

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes**

**March 13, 2008**

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Thursday, March 13, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. in the T. Jalkut, M. Hickey, L. Donovan, C. Lane, J. Muti, R. Knobel, S. Kelliher, S. Rose, M. Boragine, S. Connell, J. Stadtler, M. Kent Also in attendance 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**

Mr. Boynton spoke to his concerns to the letter in the March 13, 2008 issue of Walpole Times from J. Szymanski, President of the Walpole Teachers Association on the Town Administrator's Budget and how it is allocated. He will not respond to the letter but has concerns as who was referred to in the letter. Mr. Szymanski has the right to write the letter but would have appreciated being told ahead of time in order to answer him. He does not enjoy budgeting, but it is a function of his job. He is proud of the Employees of the Town of Walpole. Issue seems to stem from collective bargaining and issue shouldn't be in the paper as negotiations are confidential. Town Administrator has been having good dialogue with the Schools at this time. He appears to have an issue with the entire Finance Committee. Town Administrator makes recommendations to the Finance Committee and they make the recommendations to Town Meeting who has the ultimate authority. Town Meeting members have the authority to change any recommendation but has to decide where the money is coming from. Walpole does not use Free Cash to augment budgets. He expects disagreements on his recommendations but feels that he is available to be called to discuss an issue.

Chairman Jalkut spoke to any Finance Committee member is free to speak to who they wish. It is still the right of the Finance Committee to make changes to any budget and are not governed by any 2/3 – 1/3 split. The Town Administrator and Superintendent of Schools are sometimes able to make adjustments and the Committee is always willing to listen to them. Any department should feel free to come before the Committee and advocate their positions. It is not the Finance Committee's position to rubber stamp budgets. If there is a change to the Town Administrator's recommendation, it is the committee's job to find the money.

General consents of the Committee was that the article did not reflect favorably on the Finance Committee.

**Snow & Ice Deficit** – Deficit is now \$412,000 Town Administrator will be recommending \$200,000 from Free Cash.

**May 5, 2008 Spring Annual Town Meeting**

**Articles 30 –34** –Establishment of an EDIC (Economic Development and Industrial Corporation. Presenting these articles was Economic Development Committee Member L. Pittman and K. Fettig. Also Economic Development Director D. Walsh.

L. Pittman - The establishment of an EDIC is for parcels that are site specific and would help with the better utilization of taxes. They are looking at the Superfund site on South Street and the recycling facilities and junk yards on Route 1A. This will start the dialogue process. Last year the proposal to establish an Economic Development Authority didn't pass, To establish an EDIC it will require a special act of legislation to establish an EDIC. Properties would be transferred directly to the EDIC through legislation, thus making them eligible for DEP and Mass Development Funds.

D Walsh – they are looking for tools and trying to work with existing businesses and get more value for the commercial development properties. They would like to eliminate the recycling and junk yards along Route 1A. These three properties consist of approximately 74 acres of land on Route 1A and only pay \$45,000 combined per year for taxes, where in comparison Sidemen's pays \$900,000 a year in taxes. Like to replace the lower value properties with something like Siemens.

They are proposing to go forward with the EDIC articles and attempt to do just the two projects. 2/3 vote of Town Meeting would be required for passage. They would like to receive any feedback or direction from the Finance Committee and are not looking at a vote at this time. They would like to begin the dialogue.

Committee Members question why not just to the Superfund Site at this time (South Street). Properties along Route 1A are included as there is talk of one of them proposing to expand. Some members felt that there has been enough discussion on the South Street site but were interested in the properties along Route 1A. Committee questioned what the downside on this would be. Risk is that the EDIC would make bad decisions, and it would be hoped that the Selectmen would appoint people that would have the best interest of the Town.

EDIC would be comprised of a seven member Board, appointed by the Selectmen for staggered three year terms. They would not receive any compensation for serving on the EDIC. EDIC moves a project along and doesn't expose the Town to liabilities. EDIC has to be independent and can only work on projects specifically approved by a Town Meeting. Use of eminent domain for acquiring property also requires Town Meeting approval. Staff would be under the Economic Development Director and he would put

together a budget and the Selectmen would have to decide what would be needed and make a recommendation.

L. Pittman spoke to this being a vehicle to get control of property (South Street). It sits on the river, they are not paying the Town any taxes and if there is a municipal use, it is better than what is going on there now. If the Town doesn't do something on these properties, something bad could happen. Town needs to get proactive along the Route 1A sites and try to get better revenue out of the sites we have, try to help's the town cash flow.

D. Walsh – Under EDIC there are three options for a property, eminent domain, partnership or to find an ultimate end user that would speculate that a property would be a marketable location. EDIC has only eminent domain authority on a specific property. Properties along Route 1A have been used as an unapproved landfill. DEP is presently looking into this, property sits above the Town's aquifer. The three property owners are willing to talk to the Town. Cleaning up the site is not the priority of the owners.

FinCom Members questioned how they could do anything if they don't have the money. D. Walsh spoke to putting together a package and presenting it to the various state agencies. Town could also loan them money, and they have the option to borrow the money or they could be on their own. Committee members spoke to who is responsible for the clean-up. D. Walsh spoke to companies that do buy properties that are Brownfields, clean them up and then market them. That is their business to do this. They are only required to do a 21E if there is financing.

D. Walsh spoke to the commercial properties available within Route 128 being limited. Walpole is an equal distance between Providence and Boston and is off Route 95, is on a railroad and people are looking for large sites. Walpole presently has no nice sites. Town has the option to sit back and wait to see what happens. There is no guarantee that the EDIC could make it happen either. Downsize is that it is a waste of someone's time and staff and getting people's hopes up. There is no guarantees.

Economic Development would like to come back at a future time and discuss this further and if the Committee has any specific questions, they would like to try to obtain the answers.

**Police Department** – Speaking to this Budget was Chief R. Stillman and Deputy Chief S. Bushway

Chief Stillman recapped the background on the Police Department. There has been no increase in officers in 22 years, population has increased 30% in this time period. Calls have increased 80%. He has a problem with staffing as there are too few officers on a shift, and some shifts operate without supervision. Officers are doing clerical and administrative duties. He is only requesting a limited increase in his budget this year,

He would like to hire a part time clerk to assist the department, and eventually increase this position to full time. He is attempting to keep the department's costs in line. In future years, he would like to see addressed the staffing needs. Four other areas in staffing that need to be addressed are 1) full time records clerk, 2) increase in sworn officers to 44 (presently 40), 3) two more patrol sergeants and one more lieutenant, and 4) two civilian dispatchers on duty from 8:00 a.m. to 12 Midnight. Town Administrator is not recommending the part time principal clerk position at this time. Salary for this position is \$18,000/year. Department gets busier every year. Position is a priority this year but he is aware of the Town's budget problems. For a quality police department, community has to pay for it. Department is the only department that hasn't grown.

Town Administrator explained that he is not recommending this part time principal clerk position at this time due to other positions being eliminated three years ago that have not been replaced. He is not recommending any new positions in the budget this year. He would like to see the revenue numbers in the department increased. There is a huge cost to the town for a 7 day schedule, which is a function of the staffing and the Chief has to deal with it.

Chief spoke to the department not being proactive in many areas due to lack of staff. They have to deal with where the accidents are, first as this is a public safety issue. He won't tie revenue to citations.

**Capital Budget Requests for Police Department** – Department is requesting an additional car, usually they replace two a year, this year requesting to replace three. They are also requesting a radar collection device, all terrain vehicle plus trailer, defibrillator and finger print scanner.

**Public Safety Facility Update** – Nothing is going on at this time, but the need hasn't gone away for the department. Department needs to move on to other things. A new facility would make their job easier but he understands that it is not the consensus of the townspeople, but it is a priority for the Police Department but have to focus on other things. Need hasn't gone away. Department needs to move on to other things. Town wasn't interested in it.

Finance Committee meeting of March 17 , 2008 cancelled.

**MOTION MADE** by R. Knobel, Seconded by S. Kelliher to adjourn meeting at 9:50 p.m. Motion Approved, Unanimous (13-0-0)

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril, Clerk

Finance Committee  
Minutes  
March 13, 2008  
Page 5  
Clerk