Wenham is one of the most prepared towns on the North Shore due to training.

This budget includes 6 months of funding in the event Cares Act money is no longer available for future needs found not eligible under the Act.

- Water Department (Erik Mansfield, Supervisor)

The Water Department is overseen by a Water Commission.

Mr. Mansfield began with the salary line which includes a newly requested secondary operator position, including benefits, moved from a stipend position. The Water Department reimburses the town for benefits their employees and indirect costs.

The budget includes an annual capital reserve transfer of \$30,000.

This budget is funded solely by water rates. Wenham has one of the lowest water rates in the North Shore. The water rate increase will be active January 1, 2021.

Ms. Bresnahan noted with the pending retirement of the DPW Director at the end of 2021, the Government Study Committee will be tasked with considering the merger of the Water Department and Department of Public works or if the two departments should remain separate.

The Water Department’s primary operator is retiring in the fall of 2021. Mr. Mansfield recommended an article for town meeting to approve the transfer \$15,000 for sick leave buy back.

The Water Commissioners continue to monitor for leaks, and look for water conservation programs i.e. rain barrels. It was noted a Master Plan for the town would include water usage for new developments.

- Highway Department, Buildings and Grounds Maintenance, Snow Removal, and Tree Warden (Bill Tyack, Director)

Mr. Tyack reviewed that contractual obligations with the union are the only salary changes; the budget includes summer help. The impact of leaf pick-up cost, staff, time realized savings this year (residents did not pass an override for leaf pickup at the 2020 Town Meeting). Two bagged leaf pick-ups provided by Casella are in the budget. The DPW now has the manpower to do the MS4 mandated permitting requirements in-house (testing, inspected etc.) and landscaping, previously contracted out providing a cost savings to the town. The DPW had staff turnover this year that impacted the department.

Total Capital requested: \$276,000 (37% increase)

- Road repair \$85,000
- John Deer backhoe - \$36,000 ongoing lease 2/3
- John Deer loader– \$35,000 ongoing lease 3/5

- One tone dump truck with plow - \$65,000
- Ride on roller – \$20,000 purchase
- Trackless municipal tractor - \$37,000 annual lease 1/3

A discussion on the facility director's salary followed. Mr. Tyack acknowledged he has a hard time keeping help and supported a salary survey. The current facility director is a licensed electrician and Mr. Tyack proposed his salary be increased from \$69,000 to \$72,800. This position will be on an upcoming agenda for additional discussion.

Mr. Younger cautioned that approving salary increase without a plan citing concern of how other employees perceive this action. This will be discussed at a future meeting including a salary study.

Mr. Tyack reviewed projects to be done in FY22. This included an upgrade to the server that runs HVC controls for public safety and town hall and for the server to be relocated to the Wenham town hall. Currently, the server is shared with, and located in, Hamilton. This makes it difficult to access.

- Tree Warden – The hazardous tree removal budget was increased to \$5000 to include the removal of some large maple trees on William Fairfield Drive, starting with the worse trees.

The FinCom requested to know the scope of tree removal in town. Because the tree warden's budget is not fully loaded, emergency tree removal is taken out of the DPW budget.

- Iron Rail Property (Lou Randazzo, Chair Iron Rail Commission (IRC))

Tenant rent update - Mr. Randazzo reported that all Iron Rail tenants are making monthly rent payments at this time. Two of the tenants are not making full payments. All tenants received a letter from the IRC to provide a written plan to make up the balance of their back rent including identifying the use of state grants. Mr. Randazzo recommended this discussion include Town Counsel due to recent changes in the law during COVID.

It was noted that the Town has collected revenue to cover the loan payments for Iron Rail.

A lengthy discussion ensued. Mr. Purdy noted the FinCom just became aware of the situation about a month ago when the tenants were about \$91,000 (estimated) in arrears and questioned how the town should monitor this going forward.

Ms. Bresnahan interjected that the details of the plans should be with the BOS as the landlords, adding that the IRC serves as the property managers.

Mr. Cheeseman asked that the BOS and FinCom be given regular updates.

Some FinCom members voiced concern with the ability of the tenants to pay the arrears and legal options to the town.

The BOS needs to understand the terms of the lease and act appropriately as the landlords and work with the IRC directly.

Ms. Colon will provide a breakdown of payments and amounts owed to the committee members.

A meeting will be scheduled for the BOS, FC, IRC, with the tenants and town counsel present.

Recess from 1:45pm to 1:50pm.

- Police Department (Chief Tom Perkins & Deputy Chief DiNapoli)

- Animal Control Services, Emergency Preparedness, Community Contact Initiative, Management of the Town Beach (Pleasant Pond), Expansion of Investigative Unit, and continuation of community-based policing.

Chief Perkins noted he is due to retire in May 2021 and this would be his last budget presentation and thanked the committee for their support.

Chief Perkins identified that the salary line included an additional full-time officer increasing the force from 10 to 11; this position will be funded entirely within the salary reserve budget. Chief Perkins spoke on the unfunded mandate that officers must have additional training due to recent Massachusetts legislation.

The Police Department's administrator is retiring in June 2021. Currently this is an AFSME position, but previous Town Administrators recommended that since this position has a high confidential professional requirement as part of the job description/ requirements and that it be changed to a non-union position.

A draft job description was provided in the budget for review, along with a recommendation to increase the salary to attract someone with IT experience, social media experience, and human resource experience.

Mr. Younger will provide additional information on this position.

Deputy Chief DiNapoli spoke on the benefits of hiring trained and educated police officers. He explained the department currently depends too much on the 16 reserve police officers that work about 16 shifts a week, noting most of these officers also have a full-time job. Ideally, there would be 8-10 reserve officers who work a few times a month sharing a shift with a full-time officer; the additional patrol officer will allow a full-time officer on every shift. Deputy DiNapoli mentioned that full-time officers have about 600 more training hours. The reform bill requires reserve officers must have additional training which has not been specified and therefore is not in the FY22 budget, at this time, but is estimated at \$17,000 per reserve officer.

If the eleventh officer is authorized, the three open reserve officer positions will not be filled, and the town will see a cost savings. Chief Perkins observed the last time the police rank was increased was in 1989.

There is a \$13,000 increase in the expense budget; a portion of this is restoration of the cuts made last year.

Total Capital requests \$64,000

- One front line vehicle \$42,000 in accordance with the vehicle replacement schedule. Reminder that these cruisers run 24 hours, 7 days a week and are driven by 26 different people. Vehicles are traded in at three years, just under 100,000 miles for maximum trade in value. The two-way radios in the cruisers are not repairable and outdated/not supported. (The cost of a new radio is \$5,000; five radios need to be replaced).
- Administrative vehicle \$15,000 – 3-year lease. The department has (two) administrative vehicles which last 6 years
- Replace half of the patrol rifles at \$7,000

Mr. Younger observed that he generally likes to see cruisers lease/purchase in the operation budget verses capital, because they don't meet the criteria for capital, as well as the replacement of rifles.

Chief Perkins noted that the building maintenance is being monitored i.e. painting, roof repairs. Improvements to the booking area will be included in the capital plan.

There was a brief discussion on Pleasant Pond, which was closed last year due to Covid. The cost of operating the beach is prohibitive and subsidized by the town. The Town of Hamilton no longer participates in the beach as a shared program. Without policy direction from the BOS, the beach program was included in the FY22 budget.

The Capital Subcommittee will be tasked to review an assessment of all the public buildings for cost savings by doing repairs, maintenance, painting at the same time.

The agenda was taken out of order while waiting for the Fire Department's presentation. *

- Fire Department (Chief Stephen Kavanagh and Deputy Chief Baxter)

Ms. Colon observed the spreadsheet in the binders was not correct and she would email an updated one after the meeting. Chief Kavanagh reviewed the salaried positions and firefighter on call wages. He stated that the COLAs added to the stipends in the budget will be removed. The EMT stipend was moved to expense and part-time mechanic moved to vehicle expense. Chief Kavanagh went on to summarize the pay schedules for call firefighters, stipends for rank and station coverage, training, and certification.

Overtime wages increased \$40,000 for a full-time firefighter for after hour calls and a town employee that works for the highway who responds to 50% of the calls but is on duty for DPW. Although they are waiting for a ruling if he can be paid out of on call wages (\$18,000 has been earmarked).

Four firefighters are sent to the Fire Academy each year. This is a 240-hour class over four months. Upon completion of the class, the firefighter receives a one-time incentive payment of \$1500.

Currently those firefighters working the ambulance during COVID get an additional hour of pay.

On call wages was increased to cover all firefighters that respond to calls. The \$30,000 increase is for coverage that is needed during the week because most firefighters work out of town. This also provides coverage at the station when the ambulance is out.

Mr. Purdy questioned the \$50,000 increase in wages between the two lines.

Chief Kavanagh reviewed the coverage needed at the station to be more than just two firefighters especially when responding to a call or when two people are on an ambulance call no one is at the station. This was thought to happen at least once a week.

Ms. Bresnahan interjected that the recommendation is to make this an identified person (firefighter / EMT) as a part time position for budgeting purposes and tracking, rather than paid through on call wages. This is a preliminary budget and she recommended a policy discussion on how best to address additional coverage in a wider context.

The weekly schedule was requested for review with the budget. Chief Kavanagh noted the device used by the fire department to track firefighters who respond to calls was revoked due to COVID. Ms. Bresnahan mentioned that the town considered a swipe card version and suggested the department get it up and running, but in the meantime the last data collected would be helpful.

The Finance Committee requested a coverage schedule accompany the revised proposed budget, statistics of when there is no coverage at the station, and when there is one person at the station.

Chief Kavanagh spoke on the Expense Line. This includes utilities, repairs and maintenance of the vehicles, and service plans, building expenses and contracted services i.e. EMS billing, dispatchers, regional and hospital agreements, and training.

Because there were several iterations and changes in the Fire Department budget, some of the budget lines do not reconcile; the budget will be updated and presented at the next budget meeting.

A new (second) ambulance may be purchased through the fire gift account, but a new ambulance would still impact the town expense budget.

- *Finance Department, Retirement, and Employee Benefits (Yeimi Colon)
Finance Director/Town Accountant, Treasurer Collector, Assistant Treasurer Collector & Payroll Benefits Coordinator
Ms. Colon reviewed the Finance Department budget and noted the corrected total for salary & wages was \$245,454.
The Finance Department has no capital requests. The budget includes an increase of \$4000 for software start-up costs of an electronic version of the budget to be paid out of Cares Act funding.
Essex County retirement increase 4% / \$898,615
Insurance (BCBS) increase is 8% increase / \$94,4217. There was a brief discussion in order for the employee opt out incentive to be activated on July 1, a policy needs to be approved by the BOS in time for open enrollment this spring.
Ms. Bresnahan spoke on the personnel reserve budget line added last year. This account was originally funded with additional funding from Hamilton (\$31,110) to be used for the unfunded obligation of the town for the 10 -12 employees that are in the sick time buy back when they retire; this policy no longer exists.

(Fire Department)

- Review of FY22 Budget Status and Next Steps (Yeimi Colon and Jackie Bresnahan)
Ms. Bresnahan gave an overview of the proposed capital requests, additional projects, debt, Master Plan, and a Compensation and Classification study.
Mr. Younger spoke briefly on the Compensation & Classification study and possible funding implications about changing certain positions, salaries or pay structure, etc. He estimated the cost to be between \$10,000- \$15,000. This is not included in a Master Plan.
Ms. Bresnahan noted Iron Rail revenue to date will fund the debt payment for Iron Rail.
Currently, the school budget is a 2.8% increase over last year for Wenham, compared to last year's increase of 9.1%.

Additional meeting dates will be scheduled and the budget calendar updated.
March 23 was decided as the target date to have everything completed to go to print.

At the next FinCom meeting, the committee will discuss liaison rolls, form the Capital Sub-committee, review the IRC updates on rent.

- Adjournment - *The meeting was unanimously adjourned by roll call at 3:45pm*

Respectfully Submitted By
Catherine Tinsley
1.15.21

Attachment: Statement as read January 9, 2021 budget meeting.
Carrie Jelsma – Vice Chair, Wenham Finance and Advisory Committee
Joint Wenham FinCom/BOS FY22 Preliminary Budget Presentations-Meeting Statement January 9, 2021

Massachusetts General Law Part 1, Title 7, Chapter 39, Section 16 states Finance and Advisory Committees “shall consider any and all municipal questions for the purpose of making recommendations to the town.”

Wenham Bylaws Chapter 3, Section 4 states the Finance and Advisory Committee shall “consider the annual budget” and “any other municipal matters.”

While we’re here to discuss our annual budget, the broader context of “municipal matters” also merits discussion; indeed, these “municipal matters” impact our annual budget. Thus, after considerable thought, I appreciate the opportunity to make this statement.

As Wenham FinCom Vice Chair, I contend that patterns of Board of Select municipal and financial mismanagement significantly impair Wenham’s ability to function. Recent examples include delaying moving forward on a professionally vetted and thoroughly analyzed cell tower RFP, and failing to address ongoing taxpayer subsidization of private businesses at Iron Rail.
John Clemenzi’s sexual harassment and misconduct further jeopardize town governance in multiple ways. Taxpayer dollars have paid legal fees associated with him inappropriately texting a town employee. When she suffered a dog bite injury, he suggested she was having sex with her dog. (Continued)

John Clemenzi disrespecting personal boundaries is a pattern. At a Wenham Museum reception, he caressed the base of my spine, leaned in, kissed my cheek, and sarcastically asked me what I thought of the #METOO movement. His continued presence creates a hostile work environment for multiple people serving the town.

The systemic mismanagement and patterns of misconduct lead to high employee turnover, suppress public engagement, and generally do not provide Wenhamites the value they deserve for their tax dollars. What kind of candidates want to serve as our new Town Administrator in this culture? We have a structural deficit we fund with overrides and are approaching the maximum allowable tax rate. How much more mismanagement and misconduct can we afford?

I appreciate all who serve the town and acknowledge their positive contributions, including Mr. Clemenzi's. However, the negative cumulative impact and net effect of Mr. Clemenzi's poor municipal and personal decision-making outweigh the positive. We can begin to "right the Wenham ship" by effectively and collectively addressing John Clemenzi's mismanagement and misconduct.

As authorized by Massachusetts and Wenham law as Finance Committee Vice Chair, and as a Wenham Citizen, my recommendation to begin to address these "municipal matters" is that Mr. Clemenzi resign.

Mr. Clemenzi -- will you resign?