

Annual Town Meeting - May 8, 2023
Introductory Remarks on Finance Committee Participation

On Behalf of the Finance Committee: Nick Athanassiou, Chairman

Good evening. I am Nick Athanassiou. I have the privilege to Chair the Orleans Finance Committee.

According to our Town Charter, the Finance Committee:

- ... independently examines and analyzes our Town's financial affairs, including...
 - proposed budgets,
 - the Capital Improvements Plan, and
 - all other proposals which would have a financial impact.
- Then we must inform our Town's citizens of our findings and recommendations.

To meet our responsibilities we spent considerable time discussing budget details face-to-face with Department heads, School Committee members, School District management, with our Finance Director, and with Select Board members. We do this to understand what the numbers mean and how they are put together. You can find our reviews posted on the Finance Committee website.

Today you will hear from Finance Committee members on specific groups of Warrant Articles that address five themes. For each theme, one of us will stand up once to address related Articles. We fully support the purpose of these Articles. These themes are:

- Enterprise Funds,
- The Town and School Budget and Capital Improvement Plan,
- Our Sewer Collection & Wastewater Treatment program,
- Our Fire and Emergency issues, and
- Our Housing issues.

Then we will address,

- The proposed Rental Registration program, and
- Our opposing views of the proposed Governor Prence Property Conveyance

The Town Meeting Warrant in your hands includes our four-page letter with overall conclusions of where we are today (it starts on page 20). Here, I want to highlight a few of these conclusions.

Clear evidence of our reputation as a well-managed Town was the robust response of many qualified candidates who applied for our open Town Manager position.

We have been doing a good job managing our operating budget, our capital budget, and our debt. And we keep getting better. As a result, our Bonds have been rated AAA for the past

several years. This has kept our interest payments as low as possible. We have to applaud our Finance Director and her staff for this.

Also, we have started looking more systematically beyond the horizon of a one-year operating budget and the 5-year Capital Investment Plan. Credit our Select Board for this attention to better planning. Over the past year alone, led by your Boards and Committees, we have made great strides towards, among others:

1. Triggering an update of our 20-year Comprehensive Plan,
2. Extending our Capital Investment Planning from 5 to 20 years,
3. Producing an economic vitalization plan,
4. Finishing a Community Center feasibility study that is showing a path to a broader Community Quality of Life perspective, and
5. Talking across our silos... promoting transparency, communication, and collaboration.

Planning is the key to better prioritized projects based on need and affordability. Then we can phase in the start of each project over time. This will allow us to pace the commitment of tax dollars. Additionally, funding these capital projects can be spread over 20 or 30 years. We must find ways to preserve and enhance our human resources and our infrastructure while limiting the real estate tax impact on all of us.

Our Select Board is setting a course to achieve a reasonable balance among:

1. Managing revenue sources,
2. Controlling spending on human resources and capital projects, and
3. Maintaining quality Town services.

All this while making sure that our environment is livable and protected.

Thank you.