

**Town of Andover**  
Board of Finance  
Wednesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021 at 7:00 P.M.  
Virtual via Zoom Platform

Special Meeting Budget Workshop Minutes

1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Marc Brinker called the Special Meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

Members: Chair Marc Brinker, Vice Chair Diane Choquette, Curt Dowling, Louise Goodwin, Robert England, David Hewett, Linda Fish.

Board of Selectmen: Jeff Murray, Paula King.

Town Administrator: Eric Anderson, Admin Assistant/Board Clerk: Amanda Gibson

Public: Brian Briggs, Joanne Hebert

Community Voice Channel: Nick Lavigne

2. Public Speak – None.

3. Budget Workshop

a. Board/Department Presentations – None.

b. Discuss and act upon the 2021-22 Town Budget

Eric Anderson provided an overview of the budget:

Town has received \$31k total in COVID-19 relief. Town has not spent much of the funding. The Public Library has been reimbursed for expenses including shielding and other PPE. Curt Dowling stated that the Fire Department will need to determine future storage for PPE equipment.

There is lack of senior services programs due to pandemic, so the previously approved Senior Services Coordinator position will not be filled. Roberta Dougherty to continue as the Municipal Agent.

There are savings in the Finance Department due to new Assistant Finance Officer using health insurance for one person instead of two.

The town will save \$12k in health insurance costs for the Tax Collector's Office by reducing Tax Collector's hours to part-time, and only full-time during collection months.

The town's operating budget, excluding Andover Elementary School and capital, is decreasing by 1.5%. Capital projects including roads, bridges, culverts, and physical infrastructure are increasing. Goal is to complete the bridges before the state closes them due to safety. The Board of Selectmen would like to consider bonding for future capital projects. There are 5 culverts to address relatively quickly. Public Works Supervisor Jay Tuttle is working on a plan for chip sealing and shimming of the roads.

The town is granting \$75k in capital equipment for the Fire Department's necessary items.

The town hired Distinctive Tree Care for tree work. This past year, approximately 500 trees were taken care of this year along the roads to protect against electricity outages during future storms.

Within the last few years, the unexpended fund balance surplus has been spent. Curt Dowling recommended Suzanne Heise, resident and local grant writer, to help the town apply for grant funding.

The town is currently utilizing \$130k in STEAP grant funding for reconstruction of road sections on Long Hill Road and Shoddy Mill Road. The town used StreetScan company for road evaluation.

Marc Brinker stated that the town budget moved employee benefits out of one large category into the specific departments in order to see exactly what departments costs are.

Eric Anderson stated that the salary increase requests for the Town Clerk and Registrars falls within the jurisdiction of the Board of Finance. The Board of Selectmen has approved the requests. Per town charter, the Board of Selectmen set the salary for employees other than those elected. Members discussed reasoning including workload and increase time.

Members discussed the high proposed mil rate increase of 7.58%.

Members discussed possibility of further cutting hours of Town Hall.

Eric Anderson stated that the only long-term employees are Assistant Assessor Roberta Dougherty and Town Clerk Carol Lee. The town offers less in salary than other similar towns.

Members discussed funding for the community/senior center. Eric Anderson stated there is \$447k in the fund currently. The Board of Selectmen are proposing to put \$50k in the fund to spend on upcoming architectural renderings for preliminary design. Diane Choquette, member of the Community Senior Center Building

Committee, shared that the committee will be requesting funds from the Board of Finance for the conceptual drawings.

Curt Dowling reminded the board of the idea to raise 1 mil per year for capital spending and potential for bonding. Members discussed town's 40 years of inherited neglect. Rob England suggested that bonding would be beneficial during the current low interest rate environment.

Louise Goodwin inquired on the Health Director position of the Eastern Highlands Health District. Eric Anderson stated it is a town requirement. The town has input on the program since Eric Anderson is on the district board of planning and budget sessions.

Robert England suggested a tax increase percent for the board to work towards as a goal. Marc Brinker reminded the board of last year's decision for no increase due to pandemic and residents' lack of voting, and capital projects were not funded. Marc Brinker stated the large increases are from Andover Elementary School and RHAM Middle/High School and capital projects.

Eric Anderson proposed hypothetical ideas of cutting out actual services including the Public Library and Resident State Trooper, and increasing Transfer Station revenue. CT Conference of Municipalities data on town's portion of budget is in line with other municipalities.

Robert England commended the AES staff during the pandemic.

Marc Brinker announced that each year the town pushes off capital projects, the issues increase.

Curt Dowling shared high costs of AES preschool.

Members discussed possibility of removing the Resident State Trooper position since it is a large portion of the budget. Eric Anderson shared that during Darrell Tetreault's time in town, the store and restaurant burglars and library vandalizers were caught. Members remembered residents previously voted against losing the trooper position. Curt Dowling announced that the town has received 5 applicants for the newly opened position, as Darrell Tetreault has been reassigned to Hebron. Christopher Ferreira is the temporary Resident State Trooper.

Eric Anderson provided a brief road review. To be presented at the next Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting. Members discussed landscaping services at the Veterans Memorial Field athletic fields.

Curt Dowling recommended using Public Works employees to transfer dumpsters instead of Willimantic Waste. Members discussed increase in waste and recycling costs in the next year due to CT plant closure.

c. Schedule Additional Budget Workshops

The next Board of Finance Special Meeting Budget Workshop is Wednesday, March 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M.

Members agreed to not schedule any additional budget workshops at this time but to possibly in the future.

Members announced that a budget Town Meeting is required to be held within the first 10 days of May, 2021.

The proposed Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Town Budget is located on the town website budget page.

4. Public Speak

Joanne Hebert inquired on the actual cost per student. Inquired on the Town Clerk's 6% salary increase.

Brian Briggs stated that it is a very high proposed increase with hard decisions to make and suggested limiting AES cuts.

Jeff Murray discussed idea of the Transfer Station sticker fee increase as the energy plant closing will have a significant impact to towns for hauling and tipping fees.

5. Adjournment

Rob England MOVED to adjourn the Special Meeting Budget Workshop.

Curt Dowling SECONDED

MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0

Marc Brinker adjourned the Special Meeting at 10:00 P.M.

\*Please visit our town website at [www.andoverct.org](http://www.andoverct.org) for upcoming VIRTUAL meetings with instructions on how to join. The following boards/commission Zoom Video Recordings are posted to the NEW Town of Andover, CT YouTube Channel: Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Board of Assessment Appeals, Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals. Like our [www.facebook.com/townofandoverct](https://www.facebook.com/townofandoverct) page for community updates! Helpfully submitted by the Board Clerk/Administrative Assistant, Amanda Gibson. *Amanda Gibson*  
Please see the minutes of subsequent meetings for the approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.