

Finance Committee FY25 Public Hearing and Selectboard and Finance Committee Joint FY25 Budget
Meeting via Zoom and in Person at 334 Main Street Great Barrington MA
Wednesday February 28, 2024

1. Call to Order – Finance Committee Chairman Phil Orenstein opened the meeting at 6:00pm with Finance Committee members Richard Geiler, Anne O’Dwyer, Philip. Orenstein present. Selectboard members Steve Bannon, Leigh Davis, Ben Elliott, Eric Gabriel, Garfield Reed were present.

Also present: Town Manager Mark Pruhenski, Assistant Town Manager Chris Rembold, Financial Coordinator Allison Crespo and other department heads as noted below.

Michelle Loubert, 70 Division Street, asked about conflicts of interest regarding affordable housing related budget items. P. Orenstein replied he intended to recuse and will determine how to proceed as voting progresses.

2. Public Hearing on Proposed FY25 Budget

A. O’Dwyer stated after the public hearing the budget and special articles will be discussed and voted on – and then will go to Town Meeting. She stated the public hearing is being conducted in compliance with the Great Barrington Town Bylaw Article 2, Section 74 that requires the Finance Committee to hold a public hearing on Town expenditures and to hear public input on the proposed budget by the Selectboard and Finance Committee.

- R. Geiler made a motion to open the public hearing; P. Orenstein seconded. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, “aye,” A. O’Dwyer, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0.

M. Pruhenski provided a budget overview noting the expense management challenges and concern for the impact on taxpayers. He noted changes in revenue projections and lower than expected that State revenue requiring any additional increases to be offset by reductions elsewhere. He also recommended that there not be any additional use of free cash. He stated there are three notable changes since the last meeting – a change in funding source for Special Article Courthouse Improvement to the Sale of Real Estate account instead of free cash; \$10,556 opioid settlement funds received be moved to a special revenue fund for recovery services and related uses; and a debt schedule has been created showing impact over time. He added that the tax levy is now \$3,077,375 which is a decrease of \$201,725 – and that the tax rate increase has gone from \$1.46 to \$1.14 and the budget percentage increase has gone from 12.9% to 8.2%.

a. Public Input

- Sharon Gregory suggested the budget and capital expenditures be reduced due to a concern about tax increases. She added that capital expenditures should be spread out and CPA funds used to support Ramsdell Library.
- Eileen Mooney asked for copies of information that was shared at the meeting.
- Jan Wojcik, 253 Long Pond Road, stated Town buildings and infrastructure should be maintained, especially Ramsdell Library.
- Richard Zucco, 17 Highland Drive, asked for support for the increase in the VFW budget noting the impacts of COVID including lost revenue and increased operating expenses.
- M. Loubert expressed concerns about Town budget/expenses related to projects for South Main Street, Habitat for Humanity, Railroad Street Youth and the Firehouse – noting the impact on resident taxes.

- Robert Redpath, 190 Castle Hill Avenue, asked about CPA and Community Impact funds noting Town departments should release cannabis business impact statements and the Town should be applying for CPA funds. M. Pruhenski replied Town departments do apply/receive CPA funds, as appropriate, based on CPA funding priorities, and that projects in progress are discussed at the Selectboard priority planning meetings.
P. Orenstein clarified that affordable housing projects pay substantial property taxes.
- Chris Pichard, 83 Hollenbeck Ave, stated tax increases should be managed now and into the future.
- James Bailly, Housatonic, objected to cuts to the veterans budget request and to \$750,000 in funding for the Habitat for Humanity project which should be funded through the State.

R. Geiler made a motion to close the public hearing; P. Orenstein seconded. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, “aye,” A. O’Dwyer, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0.

3. Selectboard-Finance Committee Joint Meeting.

S. Bannon called the meeting to order. He stated the voting would be in four parts: operating budget, capital budget, special articles and school assessment.

a. Operating budget

i. Selectboard/Town Manager – a \$6,000 reduction was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Selectboard/Town Manager for \$473,409 including the reductions as discussed; P. Orenstein seconded. A. O’Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, “aye,” A. O’Dwyer, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Selectboard/Town Manager for \$473,409 including the reductions as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

ii. Finance Committee – A \$100 reduction was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Finance Committee for \$100,200 including the reduction as discussed; P. Orenstein seconded. A. O’Dwyer asked if any discussion – P. Orenstein stated the budget is the Reserve Fund. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, “aye,” A. O’Dwyer, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Finance Committee for \$100,200 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

iii. Town Accountant

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Town Accountant for \$204,425; A. O’Dwyer seconded. A. O’Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, “aye,” A. O’Dwyer, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0.

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L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Town Accountant for \$204,425; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

iv. Technology

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Technology for \$330,500; A. O’Dwyer seconded. A. O’Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, “aye,” A. O’Dwyer, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve FY25 budget for Technology for \$330,500; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

v. Assessors – A \$1,500 reduction was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Assessor for \$234,611 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Assessor for \$234,611 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

vi. Treasurer/Collector – a reduction of \$500 was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Treasurer/Collector for \$275,931 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Treasurer/Collector for \$275,931 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

vii. Human Resources – A reduction of \$200 was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Human Resources for \$78,934 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Human Resources for \$78,934 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

viii. Town Clerk – A reduction of \$400 was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Town Clerk for \$158,944 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Town Clerk for \$158,944 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

ix. Conservation

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Conservation for \$47,173; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve FY25 budget for Conservation for \$47,173; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

x. Planning Board

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Planning Board for \$5,610; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve FY25 budget for the Planning Board for \$5,610; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xi. Zoning Board

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Zoning Board for \$1,250; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve FY25 budget for the Zoning Board for \$1,250; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xii. Planning and Community Development

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Planning and Community Development for \$180,510; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve FY25 budget for Planning and Community Development for \$180,510; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – L. Davis asked about the \$25,000 for economic development consulting – C. Rembold clarified the Town has used Berkshire Regional Planning as a consultant, but it can be used for any consulting services and he provided examples of past strategic projects. L. Davis made an amended motion to reduce the economic development line to \$15,000; G. Reed seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – E. Gabriel expressed concerns about reducing economic development funding as it is important to the Town. Motion failed: 3-2 with S. Bannon, B. Elliott, E. Gabriel voting "no." E. Gabriel made a motion to approve FY25 budget for Planning and Community Development for \$180,510; B. Elliott seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. Motion passed: 3-2 with L. Davis and G. Reed voting "no."

xiii. Buildings and Grounds – a reduction of \$20,000 was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Buildings and Grounds for \$1,003,838 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Buildings and Grounds for \$1,003,838 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xiv. Police Department – a reduction of \$5,000 was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Police Department for \$2,138,261 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Police Department for \$2,138,261 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xv. Fire Department – a \$1,000 reduction was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Fire Department for \$897,477 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Fire Department for \$897,477 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xvi. Emergency Management – a \$500 reduction was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Emergency Management for \$24,461 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Emergency Management for \$24,461 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xvii. Building Inspector – M. Pruhenski described the shared Building Department

arrangement noting Great Barrington is the host for the program/four employees and will bill the four participating towns. P. Orenstein asked about a potential decrease in the number of permits – M. Pruhenski replied it is a percentage share based on the number of permits issued. A. O'Dwyer stated the reimbursement by the other towns goes into free cash to offset the Town's contribution. L. Davis

asked if this could be funded out of free cash. M. Pruhenski and C. Rembold cautioned against allocating additional free cash even though it will be reimbursed and noted the impact on free cash for next year. Best practices around maintaining free cash, especially as a cushion due to the tight budget and to preserve the Town's bond rating was discussed. P. Orenstein asked about charging interest to the participating towns – M. Pruhenski replied it is not in the signed agreement. He noted the towns can be billed quarterly, if needed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Building Inspector for \$473,901; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve FY25 budget for the Building Inspector for \$473,901; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. Motion passed: 3-2 with L. Davis and G. Reed voting "no."

xviii. Animal Control – an \$800 reduction was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Animal Control for \$11,000 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Animal Control for \$11,000 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xix. Highway Department – a \$37,700 reduction was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Highway Department for \$1,990,234 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Highway Department for \$1,990,234 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xx. Health Department – a \$700 reduction was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Health Department for \$146,443 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Health Department for \$146,443 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – it was confirmed that legal expenses were removed. All in favor: 5-0.

xxi. Council on Aging – a \$300 reduction was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Council on Aging for \$246,766 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Council on Aging for \$246,766 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xxii. Veterans – allocating the requested additional \$8,400 was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Veterans for \$176,429 including the additional \$8,400 as requested; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Veterans for \$176,429 including the additional \$8,400 as requested; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xxiii. Library – a \$2,300 reduction was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Library for \$654,955 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for the Library for \$654,955 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xxiv. Parks and Recreation – M. Pruhenski suggested that funds to cover the additional \$8,400 allocated to Veterans could come from time off for lifeguards and the skate park. He clarified that the parks would remain open. A \$52,800 reduction was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Parks and Recreation for \$83,825 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Parks and Recreation for \$83,825 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xxv. Boards and Commissions – a \$2,000 reduction was discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Boards and Commissions for \$21,000 including the reduction as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Boards and Commissions for \$21,000 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xxvi. Celebrations and Events

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Celebrations and Events for \$12,500; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve FY25 budget for Celebrations and Events for \$12,500; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xxvii. Debt Service – P. Orenstein stated there is a historical summary for debt service including what was previously authorized and being approving this year. He asked that Town staff communicate when projects previously authorized are undertaken.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Debt Service for \$3,378,034; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve FY25 budget for Debt Service for \$3,378,034; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xxviii. Retirement

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Retirement for \$1,230,281; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve FY25 budget for Retirement for \$1,230,281; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

xxix. Insurance

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Insurance for \$1,797,506; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve FY25 budget for Insurance for \$1,797,506; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0

xxx. Wastewater

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 budget for Wastewater for \$3,153,295; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve FY25 budget for Wastewater for \$3,153,295; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

b. Capital Budget

i. Police Department – It was discussed that one cruiser and radio was removed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 capital budget for the Police Department for \$104,675 including the reductions as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 capital budget for the Police Department for \$104,675 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

ii. Fire Department – There was a discussion about partially funding the new engine this year.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 capital budget for the Fire Department for \$167,000 with \$67,000 borrowed and \$100,000 free cash; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – it was debated whether to partially fund the new engine this year. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "no," P. Orenstein, "no." Motion failed: 2-1 with A. O'Dwyer and P. Orenstein voting "no."

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 capital budget for the Fire Department for \$67,000 including the reductions as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 capital budget for the Fire Department for \$67,000 including the reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

iii. DPW – S. Bannon asked about the status of grants for the Habitat for Humanity project - C. Rembold replied there is no update and bids have not been opened.

Removing \$750,000 from the reserve fund for the project was discussed and it was noted that if the situation changes it can be discussed again and voted on at a subsequent Town Meeting. Removing an additional \$3,600 was also discussed.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 capital budget for the DPW for \$4,358,684 including reductions as discussed; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 capital budget for the DPW for \$4,358,684 including reduction as discussed; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – G. Reed asked what is the plan if bids are high – it was stated that staff would try to reduce costs or look for other funds. All in favor: 5-0.

iv. Parks

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 capital budget for Parks for \$153,000; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – it was noted that \$95,000 is being funded through CPA. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 capital budget for Parks for \$153,000; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – G. Reed asked what is the plan if bids are high – it was stated that staff would try to reduce costs or look for other funds. All in favor: 5-0.

v. Transit

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 capital budget for Transit for \$22,000; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – it was noted that the budget had previously been reduced from \$45,000. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 capital budget for Transit for \$22,000; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

vi. Wastewater

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 capital budget for Wastewater for \$2,650,000; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 capital budget for Wastewater for \$2,650,000; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

c. Special Articles – S. Bannon stated the five Town Manager recommended and the one Selectboard recommended Special Articles would be voted on.

i. Community Impact

P. Orenstein recused. It was stated the Finance Committee cannot vote on this Special Article with only two members voting.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 Special Article for Community Impact for \$1,500,000; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

ii. BHRSD Vocational Tuition and Transportation

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 Special Article for BHRSD Vocational Tuition and Transportation for \$80,000; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 Special Article for BHRSD Vocational Tuition and Transportation for \$80,000; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

iii. Emergency Medical Services

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 Special Article for Emergency Medical Services for \$205,326; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – P. Orenstein stated the 2022 financial audit was received. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 Special Article for Emergency Medical Services for \$205,326; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

iv. Courthouse Improvements – S. Bannon stated there is a change in the funding source to the Sale of Real Estate account.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 Special Article for Courthouse Improvements for \$200,000 from the Sale of Real Estate account; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 Special Article for Courthouse Improvements for \$200,000 from the Sale of Real Estate account; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

v. Ramsdell Library – M. Pruhenski suggested partially funding this out of the Sale of Real Estate account.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 Special Article for Ramsdell Library for \$150,000 with \$125,000 from the Sale of Real Estate account and \$25,000 from free cash; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 Special Article for Ramsdell Library for \$150,000 with \$125,000 from the Sale of Real Estate account and \$25,000 from free cash; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – S. Bannon stated his concern about the lack of a solid plan to raise \$2-3m, and if not, the Town may be responsible for making up the difference. It was discussed that Ramsdell is an important project and the Town can decline to fund any additional expenses. P. Orenstein stated he would not support another request for funds. All in favor: 5-0.

vi. Opioid Settlement Funds

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 Special Article for Opioid Settlement Funds received in 2023 in the amount of \$10,556.32; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 Special Article for Opioid Settlement Funds received in 2023 in the amount of \$10,556.32; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – there was none. All in favor: 5-0.

d. School Assessment – S. Bannon stated whatever is voted tonight is predicated on the School Committee public hearing tomorrow and if there is a change in the amount we will have to revoke.

R. Geiler made a motion to approve the FY25 School Assessment for \$21,040,872; A. O'Dwyer seconded. A. O'Dwyer asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Geiler, "aye," A. O'Dwyer, "aye," P. Orenstein, "aye." All in favor: 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the FY25 School Assessment for \$21,040,872; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any discussion – it was noted the increase is under 4%. All in favor: 5-0.

3. Citizen Speak Time – No citizens asked to speak.

4. Media Time

a. Shaw Izikson, Berkshire Edge, asked for the bottom line on budget cuts – S. Bannon replied that information is not available right now, but it will be on the Town website, He also asked about next steps – S. Bannon replied one item needs a Finance Committee vote, but otherwise, the budget goes to Town Meeting for vote.

b. Eileen Mooney asked for clarification on the result of the Building Inspector and Fire Department capital votes.

5. Adjournment - Chairman Bannon adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent at 8:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Ostrow, Recording Clerk