

**Town of Arlington
Massachusetts**

**Report of the
Finance Committee**



**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
October 17, 2023**

THE FINANCE COMMITTEE
CHRISTINE DESHLER, *Chair*

DARREL HARMER, *Vice Chair*
ANNIE LACOURT, *Vice Chair*

ALAN JONES, *Vice Chair*

Precinct		Term Ends	Precinct		Term Ends
1	JORDAN REMY	2025	11	JOHN GRIFFIN	2023
2	SHANE BLUNDELL	2025	12	DARREL HARMER	2024
3	JENNIFER SUSSE	2024	13	ANNIE LACOURT	2025
4	SOPHIE MIGLIAZZO	2023	14	ALAN JONES	2025
5	BRIAN BECK	2023	15	CHRISTOPHER HEIGHAM	2024
6	CAROLYN WHITE	2025	16	PEGGY BLISS	2023
7	REBECCA YOUNKIN	2025	17	ALLAN TOSTI	2024
8	JOSH LOBEL	2025	18	VACANT	2023
9	GRANT GIBIAN	2023	19	CHRISTINE DESHLER	2024
10	CHARLES FOSKETT	2023	20	DEAN CARMAN	2023
			21	DAVID MCKENNA	2024
	TARA BRADLEY				
	Executive Secretary				

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Arlington is at an inflection point where decisions soon to be made by both Town Meeting and the voters of Arlington will have far-ranging and long-lasting impact upon our residents for generations to come.

Three weeks after this Special Town Meeting commences the voters will be asked to approve a \$7 million override, \$5.8 million of which will be used over the course of the next five years to increase the base budget of our school system. This decision is not to be made lightly. By increasing school spending, we will worsen our structural deficit. This will almost certainly necessitate bigger and/or more frequent override votes in the future. Should any of those override votes fail, cuts to budgets -- and services -- may well be the result.

This is not to say that such a decision is imprudent. The business of the Town is to provide for the needs of its people. Those needs change with time and do not remain static. Just as today's needs are different than those of ten or twenty years ago, we must prepare the Town to meet the needs of tomorrow.

On May 31, 2023, the Finance Committee met with members of the School Committee, the Superintendent, and members of her staff to discuss, in depth, the Superintendent's Strategic Plan and its funding requirements. This open and robust conversation allowed the Finance Committee to question, challenge and test the thinking of those entrusted with our children's education. Following that, the Finance Committee met one week later on June 7, 2023 to debate amongst ourselves whether to support or oppose the override and, more specifically, the Select Board's commitment to dedicate most of the funds raised by it for use by the school department.

By a vote of 10 to 7, the Finance Committee opted to support the override. While sobered by the knowledge of our having to confront future deficits, a majority of the Finance Committee believes it is our collective responsibility to close student achievement gaps, improve the quality of education for all, and ensure that we are able to recruit and retain the best talent possible for our children. Towns thrive with a strong educational system; without one, they die.

If the November 7, 2023 override vote is approved by the voters, the school department is asking that an additional \$400,000 be appropriated into its current FY 2024 budget. Consistent with its vote on June 7, 2023 to support the Select Board's override commitments, the Finance Committee recommends favorable action on Article 2 of this year's Special Town Meeting. To be clear, this appropriation is entirely contingent on successful passage of the override; no further funds will be appropriated in this fiscal year if it fails.

Also facing this Special Town Meeting are momentous decisions relating to our Town's zoning. Arlington, along with numerous other communities in eastern Massachusetts, must comply with the requirements of M.G.L. c. 40A, §3A, the "MBTA Communities Zoning Law", which mandates that cities and towns allow a certain amount of space be zoned for multi-family housing by right.

In response to this state law, the MBTA Communities Working Group (“Working Group”) engaged in a planning process to determine the location and details of new zoning districts. Throughout 2023, multiple iterations of a plan were generated. The Working Group submitted its final proposal to the Arlington Redevelopment Board (“ARB”) recently on September 11, 2023. The ARB further refined this proposal at its October 2, 2023 meeting, and will be making its recommendations in its Report to Town Meeting.

Traditionally, the Finance Committee refrains from making recommendations to Town Meeting on matters related to zoning, deferring to the ARB on those issues that are more properly within its purview. Nevertheless, recognizing its own obligation to advise Town Meeting as to financial matters, the Finance Committee considered the implications that the MBTA Communities Zoning Law might have upon the Town’s fiscal situation.

While it is the consensus of the Finance Committee that housing which increases the population of the Town will increase the overall cost of delivering services to our residents, and that the more population increases, the more costs, too, will increase, what is indeterminable based on currently available data is whether revenue generated by the development of new housing will be capable of offsetting these additional costs. Beyond that, however, the Finance Committee could not come to any useful conclusions due to the number of variables and uncertainties that now exist and the dearth of available data on which to rely. Concluding that it could not in good faith make recommendations to the Special Town Meeting, by a vote of 10 to 5, the Finance Committee decided to take no position on any zoning proposals to come before it.

Altering Arlington’s zoning regulations in response to the MBTA Communities Zoning Law is, perhaps, the most significant vote that Town Meeting has been asked to take in years. As such, it is the Chair’s hope that better data will be forthcoming to assist the Special Town Meeting in this decision.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine P. Deshler, Chair
Arlington Finance Committee

The Finance Committee recommends passage of the following votes:

(Unless otherwise indicated, the following recommendations were by unanimous votes: any exceptions are noted in parentheses following the text of the recommended vote. The vote code is: number of yes votes-number of no votes-number of abstentions. The Chair votes only when the recommendation of the Finance Committee will be affected.)

ARTICLE 1 The Select Board will report on this Article.

**ARTICLE 2 APPROPRIATION/CONTINGENT ARLINGTON
PUBLIC SCHOOLS EDUCATION FUNDING**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate or transfer a sum of \$400,000 from the tax levy for the Fiscal Year 2024 Arlington Public Schools operating budget, contingent upon passage of a Proposition 2 ½ ballot question under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 59, §21C; or take any action related thereto.

(Inserted at the request of the Town Manager)

VOTED: That the sum of \$400,000 be and hereby is appropriated to the Arlington Public School Department’s operating budget for the Fiscal Year 2024, said sum to be raised by general tax contingent upon successful passage of a Proposition 2 ½ ballot question under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 59, §21C.

(10-7).

COMMENT: See Report of the Chair of the Finance Committee for further information.

ARTICLES 3-14 The Redevelopment Board and the Select Board will report on these Articles.

COMMENT: See Report of the Chair of the Finance Committee for further information.

ARTICLE 15 COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

To see if the Town will vote to fund any fiscal items in the event that any are contained in collective bargaining agreements between the Town and the following named collective bargaining units, determine how the money shall be raised and expended; or take any action related thereto:

- A. Arlington Police Patrol Officers’ Association (formerly Arlington Patrolmen’s Association);
- B. Arlington Ranking Police Officers’ Association;

(Inserted at the request of the Town Manager)

VOTED: That the sum of \$477,003 be transferred from the existing salary reserve to the following FY24 departmental budget for FY24 pay for the FY22, FY23 and FY24 retroactive compensation for settlement of the Arlington Police Patrol Officers' Association (APPOA) contract:

Department	Total
Police	\$477,003
	\$477,003

and that the sum of \$126,909 be transferred from the existing salary reserve to the following FY24 departmental budget as indicated in this table for settlement of the APPOA contract:

Department	Total
Police	\$126,909
	\$126,909

AND FURTHER VOTED That the Town hereby ratifies the following financial items in the collective bargaining agreements and memoranda of agreement with the following enumerated collective bargaining units and hereby approves the following financial items relating to:

A. Arlington Police Patrol Officers' Association (APPOA):

- 1. A one and-a- half percent (1.5%) wage increase effective July 1, 2021, to be paid as a retroactive payment to all union members employed by the town as of May 23, 2023, including those who retired between July 1, 2021 and the time of union ratification.**
- 2. A two percent (2%) wage increase effective July 1, 2022, to be paid as a retroactive payment to all union members employed by the town as of May 23, 2023 including those who retired between July 1, 2021 and the time of union ratification.**
- 3. A two percent (2%) wage increase effective July 1, 2023, to be paid as a retroactive payment to all union members employed by the town as of May 23, 2023 including those who retired between July 1, 2021 and the time of union ratification.**
- 4. A four percent (4%) market adjustment to all covered positions effective July 1, 2023, to be paid as retroactive payment to all union members employed by the town**

as of May 23, 2023, including those who retired between July 1, 2021 and the time of union ratification.

- 5. An increase from 4.8% to 5% (a .2 increase) to the 3-year step and an increase from 1% to 3% (a 2% increase) to the 7-year and 10-year steps effective July 1, 2022 to be paid as a retroactive payment to all union members employed by the town as of May 23, 2023 including those who retired between July 1, 2022 and the time of union ratification.**
- 6. A 2% wage increase upon agreement of a Body Worn Camera policy.**
- 7. Recognition of Juneteenth as a holiday.**

COMMENT: Negotiations are still in process with the Ranking Police Officers' Association.