

Finance Committee – May 14, 2024 SATM Recommendations

Article 1: Bills of Prior Fiscal Year

Recommendation: Favorable Action 7-0-0

Favorable action recommended as these are legitimate authorized expenses that the town is responsible to pay.

Article 2: Supplement FY2024 Budgets

Recommendation: Favorable Action 7-0-0

Favorable action recommendation as these items were unforeseen and need to be properly funded. The potential impact to property taxes when combined with article 6 is available on the table provided by the town accountant.

Article 3: Transfer to OPEB Trust Fund

Recommendation: Favorable Action 7-0-0

This article completes the process of bringing previous funding of OPEB in line with allowed state policy. Future Funding will be done via a Town Budget line.

Article 4: Transfer to Stabilization Fund

Recommendation: Favorable Action 7-0-0

This is our standard article to transfer Free Cash to Stabilization. The committee recommends this article remains one of the first articles at SATM.

Article 5: Transfer to Capital Stabilization

Recommendation: Passover

Article 6: FY2025 Town Budget

General Government: Favorable Action 7-0-0

Public Safety: Favorable Action 7-0-0

Education: Favorable Action 6-1-0

Public works: Favorable Action 6-1-0

Health and Human Services: Favorable Action 7-0-0

Culture and Recreation: Favorable Action 7-0-0

Debt Service: Favorable Action 7-0-0

Other Unclassified: Favorable Action 7-0-0

Finance Committee's favorable recommendation is because the FY 25 budget provides both the Town Administration and School Administration with the resources required to fund current operations and prepare for the future. This budget provides for negotiated contracted salary requirements, appropriate staff and operating resources and enters the first year of a 3-year period of salary stability. The Town and School collaborated to create a plan that increases the tax levy to just below the maximum amount allowed without a Prop 2.5 override. The potential impact to property taxes when combined with Article 2 is available in the table provided by the town accountant.

The unfavorable vote for the schools is due to the Uxbridge public schools building their budget to the maximum funding available without performing zero-based budgeting.

The unfavorable vote for the Public Works is based on the belief that the care and conditions of town roads should be its own article.

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It is imperative that both the Town and School Board utilize the next two years of cost stability to evaluate and implement actions that will control the rate of growth in the resident's tax liabilities to be below the growth in tax revenue. This includes all aspects of Town and School revenue opportunities, including new growth, fees, licenses, grants, intra-town collaboration, operating policies, and all other reasonable ideas. Failure to implement appropriate cost and revenue action will significantly impact the future stability of the Town.

Article 7: Wastewater Enterprise Fund Budget

Recommendation: Favorable Action 7-0-0

The Finance committee finds that this budget is in line with the needs of the department to adhere to the regulatory requirements.

Article 8: Water Enterprise Fund Budget

Recommendation: Favorable Action 7-0-0

The Finance Committee finds this budget in line with the needs of the department.

Article 9: Cable Peg Access Television Enterprise Fund Budget

Recommendation: Favorable Action 7-0-0

The Finance committee thanks the Uxbridge PEG Access team for their great work and feels this budget will allow that work to continue. The committee would also like to see an updated contract, and investigation of possible regionalization.

Article 10: Authorization to Bond Repairs to Blackstone Valley Tech

Recommendation: Favorable Action 6-0-0

The committee recommends favorable action as BVT will be looking at state and grant funding to reduce the impact to member towns. In the worst-case scenario, the Uxbridge portion of this is \$1.1 Million. This equates to approximately \$20 per year for a 20-year bond for the average home.

Article 11: School Transportation

Recommendation: Unfavorable Action 6-0-0

The Finance Committee's unfavorable recommendation is because this request is not directly linked to the transportation of students. It is a request to increase the FY25 operating budget using Stabilization Funds, although claiming to be on a one-time basis in order to have the time to effectively evaluate potential implementation of transportation fees. The use of Stabilization Funds for operating costs is not financially sound and will raise the risk of the need to seek extraordinary funding next year. As the largest factor impacting the Town cost structure, it is critical that the School Committee be transparent as to the tradeoffs and consequences of their cost and funding decisions so that the Town and School collaborate in achieving the overall cost and revenue goals of the Town.

Article 12: Appropriation for CMRPC Per Capita Rate

Recommendation: Pass Over

Article 13: Capital Purchases

Items 1-8 For DPW Favorable action 5-0-1

Item 9 Vehicle Maint. Favorable action 5-0-1

Items 10&11 Fire Dept PPE Favorable action 5-0-1

Item 12 UPD Handgun Replacement Favorable action 5-0-1

Item 13 Uxbridge Pickleball Court Favorable action 5-0-1

Items 14-16 UPS Fire Panels and Social/emotional classroom setup Favorable action 5-0-1

Items 17-21 UPS system wide Technology Favorable action 5-0-1

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The Finance Committee's favorable recommendation is because of the thorough and effective review of each individual item by the Capital Committee. As a critical part of managing the future financial health of the Town, decisions and actions concerning the stability, availability, and use of Capital funding must be made within the strategic plan for overall health of the Town. 1 Member abstained.

Article 14: Borrowing Authorization Blackstone Water Treatment Plant

Recommendation: Favorable Action 6-0-0

The Finance Committee's favorable recommendation is because the EPA will enforce a treatment action by the Town within the next few years if we do not act first, and at this point in time the Town can take advantage of very positive financial incentives. When combined with article 15, this is approximately a \$47/year increase in the water rate for the average 3-person household.

Article 15: Borrowing Authorization Bernat Wells Phase 2 Construction

Recommendation: Favorable Action 6-0-0

The committee recommends favorable action as this improves the town's ability to maintain a consistent and sufficient water supply. When combined with Article 14, this is approximately a \$47/year increase in the water rate for the average 3-person household.

Article 16: Planning and Design Appropriation for State Library Construction

Recommendation: Favorable Action 6-0-0

The committee recommends favorable action as this allows for review of future library needs and is a requirement for applying to the Massachusetts Library construction grant program.

Article 17: Sale of Farnum House

Recommendation: Favorable action 5-0-0. 1 member recused. The committee recommends favorable action as this gives the select board and town manager options to save this historic structure.

Article 18: Appropriation for High Street Area Drainage Improvements

Recommendation: Favorable action 6-0-0

The committee feels these funds are required to complete this stormwater project prior to the South Main repaving project.

Article 19: Appropriation for Conservation Restriction at 300 Quaker Highway

Recommendation: Favorable action 6-0-0

The committee agrees that conservation restriction needs to be timely completed.

Article 20: Establish a 2027 300th anniversary Celebration Special Account

Recommendation: Favorable action 6-0-0

The finance committee welcomes this celebration and understands the need for startup funding.

Article 21: Renewal of Clause 56 for Military Services Abatement

Recommendation: Favorable action 6-0-0

The committee finds this a customary renewal in support of our active-duty community members.

Article 22: Accept Provisions of M.G.L c. 60. §2 Paragraph 2

Recommendation: Favorable action 6-0-0

The committee finds merit in these abatements.

Article 23: Accept Provisions of M.G.L. c. 59, §5, Clause 37A

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Recommendation: Favorable action 6-0-0

The Committee agrees with the increase of this exemption.

Article 24: Accept Provisions of M.G.L. c. 59, §5, Clause 17F

Recommendation: Favorable action 6-0-0

This will allow yearly abatement adjustments based on state COLA determinations.

Article 25: Trust Fund Investments Prudent Investor Rule

Recommendation: Favorable action 6-0-0

The committee feels this opens up more opportunities for investment growth, within the limitations of state law, while still being Fiscally responsible.

Article 26: Sutton Street Culvert Replacement Authorization to acquire permanent and temporary easements:

Recommendation: Favorable action 6-0-0 The committee understands the needs for these repairs and recognizes the scope of work requires these easements to be completed.

Article 27: Amend Town Charter: Town Manager – Section 2: Powers and Duties

Recommendation: Favorable action 6-0-0

The committee believes this allows the Town Manager to have the flexibility to build the organization to align with the growth of the town without adding new employees.

Article 28: Amend General Bylaws Section 233-1: Licenses and Permits

Recommendation: Favorable action 6-0-0

The committee recommends favorable action as this will improve the operation performance of the town.

Article 29: Amendment to the General Bylaws Chapter 290 Stormwater Authority

Recommendation: Favorable action 6-0-0

The committee agrees with the transition of the stormwater authority to the Conservation Commission.

Article 30: Citizens' Petition: To Establish a Town Mission Statement

Recommendation: Unfavorable Action 6-0-0

Although the committee likes the idea of creating a town mission statement, we believe a process that includes all interested and relevant parties and not simply adopt this statement.