



Town of Medway  
**FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
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Wednesday, March 13, 2024 – 7:00 PM  
Presentation Room, Medway Middle School  
45 Holliston Street

Members Present: Brian Cowan, Chair; Ellen Hillery, Clerk; Bruce Carbone; Nick Fair; Will Lane; Jim Sullivan.

Absent: Chris Lagan, Michael Schrader.

Municipal Staff Present: Michael Boynton, Town Manager; Carol Pratt, Finance Director; Julie Harrington, Director, Parks and Recreation.

Medway Public Schools Staff Present: Dr. Armand Pires, Superintendent; Gabrielle Abram, Assistant Superintendent; Patricia Leonhardt, Director of Finance and Operations; Ellen Quinn, Executive Assistant to the School Committee.

School Committee Members Present: Cindy Sullivan, Chairperson; Melissa Greenfield, Vice Chair.

Select Board Members Present: Frank Rossi, Vice Chair; Todd Alessandri, Clerk; Dennis Crowley; Maryjane White.

Others Present: Jess Peck, M.Ed., Director, The Sunshine Group; Debi Rossi, Chair, Parks Commission; Carol Collord, President, Medway Community Farm Board of Directors.

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At 7:02 PM Chairman Cowan called the Finance Committee meeting to order with six members present. Members Chris Lagan and Michael Schrader were absent. It is noted that member Sue Segarra resigned from the committee as of March 1, 2024, bringing the total number of members to eight.

Chairman Cowan explained that the Tri-Board meeting will occur first, advising attendees if they were present for the public comment period, it would take place after the Tri-Board meeting.

**Tri-Board Meeting with School Committee and Select Board**

*The following materials were received: (1) FY25 Preliminary School Budget Presentation; and (2) FY25 Budget Book [Schools].*

At 7:02 PM Vice Chair Rossi called the Select Board meeting to order with four members present. Chairman Trindade was absent.

At 7:02 PM Ms. Cindy Sullivan, Chairperson, reported that she and Melissa Greenfield, Vice Chair, were the only School Committee members in attendance; a quorum was not present. Lauren Nassiff, Kailene Simon and Preston Gales were absent.

Present: Dr. Armand Pires, Superintendent; Patricia Leonhardt, Director of Finance and Operations; Gabrielle Abram, Assistant Superintendent.

Dr. Pires stated that the Tri-Board format allows more transparency into the budget, noting he would stop the PowerPoint presentation to answer questions along the way. There was occasional discussion throughout the presentation, some of which is summarized below. Interested persons may review the video posted online at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=search&v=2146636592369740>.

Dr. Pires spoke briefly about tonight's goals and utilized a PowerPoint presentation, beginning with the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan and Budget Development Strategies. An increase of \$900,000 is proposed for FY25. Responding to a question from Mr. Crowley, Dr. Pires stated the some of the increase is attributed to new housing developments in the community, namely, Timber Crest and 39 Main Street. It was noted that there were more mid-year transitions within the school population during and since the pandemic. Some of that during the 2023-24 year is due to students coming back to an in-school environment from home schooling. Regarding class sizes, Dr. Pires noted that enrollments have increased in the lower grades, but not so much in the middle and high school populations.

Ms. Leonhardt emphasized that the school budget is not only the municipal budget allocations but includes outside funding sources:

- Chapter 70 aid from state
- State and Federal Grants
- Circuit Breaker (reimbursement of some special education expenses based on state formula)
- School Choice (accepting non-Medway students into Medway schools)
- Revolving Fund Accounts including Pay to Ride transportation fees (new for FY25)

Historical Chapter 70 Allocations from FY18 – FY25 illustrated a final increase of approximately \$3,000 less than FY18. Dr. Pires spoke briefly about how the funding process and how it has affected surrounding school districts. Discussion followed.

Ms. Leonhardt continued with FY25 Level Service Development, Historical School Choice Revolving Account Balances and Budgeted Circuit Breaker: Transportation. It was noted that circuit breaker revenue is received a year after the expenses are incurred/paid. This amount will not be known until the close of FY25. In FY24, the district should have received 100% reimbursement of eligible expenses. The reduction, based on available state monies, represents a decrease in revenue to the district of \$136,548.

Medway Public Schools Main Revolving Accounts – There was brief discussion on how these funds are used. Dr. Pires noted that this type of account is heavily restricted on what the funds can be used for. He briefly reviewed some of the accounts and the types of expenses paid out of them. For example, the Custodial Revolving Account is used to collect revenue when the facilities are rented, and also to pay the custodian for the time spent for that rental time as it is not part of the regular salary. Each account is used differently. Committee members can request more details on these accounts if they wish to.

Regarding School Choice and Circuit Breaker, Dr. Pires cautioned that ideally money should not be used to fund something for an upcoming year. He noted that the amount used in a particular year may be used as a

starting point in budget preparation. Student needs have to be met, and depending on the student population, each future year has to be treated as an unknown. Discussion followed. Increased federal funding during the pandemic has skewed annual revenues as now things are going back to pre-pandemic levels. Selectman Crowley reported that the Select Board voted to allocate \$500,000 from the Exelon contract to the schools.

With respect to Budget Development Calculating Level Service – Ms. Leonhardt reviewed salaries, level support (\$325,000) from School Choice, cost increases from transportation and custodial service contracts. There have also been increases in utility and building maintenance costs as well as estimated increases in water, sewer and trash rates. Ms. Leonhardt reported that there has been a sizable hit from the out-of-district transportation costs. The district is trying to control the size of annual increases in these expenses.

Discussion followed. Mr. Sullivan and Selectman Alessandri emphasized that budget preparation has been happening for months, and that this is not the first time these numbers have been reviewed. Mr. Sullivan urged residents to ask questions, cautioning that there is a lot of work happening behind the scenes for months before meetings such as this. Ms. Tracy Stewart, Medway representative to the Tri-Country Regional Vocational High School Committee, encouraged everyone to contact legislators about rising transportation costs for all schools which creates a hit for each community. She theorized that there could be other funding sources, but emphasized that transportation for students to their place of education should not be affected by the lack of adequate revenues.

Returning to the presentation, Dr. Pires reviewed a breakdown of the FY24 Budget with respect to transportation, out of district tuition, facilities, payroll costs, and miscellaneous costs.

Fiscal Efficiency Efforts include the following:

- Exploring solar rooftop array for McGovern School and possibly Memorial after roof replacement
- Expanded use of in-district specialized transportation
- Pursue optimal operating of mechanical systems with Trane Engineering
- Use of grant funds to support district purchases
- Use of grant funds for student services (academic support and mental health)

At this time, Salary Adjustments, Proposed FY25 Budget, and General Fund Full Time Equivalents(FTEs) for FY20-FY25 were addressed. Dr. Pires emphasized that educators work hard to educate students in Medway, but often there is a student with needs that cannot be met, and that student is placed in an outside program with other students with similar needs. With regard to Non-General Fund Full Time Equivalents (FTEs), it was noted that some positions are provided with alternative funding such as a revolving fund offset or via state or federal grant.

Town of Medway Municipal Budget Support reflects school expenses embedded in Medway Municipal Budget. Lengthy discussion followed during which it was suggested that those who live close to the schools should be considered. Chairman Cowan reported that there is a School Committee public hearing tomorrow at which it will finalize the budget before it is submitted to the Town Manager.

In closing, Ms. Leonhardt emphasized that all number and dollar amounts in the presentation were accurate as of the time of budget creation.

Generation discussion followed. The presentation and discussion ended at 9:03 PM. Chairman Cowan thanked all parties for coming in.

At 9:03 PM Mr. Alessandri made a motion to adjourn the Select Board meeting; Ms. White seconded. No discussion. VOTE: 4-0-0.

At 9:04 PM Ms. Sullivan declared that the School Committee had terminated its participation in the meeting.

**At 9:05 PM Chairman Cowan suspended the Finance Committee meeting for a brief recess.**

**At 9:11 PM, Chairman Cowan reconvened the Finance Committee meeting to continue with its agenda.**

**Public Comment**

Mr. Larry Ellsworth, 148 Holliston Street, expressed concern for artificial turf fields, cautioning there are many known concerns about these types of fill, specifically, fiscal, environmental, and the impact on water. He urged clearer understanding about the costs of operating turf fields as well as increased use of Medway's public facilities by non-Medway groups. These facilities should be prioritized for residents, and then made available to outsiders. Artificial turf fields have to be replaced every 8 to 10 years so this is an ongoing cycle.

There being no other persons wishing to speak, Chairman Cowan closed public comment at 9:17 PM.

**Review of Departmental FY25 Budgets**

**The Sunshine Group**

*The following information was received: (1) Sunshine Group Budget Overview; and (2) PowerPoint Presentation.*

Present: Jess Peck, M.Ed., Director, The Sunshine Group; Michael Boynton, Town Manager.

Town Manager Boynton noted that The Sunshine Group had been recently been before the Finance Committee. He reported that he and Selectman Trindade had a conversation about finding additional funding for The Sunshine Group which was successful during the budget preparation process.

At this time, Ms. Peck provided a brief overview of the six-week summer program including specific and specialized activities. Partnerships exist with Medway Public Schools, Medway Housing Authority and Medway Guidance/Adjustment Counselors. Tuition is intentionally kept low to avoid becoming a barrier to families who really need and rely on the program. Payroll has consistently been above their budget and their supply budget is depleted each year. Transportation costs have resulted in fewer field trips and reducing daily transportation to a single bus instead of two.

Continuing, Ms. Peck reported that some students require 1:1 staffing, and some 1:2 staffing which has to be considered separate from the general program staff. Counselors for 1:1 and 1:2 must have experience working with students with diverse needs. To continue to meet needs of the students in the program, additional staff members with more than entry level experience are necessary. Losing staff to better paying positions is an unfortunate reality.

A second bus is necessary to reduce the ride length which can be up to an hour. A third bus would be needed to allow for field trips as well as to increase the program capacity.

Looking toward the future, there is a need for shelter during inclement weather, air conditioning for overheated or dysregulated students, and increased permanent storage for items.

Mr. Sullivan asked if there have been efforts to seek additional funding from sources other than the Town budget. Ms. Peck responded that they are working on increasing efforts to secure donations to the program. Regarding enrollment, she reported that 90% of the program participants are Medway residents, adding that they are very close to their limit of 75 participants.

At 9:35 PM Ms. Peck exited the meeting room.

Parks and Recreation

*There were no additional materials aside from the proposed FY25 Budget.*

Present: Julie Harrington, Director; Debi Rossi, Chair, Parks Commission.

There is a single amount for our two areas combined. Ms. Rossi clarified that, due to field rotation, some programs may be reduced or delayed. Ms. Harrington added that the fields are always being used. If a field is offline for any reason, it may impact summer and fall soccer leagues. The turf field is one that can be consistently used, and there are three. The fields are right off Interstate 495 which make for easy access for outside groups and tournaments.

Mr. Fair asked about field use with respect to residents vs. non-residents and revenues. It was noted that there are no local groups being denied use in favor of an outside group. The Parks Commission is working to rent out the fields that are not currently being used by residents in order to generate revenue toward maintenance and resident use of fields. It is difficult to know the impact on a grass field that is based on resident vs. non-resident. Mr. Fair noted that he has reviewed minutes of the Parks Commission where there was mention of a three-day tournament which could be construed as a loss to Medway residents. Ms. Rossi suggested he attend one of their meetings where she can provide information that will help answer his questions. Brief discussion followed during which Ms. Rossi emphasized that there are many community programs and activities that are provided through the Parks Commission in addition to monitoring use of athletic fields.

At 9:44 PM Ms. Harrington and Ms. Rossi exited the meeting room.

**Finance Committee Reserve Fund – Emergency Transfer Request – Kitchen Project, Medway Community Farm, 50 Winthrop Street**

*The following information was reviewed: (1) Emergency Transfer Request form, dated 3/7/24; and (2) Status of Expenses for Kitchen Project.*

Present: Michael Boynton, Town Manager; Carol Collord, President, Medway Community Farm Board of Directors.

Mr. Boynton explained that the Emergency Transfer Request is for unanticipated expenses, and this particular request is necessary to complete the kitchen project at the Medway Community Farm. Unanticipated plumbing, HVAC, and electrical expenses were incurred during the project. This project is intended to make the house usable for an elementary program in April and a summer program beginning in June, therefore, a public benefit. Ms. Collord added that students in associated programs at Tri-County Regional Vocational High School were assisting with the work.

**Mr. Carbone made a motion that the Finance Committee approve the Emergency Transfer Request of \$4,000 as presented; Ms. Hillery seconded. No discussion. VOTE: 6-0-0.**

At 9:51 PM Ms. Collord exited the meeting room.

**Discussion of FY25 Debt Schedule, and ATM Calendar Review**

*There were no additional materials aside from the FY25 Budget Book.*

Present: Michael Boynton, Town Manager; Carol Pratt, Finance Director.

Ms. Pratt directed committee members to page 95 in the budget book where anticipated debt costs for FY25 were listed. She noted that there were there are also authorizations for borrowing as voted at Town Meeting, but that borrowing has not yet occurred. The authorizations are like bookmarks, and there are times that borrowing is not necessary.

Continuing, she pointed out that there are projects on the upcoming Warrants that will involve both short- and long-term borrowing. Responding to a question from Mr. Fair regarding track and field replacement, money was appropriated via Town Meeting action. Ms. Pratt theorized that because the track itself is in such disrepair that it can no longer be used, it is prudent to replace the track and the field at the same time. It would not make fiscal sense to tear up the track without working on the adjacent field. Mr. Sullivan pointed out that some debt and responsible repayment helps with the Town's bond rating. Mr. Boynton added that, without considering the track replacement, Hanlon field replacement would not be occurring yet. It is a package deal.

Brief discussion followed on the overall debt schedule contained in the budget book including several large projects, either current or being planned. This includes fire engine replacement as well as repairs to school buildings and parking lots. A new fire engine could cost over \$1.1 million and take two years to arrive from the time it is ordered. It is a challenge to anticipate markedly increased construction costs post-pandemic.

Responding to a question from a resident, Mr. Boynton responded that the Community Preservation Act establishes criteria by which communities must abide with how their CPA funds are used. This is why only a portion of the track and field replacement can come from CPA funds.

Mr. Fair asked about costs associated with the Water Treatment Plant. Mr. Boynton responded that the new plant will be online in a couple of weeks. Funds authorized at the 2002 Annual Town Meeting were not completely used, and the remainder will be on the Special Town Meeting Warrant (Article 6) to repurpose those unused funds to the construction of the pump house at Oakland Street as well as a meter vault and piping at Village Street.

Brief discussion followed.

**Initial Review of Annual Town Meeting/Special Town Meeting Warrants**

*The following documents were received: Updated May 13, 2024 Special and Annual Town Meeting Warrants.*

In accordance with Town Bylaws, discussion on a new agenda item could not begin after 10 PM without a vote of the committee. Chairman Cowan did not ask for a motion to continue with the agenda; therefore, this agenda item was postponed.

### **Miscellaneous Committee Matters**

Chairman's Report – Chairman Cowan reported there was a nice presentation of the Fire, Police and Town Hall Feasibility Study Report at the Select Board meeting on March 4 and encouraged everyone to watch the video.

Clerk's Report and Liaison Reports were postponed.

### **Other Business**

*The following information was reviewed: (1) Summary of Finance Committee Appointment Terms; and (2) Draft meeting minutes from February 12, 2024.*

### **Review Assignments of Reports for Annual Town Meeting Book**

Chairman Cowan asked that reports be submitted to him by April 8.

### **Review Finance Committee appointments ending June 30**

No discussion.

### **Review/Approval of meeting minutes**

**Mr. Sullivan made a motion to approve the minutes of February 12, 2024, as drafted; Ms. Hillery seconded. No discussion. VOTE: 5-0-1 (Fair abstain).**

### **Upcoming Meetings**

The next regular meeting will be Monday, March 25; Police, Fire, and DPW will be coming in for budget review. The Planning and Economic Development Board will be coming in to speak to proposed changes in the Zoning Bylaw. An additional meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, April 3 for the initial warrant review postponed from this evening. The public hearing will be held on Wednesday, April 10, followed by a regular meeting during which the Finance Committee will vote its recommendations on warrant articles. Special Town Meeting and Annual Town Meeting will be held on Monday, May 13.

### **Adjourn**

**At 10:24 PM Mr. Sullivan made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Carbone seconded. No discussion. VOTE: 6-0-0.**

*Respectfully submitted,  
Jeanette Galliardt  
Night Board Secretary*