

Williamstown Finance Committee
Wednesday, March 18, 2025
7pm at Town Hall

Finance Committee members present: Fred Puddester, Melissa Cragg, Moly Magavern, Rachel Tarses, Michael Sussman, Paula Consolini and Donna Quirk

Staff present: Bob Menicocci and Dave Fierro

Puddester opened the meeting at 7:00.

This meeting was dedicated to hearing from nonprofit organizations seeking town financial support. As context, it was noted that the proposed budget included \$200,000 for community projects. This level is 30% higher than last year but represents the high-water mark of town support for nonprofits. This year requests totaled \$450,000, more than twice the amount in the budget.

(The organizations put a lot of work into detailed proposals for funding and people should read the proposals if they are interested in learning more about the work these organizations. These minutes are only a summary of the proposals.)

Sue Briggs presented the \$55,000 request from the Chamber of Commerce. Sue summarized the work of the Chamber and indicated that town funding would help them promote and market the town, produce events and work with town government to serve local businesses, residents and visitors.

Vanessa Brown and Rachel Heisler presented for the Community Pre-School. They described the services they provide to parents and children in the area. They noted several challenges they face including recruiting staff, maintaining their building and remaining affordable when most revenue comes from parent fees. Town funding at the \$50,000 level will help the center continue to provide affordable and professional childcare.

Mike Evans and Jeannie Alexander talked to the committee about the request from the Farmer's Market. They are requesting \$10,000 to provide funding to compensate the market manager and to support the produce buy-back program, which provides unsold food to those in need and supports farmers.

Next, Dan Hudson presented on behalf of Images Theatre. Their request for \$50,000 would go to support offsite programming while the theatre is closed for a major renovation later this year.

Bill McEwen made submitted a request on behalf of Purple Valley Trails. This organization is engaged in revitalization of the skatepark on Stetson Road. They are

requesting a one-grant of \$150,000 to provide additional financing, in addition to other town grants, for the new skatepark.

Remedy Hall was represented by Carrie Greene. Remedy Hall provides basic services to people in need. They distribute free personal hygiene items, cleaning supplies, clothing and baby supplies, as well as other items. The organization has outgrown its current location and is hoping to relocate to provide more privacy for clients, as well as more storage and display space. The \$40,000 request would help support operation and allow them to concentrate of grant and private fund-raising activities.

Tomas Adalsteinsson and Henry Smith presented for Sand Springs. They detailed the activities at Sand Spring and talked about the need for support for facility maintenance and to keep the pool affordable to everyone in town. The \$50,000 request to the town would be used for maintenance (\$25,000) and for financial aid (\$25,000).

And finally, Michael Williams presented Williamstown Youth Center's request. Michael discussed the programs at the center, including after-school care, the sports and arts program and an 8-week summer camp. The center's \$50,000 request would support that programming and provide for financial aid.

Public Comment

Randy Fippinger commented that the nonprofits provided important services to the town and were all good investments of town funds. Dan Cappinger mentioned his opposition to town spending for nonprofits, referring to the anti-aid amendment to the state's constitution. He argued that the town should determine the priorities and fund those priorities and cautioned about this spending given the current economic situation.

Water, Wastewater (Sewer) and Transfer Station rates

Dave Fiero presented the analysis of all the rates. For water and wastewater, the rates are being held at the same level as the previous year. The Hoosic Water Quality District budget is down slightly, based on usage data. Sussman asked about future rates given capital needs in the future. Fiero indicated there were reserves to cover those costs, but financing those projects will increase future rates. Stinson supported the idea of leaving rates flat until we get a better handle on future operational and capital needs using the WaterWorks system. Cragg asked about the well project, Clough explained the project was still in design and he believes the \$2.5 million budgeted is still sufficient despite increases in construction costs. Magavern asked about the Hoosic Water Quality District budget and the decision on sludge and Sussman asked about who makes that decision. Puddester responded that the district makes that decision. The committee will vote on these rates at our decision meeting.

The meeting at adjourned at 9:30.