

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes

March 12, 2009

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Thursday, March 12, 2009 with the following members present: T. Jalkut, S. Connell, M. Kent, L. Donovan, P. Stasiukevicius, R. Knobel, S. Kelliher, J. Muti, T. Bowen, C. Lane, M. Boragine, M. Hickey, M. Barry, 8:30 p.m. J. Stadtler, Also present was Town Administrator M. Boynton and Finance Director M. Good. .

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

Town Administrator

May 4, 2009 Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant

Mr. Boynton has met with the Selectmen on the budgets and they are going to maintain the 66/33 split between municipal and schools. Upon receipt of the stimulus money by the schools, the 66/33 split will be discussed further.

Budget Restorations dated 3/12/08 – Total available funds as of March 11, 2009 were as follows: School Budget - \$277,471, Library – Personnel - \$54,94, Library Expenses - \$6,000, Council on Aging Personnel \$35,729, Assessor’s Personnel - \$22,724, Treasurer/Collector Personnel - \$22,724 and DPW – Expenses - \$800, (this is due to increase in costs in CDL drug testing). This restoration doesn’t do anything for public safety or recreation and hopes that there will be additional funds through reduction in property and casualty numbers. There has been anticipated increase of \$100,000 from local receipts It is hoped that there can be something worked out with the School Department to help recreation out.

Chairman spoke to the joint meeting of the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen on Monday, March 16, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. Selectmen want the pools to remain open and Finance Committee wants to hear from the Selectmen and they want to hear from the FinCom. Priorities have to be decided upon. The \$80,000 in Capital Budget for the pools has to be decided soon in order to have the pools open this year, or whether these funds should go to the Library Budget. It is not know what the position of the Selectmen

Committee discussed that it was a dangerous thing for the Selectmen to come out so strongly on the pools. People are under the impression that this is the way it was going to be. Town Administrator spoke to the pools being a timing issue and getting the work

done prior to the summer, also the pools are integral part of the summer recreation programs. Summer recreation is a revenue driver and helps offset the cost of pools.

7:45 p.m. – Sewer and Water Enterprise Funds

Speaking to these Enterprise Funds was Superintendent of Water and Sewer R. Mattson. Town Administrator has provided revised numbers on Article 7 – Water Enterprise Fund, this is due to a change in the monies for the secretary. Mr. Mattson spoke to no significant increases in the Water Budget with the exception of heating and fuel costs, based on anticipated usage, increase in meter section. Previously the maintenance of the transmittal units was not included, need to begin to do this. Expenses are down over last year and they are taking cost saving measures on water treatment chemicals. Under the salary portion, there are no new positions or additional hours and department has maintained the same staffing levels for the last few years and only contractual adjustments.

Capital Budget

Article 14 – Delaney Treatment Plant - \$758,000 being requested to renovate the major components. Treatment plant was constructed in 1996 and put on line in 1998 and provides a high level of service to the town. This will be funded by water borrowing.

Septic Treatment Plant has not been used in three years. .

Article 7- Water Department Equipment - \$270,000 being requested for two trucks and a back hoe out of retained water earnings plus funding for a one half ton truck to be shared with engineering.

Article 8 - Sewer Enterprise Fund

There is an increase in the amount of \$150,000 this year due to the MWRA Assessment. This is 97% of the operating budget, leaving them with \$115,000 to operate and maintain the sewer system. Budget is bare bones with the exception of the assessment. The jet vac truck needs about \$8,000 in work, this will be instead of purchasing a new vehicle. Work can't be done in house, need to send it out. This is the most important vehicle in the operation and can't do without it.

Town Administrator spoke to cutting back on the flow, town is progressing on the I and I, taking the flow out reduces the Town's assessment. I and I is an annual thing, they remove about 300 gallons a day from the system and will have to be kept up forever. Program is required by regulation. Storm drains don't connect to the sewer. Salaries – there is an increase in hours in one of the clerical positions. There is presently a part-time clerk working in the Sewer Department, and there is a need to fill these hours to full time. This increase in hours has been discussed over several years. This position will

help to streamline the operation, cross connection program has suffered over the last year, with dirty water mixing with clean water and will also focus on bringing up to par the two billing systems. This position might be filled by someone that was going to be laid off.

8:30 p.m. – Committee Member J. Stadler.

Police Department Budget

Police Chief R. Stillman spoke to this budget. Staffing in the department is an issue but he appreciates the hiring of a part time principal clerk last year. This position has helped free up the officers. He is losing staff through retirements and would like to see this minimized as much as possible. He lost one position in October and he is not replacing three additional officers. His officers are well trained, educated and can handle numerous other jobs and have multiple tasks. If he loses the four officers, he will be running the department with four men minimum, Sergeant and three patrolmen. If the staffing level gets any lower, overtime does increase and noted it is not safe to go below four officers.

R. Knobel spoke to not voting for any reduction in the number of officers that doesn't include the number we had last year. Town Meeting has to be advised of this reduction, It is inconceivable to reduce the force, and is sending a very dangerous message.

Chief spoke to having to cut existing programs. These programs allow people to know the police officers. He is looking at reducing the number of crossing guards from eight to four and just maintain the elementary school crossing guards. He is only looking to replace one vehicle this year, the Assistant Town Administrator's car is being transferred to his department.

The reasons isn't advocating more strongly for his department as he doesn't expect he Police Department to receive any additional money, but noted that he would like to have more officers and feels that his department is part of the town. He expressed concerns that the staffing would stay this way even when the economy changes. He has 5 full time and one part time dispatchers.

Town Administrator spoke to appreciating the way he has been able to work with the Police Chief and supports the move on vehicles and it is a valuable move on the crossing guards.

Committee questioned the need for the \$38,000 for radios for the schools in the Capital Budget and whether it is necessary. Chief spoke to when there is a major incident, the Nextel's won't work and he doesn't feel that we should rely on a system that might not work, there is need to communicate between police and schools in an emergency. He feels it is a good system, well designed and should work very well for schools. It would

be up to the Superintendent whether or not to remove the Nextel's in the schools. All the schools have to buy the portable radios and charges.

MOTION MADE by J. Stadtler, Seconded by P. Stasiukevicius to release the hold on the \$38,000 for the School Department Safety Communications, Motion Approved (12-1-0) (C. Lane opposed) (13 voting)

Capital

Four things being requested, only two are being recommended, the two satellite radio receivers for \$14,000 and South Walpole Antennae site,\$10,000. This is an ongoing program that needs to be finished with these two items. He had requested a new vehicle, but the Assistant Town Administrator's vehicle will be transferred to his department.

Committee questioned whether there is any money being anticipated to be received from the stimulus. It is his understanding that there is some money in the stimulus package to pay officers for three years, but the State only received 40 million and he feels that this money will go to the cities. He will still apply and might receive an officer in the second round. There is also no grant money available for life scan fingerprinting

9:35 p.m. – Fire Department Budget

Speaking to this budget was Fire Chief T. Bailey. There is a proposal for losing three firefighters in addition to the one position that has been vacant since last October and the closing of the East Walpole Fire Station, this is a staffing issue. Problems occur when two ambulances are out. He has been talking to the Selectmen on this issue, equipment will stay at the station. These four positions will have major impact as they are the four paramedics, town could lose the ALS certification. There needs to be an analysis done of the potential loss to the town for the ALS certification. Chief Bailey will provide this to the Committee, department did over 2,000 ambulance calls and 900 fire calls last year. .

Fire Chief spoke to anticipating a \$125,000 deficit, and he has discussed this with the union and overtime costs have dropped down. He has had to hire a provisional.

10:00 – Committee Member J. Stadtler left

In order to reinstate the four firefighters, it will cost \$230,000, but the structural problem remains and problem being that additional personnel, it becomes more of an issue.

Capital

Under Capital, department is requesting new ambulance for \$200,000 out of the ambulance fund and \$17,000 for pagers for recalling Fire Department Personnel. He had applied for a grant for them but did not receive it.

Prison – was suppose to sign a contract for mutual aid. He is in receipt of an opinion from Town Counsel and reviewing it as it pertains to mutual aid. Hopefully, they will be able to change on responding and transferring patients and help alleviate some of the issues. Town receives no aid form the State, and department is obligated to go the prison as it is in the Town.

Minutes

MOTION MADE by R. Knobel, Seconded by S. Connell to approve the March 5, 2009 Minutes, Motion Approved (11-0-2) (J. Muti and L. Donovan abstained) (13 voting)

10:30 meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril
Clerk