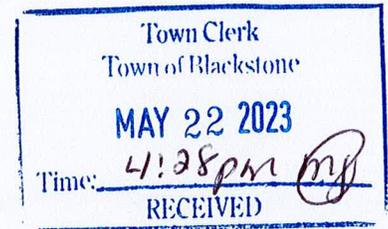




TOWN OF BLACKSTONE
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
May 30, 2023 7:30 PM



FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

ARTICLE 1. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to authorize the Collector to use all means of collecting taxes that a Treasurer may use when appointed Collector.

ARTICLE 2. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to raise and appropriate such sums of money as may be deemed necessary to fix the salaries of all elected and appointed Town officers and to defray Town expenses for all departments, including the Reserve Fund, for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024 and to determine how such sums of money should be raised, whether from the current tax levy, by transfer from available funds, by borrowing or otherwise.

ARTICLE 3. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to compensate the members of Boards and Committees of the Town of Blackstone for their services and to set the amount of said compensation; said compensation set by town meeting to be paid in four (4) equal installments provided, however, that no such installment shall be paid a) to a member who has not attended at least 60% of the meetings of the respective Boards and Committees (excluding, however, any meetings not attended by such member due to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 268A) in the twelve (12) month period prior to March, June, September and December, as the case may be, if such member has been a member for twelve (12) or more months prior to each of said dates; orb) to a member who has not attended at least 60% of the meetings of the various Boards and Committees (excluding, however, any meetings not attended by such member due to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 268A) in the period prior to each of said dates if such member has not been a member for twelve (12) or more months prior to each of said dates.

ARTICLE 4. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to compensate the members of the Blackstone-Millville Regional District School Committee for their services as such members and to set the amount of said compensation at \$1,500.00 per member and \$1,800.00 for the Chairman, such compensation to be paid in three (3) equal installments in the months of July, November and March provided, however, that no such installment shall be paid a) to a member who is not in attendance of at least 60% of the meetings of the District School Committee (excluding, however, any meetings not attended by such members due to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 268A) in the twelve (12) month period prior to July 1, November 1 or March 1, as the case may be, if such member has been a member for twelve (12) months or more months prior to each of said dates; or b) to a member who has not attended at least 60% of the meetings of the District School Committee (excluding, however, any meetings not attended by such member due to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 268A) in the period prior to each of said dates.

ARTICLE 5. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds a sum of money to overlay town streets and roads to be determined by the Board of Selectmen, or for the construction, reconstruction and improvement of public ways and street drainage systems and to determine how such sums may be raised, whether by advancement from Town Treasury, or by borrowing in anticipation of reimbursement by the Commonwealth, or otherwise, by the Treasurer, with approval of the Board of Selectmen.

ARTICLE 6. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to enter into contracts on such terms and conditions as the Board of Selectmen may determine for the construction, reconstruction and improvements of public ways, street drainage systems and sidewalks throughout the Town.

ARTICLE 7. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to acquire by gift, purchase, or eminent domain an easement or easements for the purpose of construction, installation, maintenance and repair of municipal drainage, sewer water systems, and roadways, and to raise and appropriate or transfer from any available funds a sum of money to fund such acquisitions.

ARTICLE 8. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$150,000 to fund FY2024 expenses of the PEG Access and Cable Related Fund, as established by the vote under Article 29 of the May 28, 2019 Annual Town Meeting, pursuant to Mass General Law, Chapter 44, Section 53F 3/4, said appropriation to be funded by fees received pursuant to the Town's cable licensing agreement and cable franchise agreement, with the fund to begin operation for FY2024 effective July 1, 2023.

ARTICLE 9. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to grant the Board of Selectmen authority to research, develop and participate in a contract, or contracts, to aggregate the electricity load of the residents and businesses in the Town pursuant to M.G.L. c. 164 Section 134 and for other related services, independently, or in joint action with other municipalities, retaining the right of individual residents and business to opt-out of the aggregation, or take any other action in relation thereto, and, further, to adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has engaged in a process to establish a competitive marketplace through the restructuring of the electricity market; and

WHEREAS, citizens of Blackstone have a substantial economic and social interest in terms of greater customer choice and opportunities for savings in this restructured market; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Blackstone hereby finds that it may be in the interest of its citizens who are electric ratepayers, both residential and commercial/industrial, to develop and secure such approvals and enter into appropriate agreements with consultants, experts and attorneys in connection with the establishment and operation of an electricity aggregation plan.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Town of Blackstone hereby:

Publicly declares its intent to become an aggregator of electric power on behalf of its residential and business electric customers and to reestablish such plan if its operation is suspended; and

To negotiate and enter into such contracts for power supply pursuant to the plan or services for such plan, with the understanding that if a power supply contract is executed, individual consumers would retain the option not to participate in the aggregation plan and, instead, to choose any electricity alternatives they desire and, further, to take such other action relative hereto as may be appropriate and necessary.

ARTICLE 10. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to acquire by purchase, gift or eminent domain temporary and permanent easements and/or rights in a portion of the property known and numbered as 1 Marie Drive (Assessors' Parcel 20-54) for the purposes of locating and constructing a system of stormwater drainage on such terms as the Board of Selectmen shall deem to be in the best interests of the Town; and to raise and appropriate, borrow, transfer from available funds or otherwise provide a sum of money for the purpose of such acquisitions.

ARTICLE 11. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to accept, as a gift of land as provided in the Blackstone Planning Board's Flexible Residential Development Special Permit for 298 Blackstone Street, the property located on Blackstone Street identified as Assessors Plat 30, Lot 9, for park or open space purposes and on such other terms as the Board of Selectmen shall deem to be in the best interests of the Town.

ARTICLE 12. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$20,000 to be expended under the direction of the Board of Selectmen, for the purpose of paying the cost of a contract with a qualified vendor for the purchase of Voice Over IP telephone system equipment and related implementation services and operational charges for the first year of said contract.

ARTICLE 13. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$50,000 to purchase and install an electronic card pass or token access system for Municipal Buildings.

ARTICLE 14. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to amend Article 18 of the May 2022 Annual Town Meeting to allow the appropriated but unexpended balance of \$25,000 to be repurposed for expenses related to design services for renovations to Town Hall, and to amend Article 1 of the January 2018 Special Town Meeting to allow the appropriated but unexpended balance of \$75,000 to be repurposed for expenses related to design services for renovations to Town Hall, and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to take such action as may be necessary or appropriate to implement the purposes of this Article, including engaging a designer to perform said services.

ARTICLE 15. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote NOT to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds, or borrow pursuant to any applicable statute with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, the sum of \$350,000 for the purpose of paying costs of replacing and upgrading playground fitness equipment, ground surfacing, fencing, picnic tables, and any other related site work at Roosevelt Park.

ARTICLE 16. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$520.00 to pay prior year Forestry bills to Stanley Tree Service.

ARTICLE 17. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to amend the purpose of the vote under Article 23 of the May 25, 2021 Annual Town Meeting from the purchase of “one 2021 1500 GMP Pumper Fire Truck” to the purchase of “one Fire Truck”, and that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from the Capital Trust an additional \$155,513.24 for such purpose.

ARTICLE 18. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$35,000 for the purchase of structural Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the Fire Department.

ARTICLE 19. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$55,000 for the purchase of backup sets of structural Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the career members of the Fire Department.

ARTICLE 20. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$37,000 for the purchase of brush Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the Fire Department.

ARTICLE 21. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$215,000 for the purchase of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBAs) for the Fire Department.

ARTICLE 22. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote NOT to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$60,000 to purchase a command vehicle for the Fire Department.

ARTICLE 23. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$70,000 for the purchase of EMS equipment for the Fire Department ambulance service.

ARTICLE 24. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$70,000 for the purchase of fire equipment for the Fire Department.

ARTICLE 25. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to set an expenditure limit on the Library Revolving Fund set forth in § 5-33.1 of the General Bylaws in accordance with M.G.L. c. 44, Section 53 E ½ up to the maximum amount of \$3,000 during Fiscal Year 2024.

ARTICLE 26. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$45,000 for the purpose of HVAC software and any related work at the Blackstone Public Library.

ARTICLE 27. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$500,000 for pavement reconstruction, paving, and sidewalks on Reilly Ave and surrounding streets and cul-de-sacs.

ARTICLE 28. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from the Capital Trust the sum of \$150,000 to be expended under the direction of the Board of Selectmen, for engineering designs, bid documents, construction, reconstruction, repair, and future evaluation of the Blackstone Historical Museum foundation, flooring, sidewalks and ramp, for the purpose of preserving the building's structural condition, increasing allowable floor load capacity, and complying with the ADA.

ARTICLE 29. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to adopt the following resolution to re-accept M.G.L. c. 32B, § 20, relative to the establishment of the Town's Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund ("OPEB Trust Fund"):

RESOLVED: That, the Town of Blackstone hereby accepts the provisions of Chapter 32B, Section 20 of the Massachusetts General Laws, as amended by Chapter 218, Section 15 of the Acts of 2016 (the "Act"), and establishes an Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund (the "OPEB Fund");

RESOLVED: That, in accordance with the Act, the Town hereby designates the Treasurer of Blackstone to serve as Custodian of the OPEB Fund (the "Custodian");

RESOLVED: That the balance of the existing account be appropriated as the initial investment into the OPEB Fund;

RESOLVED: That the following person(s) be designated as Trustee(s) of the OPEB Fund:

[Insert either:

- (a) The Custodian of the OPEB Fund; OR
- (b) The name of 5-13 individuals, at least one with investment experience, one citizen of the Town, one employee of the Town, one retiree of the Town, and one officer of the Town.]

RESOLVED: That the Treasurer of Blackstone, as Custodian of the OPEB Fund, be, and hereby is, authorized to execute and deliver the Investment Agreement with the State Retiree Benefits Trust Fund board of trustees on behalf of the Town for the purpose of making the representations and warranties, acknowledgements, and agreements on the part of the Town to be made and performed thereunder.

ARTICLE 30. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$226,400 and from Water & Sewer Retained Earnings the sum of \$23,600, totaling \$250,000 as the Town's investment into the State Retiree Benefit Trust Fund ("SRBT Fund").

ARTICLE 31. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$74,610 into the Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund (OPEB Fund) of the Blackstone Millville Regional School District established under General Laws Chapter 32B, Section 20, said funds to be used only to pay some portion of health benefits for retirees from the Blackstone Millville Regional School District.

ARTICLE 32. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to authorize the Blackstone Millville Regional School District School Committee to establish a Stabilization Fund for capital planning relative to the School Building Project pursuant to Chapter 71 sec. 16 G½ for the purpose of funding a feasibility study in the amount of \$500,000.00 to be funded by the District's Excess and Deficiency fund.

ARTICLE 33. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to amend Article 25 of the May 2013 Annual Town Meeting to allow the appropriated but unexpended balance of \$68,867.25 to be repurposed from Veteran's Park to Turbesi Park and/or Roosevelt Park to be used for renovation and/or replacement of the playground equipment and any other related site work, to be expended under the direction of the Parks and Recreation Commission.

ARTICLE 34. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash a sum of \$293,000 to renovate the playground equipment and surface area of Turbesi Park, which is dedicated to active recreational purposes under M.G.L. Chapter 45, Section 3, and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to file on behalf of the Town any and all applications deemed necessary under the Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities Grant Program (301 CMR 5.00) and the Board of Selectmen be authorized to enter into all agreements and execute any and all instruments as may be necessary to on behalf of the town to affect said project.

ARTICLE 35. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$40,000 to purchase playground equipment to replace aging equipment, to be expended under the direction of the Parks and Recreation Commission.

ARTICLE 36. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$4,000 for a utility trailer to replace the current 2003 utility trailer, to be expended under the direction of the Parks and Recreation Commission.

ARTICLE 37. Citizens Petition- No recommendation made by the Finance Committee.

ARTICLE 38. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to appropriate and transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$100,000 to the stabilization fund.

ARTICLE 39. The Finance Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Town vote to accept the layout of Sycamore Lane as a public way, as shown on the plan entitled "Sycamore Park Estates", As-Built Plan and Profile of "Sycamore Lane in Blackstone, MA, Scale: 40 Feet to an Inch (Horiz.), Scale: 4 Feet to an Inch (Vert.), Date: July 20, 2020, Rev. September 3, 2020, and prepared by Guerriere & Halnon, Inc., Engineering & Land Surveying, 333 West Street, Milford, MA 01757", which layout shall have been filed in the Office of the Town Clerk not later than seven days prior to the date of the vote hereunder and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to acquire by gift, purchase or eminent domain taking any land necessary for the purpose of such way as laid out, including Parcels A and B shown on said plan and contemplated by the subdivision approval for Sycamore Lane, and, as necessary, to authorize the Board of Selectmen to assess betterments to the owners of the land abutting the way; provided, however, that the construction of said road is acceptable to the Planning Board and Superintendent of Public Works.

ARTICLE 40. Citizens Petition- No recommendation made by the Finance Committee.

ARTICLE 41. Citizens Petition- No recommendation made by the Finance Committee.