

**TOWN OF LAKEVILLE  
Select Board Meeting Minutes  
March 16, 2023 – 6:00 PM**

**Lakeville Police Station Meeting Room  
323 Bedford Street, Lakeville, MA**

On March 16, 2023, the Select Board held a meeting at 6:00 PM at the Lakeville Police Station Meeting Room. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Vice Chair Fabian. Members present were Vice Chair Fabian, Member LaCamera and Member Carboni. Also present was Ari Sky, Town Administrator and Christina Cotsoridis, Assistant to the Town Administrator. LakeCAM was recording the meeting for broadcast.

Also present for the meeting were Finance Committee Members Brian Day, Chairman; Katherine Desrosiers; Adam Lynch; Lawrence Kostant and Christopher Plonka. Finance Committee Chairman Day called their meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

**FY24 Proposed Budget Overview/Update with the following Departments:**

**Information Technology (IT)**

*Robert McNally from Green River Associates was present for the discussion.* Mr. McNally said IT is pretty level funded with minor increases in services. A revolving equipment replacement plan was implemented last year. Hardware costs have gone up, and some of the contracts and professional services have increased a bit. Mr. Plonka asked about the replacement process. Mr. McNally said we replace a certain number of PC's every year. We did replace some switches and have an ongoing process to replace some of the infrastructure. We are trying to replace hardware every four (4) years. Mr. McNally summarized licensing services that the Town is using. Finance Committee Chairman Day said a 1% increase is less than he expected. Maintenance agreements bundle a lot; are any of the larger contracts coming up for renewal. Mr. McNally said Pamet migrated to Mark 43, which is not customized for the way New England works. The Chief will have to decide if we are staying with Pamet. Member LaCamera said since Mr. McNally took over IT, we have made significant progress stabilizing our network. Member Carboni asked how much longer is the server room at Town Hall going to be viable. Mr. McNally said most of the equipment has been moved to the Police Station as we have an issue with HVAC with that room. He wants to move everything out of there to the Police Station. He has been replacing and stabilizing things over the past year and is close to being able to move things. We will have an issue if TMLP goes down, so we need a second connection. He has been speaking with Comcast and Verizon about that.

**Veterans**

*Wilford Corey, Veterans' Agent, was present for the discussion.* Mr. Sky said this budget consists of salary and Veterans Benefits. The Cherry Sheet shows a \$3,000 increase from FY23 to FY24. The Veterans Benefits are a mandate, and we receive reimbursement from the State. We spend about \$160,000 and receive approximately \$95-97,000 reimbursement. Mr. Corey said he

will need some more flag holders for graves. Member Carboni said she has been working with Mr. Corey and Joan Morton on what we are looking for. They are \$14 each, and they are looking for approximately 200 markers, for a bit over \$2,000. Mr. Corey said we get reimbursed for flags, but not the flag holders. Mr. Sky said it was not requested during the budget process, but it should not make a big difference in the budget.

Upon a motion made by Member LaCamera with Vice Chair Fabian stepping down to second, it was:

VOTED: To add \$2,000 into the Veterans' Budget to purchase the requested flag holders.  
Unanimous in favor.

### Library

*Jayme Viveiros, Library Director, and Patrick Marshall, Chairman of the Library Board of Directors were present for the discussion.* Ms. Viveiros said the budget increase is mainly contract obligations and cost of living increases. She did some significant expense cutting. There is an overall increase 2.2% over last year. The increase in expenses are fuel and trash. The budget meets the requirement for the State for municipal appropriation requirements. We will not lose certification from the State. The intent of certification is that Library services will continue to grow. We are back to pre-Covid numbers for circulation and beat our 2019 numbers. Ms. Viveiros said there is no programming money in the budget. The Friends of the Library support those activities. Grants are sought and we receive State aid, so there is no cost to the taxpayers of Lakeville for programming. We still use a portion of State Aid to help make up the difference on what we need to spend on materials. We must spend 16% of our budget on materials. Vice Chair Fabian asked why is there a 54% drop in buildings and grounds. Ms. Viveiros said the Highway Department has been taking care of landscaping for the past few years. We used to have to hire out for that. Finance Committee Chairman Day asked if Ms. Viveiros thought the increase in use is due to the economy: Ms. Viveiros said people are getting back to their regular business. She will know more next year. Mr. Plonka asked about the hourly wages for clerks and the custodian. Ms. Viveiros said there are step increases for three (3) part time clerks and three (3) full time staff. Member LaCamera asked about the roof replacement in the Capital plan. Are there any other foreseeable improvements? Ms. Viveiros said a thermal audit was done, which should cover some lighting. We discussed the HVAC system, but it is still undetermined what the course of action would be. The systems are functionable, but the building is now 18 years old, so the systems are starting to get to their end of life. Other improvements would be to redesign the layout of materials and carpeting, which we can look to grant funding for.

### Park

*Scott Holmes, Chairman of the Park Commission, was present for the discussion.* Mr. Sky said the revenue to date is \$170,000, which is 79% of their annual revenue. Finance Committee Chairman Day asked do we have historical information on additional fees. Mr. Holmes said spring fees are usually about \$20,000. We are at \$14,000 and have projected at \$38,000, plus the first week at Clear Pond. Vice Chair Fabian asked about the Boston Tavern numbers. Mr. Sky said FY23 was projected at \$115,000; we have \$83,900 to date. FY24 is projected at \$112,000. FY22

actual figure was \$92,800. Mr. Holmes said the figure was increased 5-10% as the bookings were much higher than last year. Finance Committee Chairman Day asked about the percentage? Mr. Sky said the contract's third year starts this month, so they are up to 16%. Vice Chair Fabian said we should start looking at that contract in September. Finance Committee Chairman Day said \$1.2 million and \$1.5 million was their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year revenues proposed. Mr. Sky said he doubts they would make that. A good year is \$150,000. Mr. Holmes said the last year we were close to that was pre-Covid. Mr. Sky said Boston Tavern has utilized that location to do a lot of cooking, so the utility costs are high. We can bill them back for utilities. There are things that we need to look at in the new contract. Mr. Sky said from a revenue standpoint, the operation of that lodge is crucial. About half of the revenue is coming from Loon Pond Lodge. We need to build the resource and develop a relationship that will be able to provide the revenue we need. Member LaCamera asked if the Park Commission is happy with the way things are going. Mr. Holmes said there are no complaints about what they are doing. Vice Chair Fabian said Boston Tavern has been very Town friendly when the Town wants to use the facility. Mr. Holmes said the only issue was with the triathlon. It is our biggest event, and we only received half the money. Mr. Sky said the issue has to do with the triathlon was not a normal buy in terms of food. Mr. Holmes said they had a normal dinner.

Vice Chair Fabian said the Park Department is an Enterprise fund which operates independently of the Town Budget. There is a 9.5% increase which could be accounted for with wages. Mr. Sky said the lifeguard salaries were increased last year. Vice Chair Fabian said there is a total 6.9% increase in expenses. Mr. Holmes said he wanted to change accounts so we can split the expenses and income. Repairs and maintenance is for all the properties in the Park System. His proposed budget was to split it between all the properties. As an accountant, he needs to know where money is going and coming from. Most of the increase is in the wage category. He did a general 5% increase, as he had heard there may be a 3% increase. He did not have the rate increase when he did this. Mr. Kostant asked about the 59% increase in wages. Did you hire more people? Mr. Sky said they increased the pay. Member LaCamera said we paid bonuses because we could not get lifeguards. We also bumped up the hourly wages for the lifeguards. Mr. Sky said year to date is \$30,000 for the lifeguards. The change happened after the budget was adopted. Finance Committee Chairman Day asked do these salaries pay competitive with State parks? Mr. Holmes said he hoped so. At one-point last year, there was a question if we would be able to open. The bonus enticed a few people to stay with us. Mr. Kostant asked is there a problem this year for lifeguards? Mr. Holmes said he didn't know yet.

Vice Chair Fabian said supplies went from \$750 to \$2,000. Mr. Holmes said previous budgets had that at \$2,000. Vice Chair Fabian said some of this is pre-Covid numbers. We would have to go to 2019 to see a realistic budget. Did we ever get the credit card system at Clear Pond? Mr. Holmes said no. Mr. Sky said you need someone's social security number tied to the machine. Mr. Kostant asked can we use Venmo, Cash App, or Paypal? We could get a cell phone set up just for that. Mr. Sky said we can ask around for that. Ms. Desrosiers asked how it went being residents only. Mr. Holmes said it was less stressful with no incidents. Ms. Desrosiers asked were there enough people to have a lifeguard there. Mr. Holmes said yes as they ran the swimming lessons and another lifeguard watched the water. The first week of the season is where a lot of the cash comes in. The rest of the money is in the next fiscal year.

Mr. Lynch said there was talk about opening up the fields next door. Mr. Sky said he just received information from Mike Smith about that. Finance Committee Chairman Day asked would there be more revenue opportunity with the new fields. Mr. Holmes said we would let soccer try those fields and open up the current fields for use. Finance Committee Chairman Day said so you have groups that would pay, but you don't have the space. Mr. Holmes said we could do it, but it would overuse the fields. We want to spread people out. Member LaCamera said on the expense side, there is \$15,000 for a capital project in your budget. What is that? Mr. Holmes said he was unsure. Member LaCamera said we spoke of redoing the basketball court. Mr. Holmes said there is \$20,000 of capital and that is what it is for. Finance Committee Chairman Day asked did the hall rentals and bar receipts go down, but food went up 50%. Mr. Sky said the hall rental was \$30,500; bar was \$13,342, but food was over \$40,000. It was just how it was assigned.

Vice Chair Fabian said there is \$25,000 in FY24 for skateboard park improvements. Member LaCamera said this seems to be flipped compared to last year. Why suddenly is the skatepark the #1 priority. Mr. Holmes said we were fortunate to get the tennis court taken care of and then do the basketball court this spring. Nothing has been done to the skatepark since it was built. Mr. Holmes said they are talking about fixing how you enter the apparatus. They won't tear up the asphalt. There may be some fencing repair. Member LaCamera said we had a lot of conversations about Clear Pond. Mr. Holmes said he thought the Clear Pond things were more important, but he was outvoted. He would like to see some of the Clear Pond repair work out in FY26 and FY27 done. Mr. Holmes said there is work to the bathhouse next year. Member LaCamera said we have made a lot of improvements at Ted Williams Camp, and we are doing our best at John Paun. We should consider taking the Clear Pond projects and propose to use ARPA money to get those fixed now. Member LaCamera said it would be nice to redo the basketball court at Clear Pond for multi-purpose. Mr. Holmes said he would hate to wait years to do some of these projects. Mr. Sky said we need to spend ARPA money by December 2024. We could ask the Park Commission to come back with repairs for Clear Pond Park. Member LaCamera said this would help to provide some things at Clear Pond. Mr. Sky said he has been speaking to Mr. Smith about the ability to use ARPA funds for Clear Pond. Further discussion occurred regarding Clear Pond Park. Mr. Sky said if you are going to use ARPA money, you need to come up with a solid project to clean up the place and make it like the Town deserves. Finance Committee Chairman Day asked if there is anything else the Park Commission wanted to put on the Capital Plan. These items are basically renovations, but no new services.

### Cemetery Commission

*Emery Orrall, Chairman of the Cemetery Commission, was present for the discussion.* Mr. Orrall said he is not seeing a need to increase the budget. We have less than \$12,000 in their account. We need to take down trees endangering the Clark Cemetery, which will be about \$2,500 to \$3,000. We are working to properly restore a table stone monument for Phoebe Turner at Thompson Hill Cemetery, which will be costly. That would allow us to have the cemetery put on the Historic Register. We need to paint the iron railings all over. The Ward Cemetery is in deplorable condition with broken stones, pieces of granite and iron rods scattered around with a homemade fence. Vice Chair Fabian said the Department of Public Works maintains the cemeteries, but Ward Cemetery seems like more work. Mr. Orrall said the marble monuments need to be epoxied back and tipped back up. He would like to see a decent railing. The cemetery

is pretty well hidden. Vice Chair Fabian said there are a few cemeteries off the beaten path with no road. Some cemeteries are reached going through private yards. Vice Chair Fabian asked if you had any success locating a company to help with the Turner stone. Mr. Orrall said he found a company that can manufacture the legs. It should cost about \$4,000 to \$6,000 total for the restore. Ms. Desrosiers asked does that leave enough money in your budget for the other projects. Mr. Orrall said yes. Finance Committee Chairman Day said regarding the Thompson Cemetery granite posts, there is \$50,000 in 2025 capital plan. Mr. Orrall said we could not find them in the gray granite.

Member LaCamera said there are trust funds for the cemeteries. Some of those are available to make the improvements for the cemeteries. The Treasurer/Collector has a list of the cemeteries. They have been building up over the years, including interest. The Cemetery Commission should meet with the Town Accountant and Treasurer to discuss these improvements. Member LaCamera asked if perpetual care goes into one (1) fund. Mr. Orrall said he believes so.

#### Town Administrator

Mr. Sky said this is a catch all budget. We simplified them a bit last year. For the Select Board, there is a 3% increase for non-union staff. The annual impact for two (2) additional Board members is \$9,000 annually, plus \$10,000 for potential health insurance buyout. They do not have to take the buyout and health insurance would be more. In FY24, the stipend would amount of \$2,050. We could put another \$2,500 in FY24 health insurance. Under expenses, there is not much change. Subscriptions increased and there is a reduction in audit service. The OPEB actuarial is not needed in FY24. Finance Committee Chairman Day said you might have to do another audit because of Federal funding. Mr. Sky said it would be a small component. Finance Committee's budget went up a few hundred dollars for training and attending events. The recommendation for the Reserve Fund is \$150,000. There is a \$139,055 balance currently. Legal expenses are a likely target for reserve fund funding. It is at \$65,000 already and it may be more. Public buildings and properties looks larger, but we have transferred items from other line items that were bundled in there. It is up 25% mainly due to rubbish removal. Cable Advisory Committee may have to have some sort of transfer. Member LaCamera asked since both contracts are signed, why do we need the \$8,000 in FY24. Mr. Sky said that should be adjusted. The Historic Commission budget is flat.

Member LaCamera said we talked about insurance and it is time to go out and get quotes. That bill is over \$300,000. Mr. Sky said we can go out if the Board wants to. Member Carboni said it is important to do that. Member LaCamera said they are constantly changing the worker's compensation companies. Mr. Sky said we can put that on the goals. Finance Committee Chairman Day asked Mr. Sky when his contract was coming up in calendar 2024. Mr. Sky said May of 2024. Vice Chair Fabian said she doesn't want to wait; the new Board should put something in place for that. In regards to insurance, Mr. Sky said we used a 6% increase. We are self-insured. The rates are based on a combination of the rate factors and experience. If you have big claims, the rate goes up a lot. Further discussion occurred regarding insurance policies for the Town.

## Cannabis Facilities Update

*Member Carboni recused herself from the discussion and left the meeting at 7:40 PM.* Vice Chair Fabian said she wanted to clear up some information on the cannabis facilities in Lakeville. The real estate taxes are being paid. The legislation was changed by the State so that the impact fees in their Host Community Agreements (HCAs) don't have to be paid. Now we have several companies saying they don't have to pay anything, including their charitable contributions. There is one (1) lawsuit currently. We have zero revenue in this budget from the marijuana companies. It is becoming a bigger problem. Member LaCamera said there are five (5) cultivation facilities in Town and they signed HCAs. These companies have decided because the legislature changed the law that we should not be charging impact fees. However, we are not charging them impact fees. Our position is they are paying a community benefit payment and they should be paying it. One of them was suing us prior to the change in the law and said they would not pay it. Bountiful Farms, Jushi and Northeast Alternatives didn't even tell us; they just said stopped paying. He and Vice Chair Fabian have had conversations with Town Counsel about what to do. At this point, we are going to have to take legal action against them if we want our money. The first agreement expires in June and then another in August. This is not a good situation. It is time that people know what is going on. We are not receiving any money from the cannabis companies; that is why it is not in the budget. We are estimating a loss of \$400,000 in this year's budget.

Mr. Kostant said the State sold the cannabis companies as a great thing; this is how you will buy your police cars and build schools. The State gets their tax income. Member LaCamera said on retail stores, but we don't have any. Vice Chair Fabian said there has not been a ton of feedback from the State on what to do with current HCAs. We cannot turn our backs on five (5) HCAs. Mr. Kostant asked what is our recourse? Member LaCamera said we can forget about the money, but we shouldn't. Vice Chair Fabian said when marijuana was on the ballot, it was about Towns getting money. Finance Committee Chairman Day asked if we are aware of any precedent about this. Vice Chair Fabian said there is one (1) other lawsuit going on now. We are pushing hard to find out where our companies stand. Member LaCamera said this Board had nothing to do with these contracts. Vice Chair Fabian said we wanted to make the Finance Committee and residents aware of what is happening. Member Carboni returned to the meeting at 7:51 PM.

## Budget Update

Member LaCamera said when Mr. Sky and Mr. Hassett put together the revenue projections, we didn't know that the marijuana people were not going to pay their community benefit fees. We will get by this year, but next year is going to be difficult. New growth has gone down by 40%. There is no construction going on. Building permits through February are less than half of what they were last year. Under Local Receipts, we have increased the numbers to offset some of the problems with the marijuana facilities. Instead of having receipts exceeding what we budgeted, these numbers are going to be very close now. License and permits in FY22 were \$699,000. That is down significantly for 2023 and that is concerning. Mr. Sky said as of February, permits were at \$200,000.

## Regional School Budget

Member LaCamera said he and Vice Chair Fabian had attended the public hearing for the Regional School Budget. The Finance Committee doesn't have the presentation for the budget. The budget is going up 4% overall. They presented some of the issues. We are at a \$493,000 assessment right now. That is too high. Their budget is not sustainable at \$45 million with \$1.2 million in salaries, \$500,000 health insurance increase and a \$500,000 increase in special education. They receive \$300,000 in State aid. They are asking the Towns to pick up the rest. They have Federal money from the CARES Act. They have \$318,000 for staffing and that funding is disappearing in December of 2023. They have staffing levels that they cannot maintain. They have no plan on how to absorb their salaries in their budget. Member LaCamera said Freetown and Lakeville received CARES money from the Federal government and gave \$2.1 million of our money for programs and technology. Vice Chair Fabian asked what the plan was going forward when we need to replace these Chromebooks? They did not have a plan. Member LaCamera said we need to look at alternative to bring the budget down. Their E&D budget is at \$2.1 million. They had to turn some of the money back to the Towns because it was so high. He suggested using the E&D to offset the cost for Chromebooks and reduce the assessment to the Towns.

Member LaCamera said under School Choice funding, they have \$966,000 to use to offset the budget. They are getting another \$300,000 in School Choice money as of July 1<sup>st</sup> so they will have \$1.3 million. Finance Committee Chairman Day said didn't they say there were losing \$9,000 per year per student at Regional Finance Committee. Member LaCamera said they want to use it for another purpose. Why aren't we using that money to offset the cost in their budget? They could at least take \$200,000 in E&D for Chromebooks and \$200,000 from School Choice to reduce our budget. If we are conservative and say a \$300,000 reduction, that would be \$172,000 for Lakeville. Member Carboni said we can tell them this is what we did last year and then give them a percentage above what we would give. Member LaCamera asked how do we get to that number? Finance Committee hasn't even seen the budget yet. Vice Chair Fabian said their desire to hang on to \$2.1 million in E&D is unrealistic. They don't want to use it to balance their budget. They can use it for one-time purchases. Member Carboni said they can do that and they talked about it. Vice Chair Fabian said we have to pay attention and be ready to make suggestions to help them. They are talking about taking a special education teacher away to add a special education administrator. Member Carboni said they are talking about removing a bus, but we have bus contracts. Vice Chair Fabian said they would save \$100,000 a bus. Ms. Carboni said in the contract, there is a penalty for removing a bus. Vice Chair Fabian said they have not done a complete bus re-route in the past six (6) years. They like to do it every three (3) years and are looking at 80% bus reimbursement.

Mr. Kostant said he has heard a few things about School Choice. If a student comes from Taunton, Taunton does not send a check. What is the benefit to us? Vice Chair Fabian said you take in some School Choice kids to fill empty seats and get extra money. School Choice provides some diversity. If the School Committee decides they don't want School Choice, we keep the current kids until they graduate. There are 266 kids that are leaving FreeLake to go to other schools. That doesn't include Old Colony students. Why do we have so many kids leaving? What are we not offering? Ms. Desrosiers said is that Grades 1-12. Vice Chair Fabian said yes. Finance Committee Chairman Day said we also have a private school in Town. Ms. Carboni said they did

a good job breaking the cost per student down. That was \$15,000 per student for 2021. This year we have 2,777 students coming in and 66 are School Choice.

Finance Committee Chairman Day said there is \$1.2 million in salary increases; what is new hires versus contractual obligations. Vice Chair Fabian said they reviewed the salary breakdowns. Member LaCamera said what he is proposing will not affect any staffing levels or new hires. Without much effort, they could save \$300,000. He told them this budget is not sustainable. Member LaCamera also would like to lower the Local Receipts to make it better for us the following year. The School Committee also discussed a capacity study at \$200,000 to look at capacity in the Schools. He tried to point out that our student population since 2007 was 3,200, it is now 2,777 students. The numbers over the last five (5) years have been consistent. Why do you need to do a capacity study when it has gone down 500 students. Vice Chair Fabian said they are calling it a master plan. Member LaCamera said they need to look at their student numbers. Demographics have changed.

### **Adjourn**

Upon a motion made by Mr. Kostant and seconded by Ms. Desrosiers, it was:

VOTED: To adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting at 8:31 PM.  
Unanimous in favor.

Upon a motion made by Member LaCamera and seconded by Member Carboni, it was:

VOTED: To adjourn the Select Board Meeting at 8:31 PM.  
Unanimous in favor.

### **List of documents provided at the Select Board Meeting of March 16, 2023**

1. FY24 Budget and Capital Plan