

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes

March 5, 2009

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Thursday, March 5, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the Finance Committee Room, Town Hall with the following members present: T. Jalkut, M. Kent, M. Hickey, C. Lane, M. Boragine, R. Knobel, T. Bowen, S. Connell, P. Stasiukevicius and J. Statler. Also present was Town Administrator M. Boynton, Finance Director M. Good.

7:30 p.m. – Quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by the Chairman T. Jalkut.

7:30 p.m. – Board of Assessors, J. Fisher, E. O’Neil, C. Boragine, and D. Fliss, Town Assessor

Board of Assessors Budget –J. Fisher, Chairman spoke to the budget - Recommended amount represents a decrease in personnel, one of three clerks in the office. The Board is aware of fiscal constraints but reducing the clerical staff by one third will require the workload of the other two positions to increase. They have to meet statutory requirements and things won’t be done as quickly as before.

D. Fliss – the three staff members are part of clerical union, and doesn’t know if he can do some of their jobs, doesn’t know how this works. He is the appraiser, doesn’t deal with MVE, exemptions, and abutter’s lists. Each person has a centralized task, other two will have to pick up the slack. Town Administrator still clarifying the status of positions with Town Counsel, Town can’t bring in non-union to replace union position.

Committee questioned the possibility of obtaining help from Senior Work off program, they are allowed to make \$700, This program is controlled by Council on Aging and they do have one person that works 75 hours and comes back every year and works two or three months. They have outside vendors that does data processing.

J. Fisher –Staffing level that being recommended lowest since 1970’s.

Article 19 – Real Estate Exemptions

This article deals with real estate exemptions for disabled veterans, blind, surviving spouse and elderly. Requires annual approval by the local appropriating authority. Exemption is currently 50%, Board proposes to maintain the 50% level for FY2010. Last year granted 311 exemptions, Tax abated \$304,572 at a projected cost to the Town of \$81,506.

Article 20 – 2011 Revaluation (Assessment Certification Program)

This is required every three years to be done, and seeks outside technical assistance for commercial and industrial valuation. They do residential in house in conjunction with Board of Assessors, and will start on January, 2010. D. Fliss doesn't know what will be required for staffing due to the unknowns in his staff. Presently staff does 40% of this work. For the minimum standards the cost of the program is approximately \$4.75 an account to complete (\$45,000/9,500 accounts = \$4.73 per account). This is funded through the Overlay Account. Cost scenarios based on staffing personnel was presented: (3 full time clerks - \$45,000, 2.5 part time clerks \$60,000 and 2 clerks, no position \$75,000. They won't know which scenario will be needed till Town Meeting

Committee question property values – There has been a 5 to 8 % drop in valuations next tax period. Assessors anticipate that the work load will increase due to dissatisfaction by taxpayers filing abatements, but feel that people will go along with it as long as they feel that they are being treated fairly.

Capital Equipment

Assessors are looking to upgrade the computer systems in the Assessor's Office at a cost of \$18,000 to be funded from the Overlay Account. Present computers have been in existence six years. These new computers would be used through the year 1015. Microsoft and Visions will come up with upgrades.

Town Administrator Update

Stimulus money will be used for special ed. There will be no corresponding money on municipal side. There are many scenario's to be looked at: library, combining positions in Collector's/Assessor's Office, police and fire, outside services for Board of Health, Building Maintenance, personnel, EAP Program. FinCom has options at their disposal. He is sensitive to the School Department needs, but also sensitive to the municipal side. It is unknown whether or not there is a way of sharing the stimulus. As of March 2, 2009, there is a potential of \$328,651 in available funds, and there might become available an additional \$250,000 for property/casualty savings. Board of Selectmen will be having a budget workshop on March 10, 2009 and will have some options to present to Finance Committee at the meeting of March 16, 2009. He would like to do something for the library.

Committee spoke to meeting with the Selectmen on March 16, 2009 on the budgets and the need for them to tell us their priorities.

Town Administrator spoke to meeting with all the unions this afternoon and there was no one thing agreed upon. Spent 90% of the time discussing health insurance. He doesn't feel that he will get both a rate savers and increase in insurance costs to 30%. Some

employees are willing to take a wage freeze. They discussed one time incentives for health insurance. He felt that the dialogue was good. Also talked about a one day off, this works for some departments, not others. He will be meeting again on March 24, 2009 with unions. He would like to know by May what is happening with the insurance, it

will be the open enrollment period. There are two unions that have settled their contract, fire and library. They will be treated as off contract for discussion.

Article 22 – Zoning Rewrite

Present for this discussion was Chairman of the Committee, N. Mackenzie, S. Mercandetti, Economic Development Officer, R. Chapell, Health Agent and T. Laracy, Deputy Fire Chief. It was thought it would be beneficial for them to be present for the discussion as they had spent a lot of time with the committee and they could answer questions that pertain to their departments.

N. Michenzie – Committee was appointed by the Board of Selectmen, Phase 2 of the zoning re-write. Master Plan had suggested that the rewrite be done and split into three parts, easier to do it that way. Town hired Horsely and Whitley to do the first part, committee was then put together by Selectmen. There were representatives from all boards, meetings started on May 12, 2008, consultants went over zoning and different sections, use table and got feel of how committee felt on different issues. Draft was prepared, and time was spent at meetings going over each section of the draft, redoing and taking out what they didn't want and put in things. Subcommittee reviewed different businesses and had Site Plan Review Committee look over. Water and Sewer hired a consultant to review the document. They had 20 meetings in total, and held a public forum. Copies of the power point presentation are available.

Committee's vote to advance the document was 10-0-1. Committee attendance was good and most of the people that attended the meetings did vote.

8:45 p.m. – M. Kent left

FinCom questions – they only adopted NAICS Code on what pertains to being put into the Town's zoning book.

They are trying to track everything on the GeoTems system. This should make the Town more user friendly. Planning, Zoning, Board of Health are being incorporated now into the system. Data has to be loaded into specific sites.

Members questioned that there are only four places that are using this NAICS. This could cost money in the future for staffing, how is it going to be converted and questioned who brought forward using this NAICS Code. It was explained that it is used as a way to classify and is adopted by American industries, it allows the Town to be

specific. Document was not originally for zoning. No one else in Massachusetts uses it. Members spoke to that the Town should be defining what we want, not using international document.

N. Michenzie felt with NAICS it would be exactly what they are looking for, breaks it down, provides back up. She feels it makes the process easier. Sometimes there are issues with Conservation requirements due to wetlands. Confident they are doing

everything they want to do and not something they don't want to do. Something's could be done more aggressively. Group was conservative where energy is concerned and feels that the industrial uses were pretty good.

J. Mee, Building Commissioner uses this document quite often, reference to NAICS is more of a dictionary for him. Was set up by Department of Labor, had all industries listed and they needed to be defined. He feels neater and cleaner for the Town and property owners.

S. Mercandetti, Economic Development Officer – she uses it as a guidance document with exiting companies wishing to expand or a new business looking to come into town and let them know what the process would be. It is a marketing tool to bring new industry into town. –.

R. Chapell, Health Agent, - Document provides clearer explanation to deal with hazardous materials and storage, defines what is allowed and not allowed.

M. Laracy, Deputy Fire Chief – He doesn't make decisions on zoning, but makes comments on what affects his department.

Committee members questioned making changes to document that we had before, why change some things from Special Permit to allowed. N. Michenzie, this was the consensus of the group to do this.

Thanks were extended to the Committee for their input, FinCom might need to ask them to come back. N. Michenzie would be willing to do that, and requested that a list of questions be prepared for them.

Minutes

MOTION MADE by S. Connell, Seconded by J. Stadtler to approve the March 2, 2009 Minutes, Motion Approved (6-0-3) (M. Hickey, R. Knobel and M. Boragine abstained) (9 voting)

9:45 p.m. – adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril
Clerk

