

Town of Northbridge
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2024 at 6:30PM

Committee Members in Attendance: Plato Adams, Jim Barron, Sean Ferry, Steve Gogolinski, David Graham, and Chris Thompson

Finance Committee Member not in Attendance: None

Town of Northbridge Administration and Department Managers in Attendance:

Adam Gaudette, Town Manager, Town of Northbridge, MA
Timothy Labrie, Police Chief, Town of Northbridge, MA
David White, Fire Chief, Town of Northbridge, MA
Anthony Genga, Deputy Fire Chief, Town of Northbridge, MA

Other:

Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational High School (BVT)

Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick, Superintendent, BVT

Anthony E. Steele II, Assistant Superintendent, BVT

Taxpayer(s) in Attendance: Barry Gallant

Finance Committee Meeting:

At 6:30PM the Finance Committee Meeting was called to order by Plato Adams.

BVT Budget Review / Discussion

Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick, BVT Superintendent and Anthony E. Steele II, BVT Assistant Superintendent / Principal reviewed / discussed BVT's budget for the next fiscal year.

Per the "Green Sheet", the General Fund FY 2025, Projected Revenues / Expenses increased \$1,143,630 from the 2023 – 2024 Budgeted Revenues / Expenses Amount of \$29,323,858 to the 2024 – 2025 Proposed Budgeted Revenues / Expenses Amount of \$30,467,488, an increase of 3.90%.

Per the "Pink Sheet", Northbridge's Assessment totaled \$2,150,760. The enrollment is projected to be 158 Students with an operational ratio of 12.530 %. The projected dollar breakdown is as follows:

Minimum Contribution:	\$	1,676,322
Transportation Capital/ Equipment Retiree / Medical, etc.:	\$	269,245
Additional Assessment:	\$	145,793
Debt:	\$	59,400
TOTAL FY 2025 Projected Assessment:	\$	2,150,760

Of the 3.90% expenditure increase, 83% is attributed to wages, health insurance, and transportation and technology devices.

Long Term Borrowing – Bond Principal and Interest Project Assessment Overview:

Northbridge's share of the Long Term Borrowing – Bond Principal and Interest Project totaled \$59,400 with the following detail breakdown from FY 2022 through FY 2025:

Project Ownership: 15.8%

Assessment FY 2022: \$67,916

Town of Northbridge
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2024 at 6:30PM

Assessment FY 2023:	\$64,511
Assessment FY 2024:	\$61,944
Assessment FY 2025:	\$59,400

Recap of BVT

Proposed Assessment:	\$2,150,760
Increase versus FY 2024 inclusive of debt:	\$ 238,709
Students Served:	158, Increase versus FY 2024, 13+ (+9%)

Special Warrant Articles

Stabilization Account:

To see if the Town will vote to approve the creation of a stabilization account, voted by the BVT District School Committee on September 14, 2023, which will enable the Regional District to address capital improvement items via self-funding and avoid dependence upon operational budget funding.

Questions were raised by Adam Gaudette, Town Manager, Town of Northbridge on the annual funding mechanism with this proposed Stabilization Account. It appears as though the funding mechanism would appear as revenue and expense line items on the green sheet.

\$10 Million Dollar Debt Authorization

BVT submitted a request under the Accelerated Program of the MA Building Committee for a capital project to replace the roof at BVT. The total request was for \$10 Million and the MA Building Committee has yet to determine the reimbursement rate.

It was suggested that the reimbursement rate be determined which would assist the Town of Northbridge in presenting a Warrant Article to the Town via a debt exclusion. The debt exclusion would include the proposed amount (\$10 Million at the Reimbursement Rate @ Northbridge's Percentage Ownership Rate. Having this reimbursement rate would make it much easier for the town to propose a very good rationale for supporting such a capital improvement project.

The BVT Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent to discuss the comments / concerns with the BVT School Committee on the two proposed suggested BVT Warrant related Articles as detailed below made by Adam Gaudette, the Town of Northbridge's Town Manager.

- Rescind the Vote of the establishment of the Stabilization Fund at the BVT School Committee.
- At the BVT School Committee Meeting, amend the Warrant Language being dependent upon the MSBA. Provide more Percentage (%) Reimbursement Information and the estimated time Frame for this information being made available.

Public Safety Department Budgets

Police Department Budget

Town of Northbridge
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2024 at 6:30PM

Except for the large increase in the cost of Two New Town Police Cruisers, The Police Budget is level funded.

The Police Budget includes a request to fund 20 Police Officers during the next fiscal year.

The FY 2025 proposed appropriation increased from \$3,208,441 in FY 2024 to \$3,316,282, an increase of \$107,841 or 3.336%.

As noted above the majority of the budget increase is attributable to the cost of Two New Police Cruisers which increased from \$98,327 in FY 2024 to \$114,677 an increase of \$16,350 or 16.63%.

An increase in individuals that are Homeless has increased tremendously in Town.

There are a few individuals within the police department that may be retiring in the next few years.

Fire Department Budget

It was noted by David White, Fire Chief that the FY 2025 Budget includes the addition on one Firefighter / EMT to the Fire Department. The cost of the Firefighter will be partially funded by the Ambulance Enterprise Fund.

The FY 2025 proposed appropriation increased from \$1,216,478 in FY 2024 to \$1,231,307, an increase of \$14,829 or 1.22%.

The required retirement age for Firefighters is 65.

Ambulance Department Budget

As noted above, the FY 2025 Budget includes the addition of one Firefighter / EMT to the Ambulance Department. The cost of the Firefighter / EMT will be partially funded by the Ambulance Enterprise Fund.

The FY 2025 proposed appropriation increased from \$988,148 in FY 2024 to \$1,077,765, an increase of \$89,616 or 9.07%.

Emergency Department Budget

The FY 2025 proposed appropriation increased from \$18,700 in FY 2024 to \$20,160 in FY 2025, an increase of \$950 or 5.08%.

The following items were reviewed / discussed by Adam Gaudette, Town Manager:

Town Manager FY 2025 Budget Update

- a. FY 2025 Budget Outlook
- b. FY 2025 Preliminary Budget
- c. Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant Draft

New Revenues Available:	\$	1,061,657
--------------------------------	-----------	------------------

Less Expenses:		
Insurance (Health Insurance):	\$	-----
Workers Compensation:	\$	16,927
Retirement System:	\$	42,673
Liability Insurance:	\$	53,114
Unemployment:	\$	100,000

Town of Northbridge
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2024 at 6:30PM

Benefit Expenses:	\$	212,714	7.24%
NPS Budget:	\$	432,777	1.67%
BVT	\$	243,820	13.20%
Trade School	(\$	25,000)	-7.14 %
School Funding	\$	651,597	2.32%
General Govt Offices	\$	197,346 (1)	2.04%
(1) General Government Increase		\$197,346	
Less:			
o Elections	\$	15,653	
o Landfill	\$	26,120	
o Playground / Rec	\$	17,000	
o TOTAL	(\$	58,773)	
(2) Total Available Gen Govt		\$ 138,573	1.43%

Other Upcoming Finance Meeting Discussions

- a. March 20th : NPS and Petitions
- b. March 27th: Public Meeting and Vote Positions

Prior Finance Committee Meeting Minutes – 03/06/2024

Chris Thompson abstained from voting on the 03/06/2024 Finance Committee Meeting Minutes.

A motion to approve the 03/06/2024 Finance Committee Meeting Minutes with the following changes (1) noted below was made by David Graham, seconded by Steve Gogolinski, and unanimously approved.

(1) Update to the Draft Finance Committee Meeting Draft Minutes dated 03/06/2024:

Within the Section (Northbridge Elementary School (NES) Property Proposal – 30 Cross Street, Whitinsville, MA) and Second Paragraph; update the number of townhouses from 46 to 10 and update the number of apartment units from 54 to 46.

Adjournment

Since no further business was to be transacted, a motion to adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting at 9:33PM was made by Steve Gogolinski, seconded by Chris Thompson, and unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ James P. Barron, Clerk, Town of Northbridge Finance Committee