



Joint Meeting of the Town Council and Town Council Finance Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Tuesday, June 20, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

This is a hybrid meeting. The Public is invited to attend this meeting in person or remotely, by telephone or computer access. The in-person portion of the meeting was held in Chapin Hall in Randolph Town Hall, 41 S. Main Street, Randolph, MA.

Call to Order: Council President Alexopoulos called the meeting to order.

Roll Call – Council Members Present: Christos Alexopoulos (In-Person), William Alexopoulos (In-Person), Natacha Clerger (By Zoom), Jesse Gordon (In-Person), Katrina Huff-Larmond (In-Person), Kevin O’Connell (In-Person).

Pledge of Allegiance: Pledge of Allegiance led by Councillor O’Connell.

Moment of Silent Prayer: Moment of Silent Prayer held.

Public Hearings:

1. 6:15 PM: Council Order 2023-029: FY 2024 Annual Operating Budget

This is a continued Public Hearing. The Public Hearing was opened at the last Joint Meeting of the Town Council and the Town Council Finance Subcommittee on June 12, 2023.

Council President Alexopoulos: At the last meeting of June 12, 2023, the majority of the time was spent reviewing the budget. We appreciate the Town Manager for putting forth this budget. I want to thank the Town Accountant/Finance Director Janine Smith for being here and helping to answer questions about the budget. At the last meeting, we opened the Public Hearing, went through the presentation of the budget, opened and closed the public comments portion of the Public Hearing, and had a Council discussion about the budget. This evening we are here to vote on the FY2024 Annual Operating Budget. At this particular time, I would entertain a motion on this Council Order.

Motion to approve Council Order 2023-029 as presented made by C. Alexopoulos, seconded by Councillor Clerger.

Discussion: Councillor C. Alexopoulos: After the four-hour discussion we had regarding the budget at the last meeting, we went over line items we had questions about and I think the Town Manager and the Town Accountant/Finance Director did a fantastic job of putting the budget together. I think it is appropriate that we move forward with it. Council President Alexopoulos: I think that this budget does a lot of good things for the Town. It sets up the priorities of the Council. The school budget has the highest increase ever, in the Town of Randolph budget for the school department. It is an increase of over 6% representing over \$3 million going towards the schools. Also, the Town Manager mentioned that he is proposing to add \$1.25 million to the capital budget for the needs of the school after listening to the concerns of parents and teachers. Those items were taken into consideration and put forth in this budget. This is a balanced budget. It takes care of public safety for the well-being of our citizens. I think this is an appropriate budget for the Town.

Councillor Gordon made a motion to reduce line item 51110, under the section of Town Manager Budget Department by \$1 with the recommendation of putting that \$1 plus \$50,000 more into line item 512000 dedicated to the hiring of an Assistant Town Manager with a focus on grant writing.

Discussion: Councillor Gordon: We don't have the power to increase the budget, we only have the power to reduce the budget so I am proposing that we reduce this line item by \$1 with a recommendation that the Town Manager will make a large increase. Which we don't have the power to do.

Councillor Huff-Larmond: Currently, the description of the Assistant Town Manager position does not include grant writing. I'm not saying we don't need a grant writer, but when I think of the Assistant Town Manager and their role, I think of the Human Resources component. Someone who is knowledgeable and understands equity and equality. I think the Town Manager did add another job duty to that title which is operations.

Town Manager Howard: We did increase the dollar amount for additional grant writing services in the Planning Department. There are grant-writing capabilities in this budget.

Councillor Huff-Larmond: I think the current description of the Assistant Town Manager position is already a lot and adding an additional component of grant writing would be too much.

Councillor Gordon: The idea is that the Assistant Town Manager would become a liaison to the department heads who have grant-writing duties.

Council President Alexopoulos: Councillor Gordon's motion dies for lack of a second.

Councillor Clerger: I just wanted to thank the Council and thank Councillor C. Alexopoulos for the motion because our outstanding Town Manager really took into consideration the concerns of the students and the families of our community. I have said it before and say it again, I have never seen the Town Council ignore the concerns of the residents of Randolph, especially when it comes to education.

Councillor Gordon made a motion to reduce line item 530200, under the section of 151 Law Department by \$1 with the recommendation to increase the line item from \$150,000 to \$200,000 for the purpose of legal assistance in Chapter 90 legal work and grant writing legal work.

Councillor Huff-Larmond: I would like to hear what the Town Attorney has to say about this.

Attorney Griffin: I'm happy to do whatever the Council would like me to do and if the Council has assigned some grant writing to the legal department, or if the Town Manager does, then we will make it happen. If it turns out that during the year we need to replenish the budget for outside Council and a transfer is needed then we'll come back and hopefully, the Council supports that request.

Council President Alexopoulos: Councillor Gordon's motion dies for lack of a second.

Councillor Egan entered the meeting, by Zoom, at 6:20 PM.

Councillor C. Alexopoulos made a motion to call the question, seconded by Councillor O'Connell.

Roll Call Vote: 4-2-0 (Nays: Gordon & Huff-Larmond; Absent During Vote: Egan; Absent: Brewer & Burgess)
Motion passes.

Motion to approve Council Order 2023-029 as presented made by C. Alexopoulos, seconded by Councillor Clerger.

Roll Call Vote: 5-0-1 (Abstention: Gordon; Absent During Vote: Egan; Absent: Brewer & Burgess)
Motions passes.

Council President Alexopoulos: It has been a grueling couple of weeks going over the budget and it is not an easy task. The Council is responsible for the budgets of the entire Town including all of the departments. All Councillors may not agree on everything but we all work for the residents of Randolph. As we talk about the needs of the students, the parents, and the teachers, and the dollars and cents in the budget, we keep forgetting we are building a \$50 million elementary school. I encourage residents to drive by it and take a look. The

foundation is in the ground. You should see that structure coming out of the ground very soon. It is definitely historic for our community. It is the first school we have built in over sixty years. We keep trying to do our best for our students and residents. Residents may also want to visit the new water treatment plant that is being built. Concrete has also been poured and very shortly you will see the foundation going up as well.

Councillor Huff-Larmond: I think it's impressive that we can raise the school budget by over 6%. That is a lot and really tells me the dedication the Town has in agreeing to this budget. I also want to remind people that although we agree to this budget for the schools, the school has total control over how that portion of the budget is spent. We want our students to have the best and to improve the quality of education, which I do think is improving.

New Business:

1. Council Order 2023-038: FY2024 Water and Sewer Enterprise Budget

Council President Alexopoulos read Council Order 2023-038. Town Manager Howard provided a brief explanation on this Council Order.

Town Manager Howard: The budget presented today reflects increases that are either contractual or derivative of assessments that we are responsible for. It is a relatively cut-and-dried budget.

Councillor Clerger: After we invest money into water and sewer, will we no longer have brown water?

Town Manager Howard: I don't experience the brown water, even with the recent unidirectional flushing in the Spring which usually causes discolored water. I have not received issues from residents regarding discolored water except in scenarios where that would be expected. The new water treatment plant will be up soon so any issues people may be having regarding discoloration will certainly improve.

Council President Alexopoulos: If anyone doesn't feel comfortable contacting Town Hall but lets you know they are experiencing this issue, just let the Town Manager know so it can be looked into.

Councillor Clerger: What about PFAS levels? Town Manager Howard: We have been fortunate to remain in compliance with the PFAS levels of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. Without a doubt, with the new water treatment plant, this will be a nonissue.

Councillor Huff-Larmond: I haven't seen the issue of water discoloration since I've seen the flushing and the new hydrants. One of the main improvements we've made is the flushing program especially when talking about apartment buildings and understanding the designs of their pipes and how we can do better to flush out the water.

Council President Alexopoulos: Council Order 2023-038 will be continued to the Council Meeting on June 26, 2023.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn made by Councillor Clerger, seconded by Councillor O'Connell.

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0 (Absent During Vote: Egan; Absent: Brewer & Burgess)

Meeting adjourned at 6:42 PM.