

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES**

**March 16, 2009**

A joint meeting of the Finance Committee with the Board of Selectmen on budgets was held on Monday, March 16, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. with the following Finance Committee Members present: T. Jalkut, J. Muti, C. Lane, L. Donovan, M. Kent, S. Connell, M. Barry, M. Boragine, R. Knobel, M. Gallivan, J. Stasiukevicius, and T. Bowen, Selectmen present were C. Winston, C. Snuffer, C. Timson, D. Sullivan, and A. DeNapoli, Also present was J. Johnson, Assistant Town Administrator and Finance Director M. Good.

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

Mr. Jalkut explained that the purpose of this meeting with the Selectmen was to discuss the FY2010 Budgets and the priorities of the Selectmen. The Town's needs outstrip the resources. Town Administrator has prepared various scenarios on putting any additional money back in the budgets. Before the Finance Committee takes any action, Committee would like to get a sense of how they rank in priority by the Selectmen i.e. police, fire, library, schools, pools, and Council on Aging. There isn't enough money for all of them. Some members have very strong feelings on some budgets and there are many different views from the members. Committee hasn't discussed the stimulus money as a Committee. Police Department was in and they are down four officers and the Chief can live with this reduction. Town might receive additional monies by Town Meeting.

C. Timson spoke to Selectmen being in discussion phase with Police and Fire Departments on their staffing, they are high priority departments. He is aware that the Police Chief is Okay with the reductions in his department..

C. Winston – Police Department is proposing eliminating four crossing guards and the Assistant Town Administrator's vehicle is being transferred to the Police Department. Department is also looking to put the Resource and Safety Officers into cars. Fire Department is down four firefighters and the Board is attempting to do something with overtime issue. .

R. Knobel spoke to requesting from the Fire Department the details on the cost of running Advance Life Support and whether or not this could cost us money if we lose accreditation if we lose personnel.

Articles 22 and 23, Zoning articles have been withdrawn from the warrant by the Selectmen and Planning Board.

C. Lane expressed concerns on funding the library and would like to see it kept at it a point that they don't lose accreditation. They need this if they are going for an Override in June, if the money is taken away, they can't win, they should be able to lose or win on their own. This is the final shot for a new library and the final year to have an opportunity. Library is not receiving funds from Capital Budget Committee, and questioned whether they could purchase books with capital money, could this be counted in their number?

C. Timson spoke to needing to find the number in order to keep the certification or possibly get a waiver. Need to do a scenario from the 22 – 24 towns that have received waivers, need to know what the exception number is?

M. Good spoke to the average cuts on the budgets was 3.5%, Library number was 36%.

T. Jalkut – If you compare the pools and library, library is more vital and deals with a larger portion of the population. If the library loses their accreditation, it is only open three days a week. Can't keep the library up to state standards unless we deny the numbers in the other budgets.

T. Bowen spoke to the problem, the last 10 years on the amount of salaries and benefits. Other Towns have had success in getting concessions, there is a need to discuss this. We knew the money was going away, need to step back and focus on concessions and salaries.

J. Johnson spoke to Administration in discussion with unions on changes.

C. Winston spoke to the Town not being in a better position next year. Board is trying to find some more money for the library, but will have to take from other budgets. If we don't repair the pools, do we fill them in? This is a tough time for many, pools play a big part for families. Recreation is a fee driven budget. Norwood pays \$800,000 a year for Recreation. Walpole's Recreation Budget is \$115,000.

Town Administrator met with L. Lynch, Superintendent of Schools today, and they will be having a discussion about the stimulus package on Wednesday morning with the Superintendent, School Committee Chairman, N. Gallivan and C. Winston, Selectmen Chairman.

A. DeNapoli – spoke to the issue of trash fees, deeper analysis needs to be done, he is willing to find out what people's thoughts are. There is the need to see if there is any resources from anyplace else. There are benefits on the environmental side for trash fees. He understands that the taxpayer doesn't want to pay any more costs, people are hurting, but there are going to be a lot of services lost, cost to the average taxpayer can be adjusted, there hasn't been a deeper analysis and he doesn't see any other areas for revenue. It is the will of people, need to get a sense of what people want. He supports

putting pressure on the unions. There are over 100 communities that use them as a revenue source.

C. Snuffer - trash fees are a unilateral decision of the Board of Selectmen. Residents get an opportunity to vote on other issues. He is opposed to trash fees, feels it is a taxation issue. He feels it is a wrong direction to tax people in a recession. Need to know the percentage changes to health insurance, status of raises and step increases, and the enter and exit data from schools and municipal side, cost of dental program actual usage vs actual funding, benefit to outsourcing the school cafeteria vs the actual funding and the benefits to the town and the affordability. His priority is public safety, schools, administration. Difficult to make a decision as the largest budget (Schools) isn't available. You have to be prepared to make hard decisions.

T. Jalkut - FinCom can't make trash fees happen and can't make the unions make concessions, only can deal with the money that we have, have to decide whether pools are a must or a luxury and what the town is to be. If the pools are to be used, need to know quickly.

R. Knobel spoke the costs of one pool vs two. Most of the capital money goes down to the south pool. FinCom is waiting for a direction from the Selectmen. C. Timson spoke to the Selectmen haven't discussed this, they need to look at everything to see if there is any savings.

J. Muti spoke to if the pools are opened, have to do the drain covers. She has asked the Town Administrator for the cost saving numbers if one pool is closed. Pools are an integral part of the summer recreation. If the swim team raises fees, could break even.

A. DeNapoli, it is a quality of life issue, important to give the people something for the summer months, sends a message that we care, supports releasing the hold on pools, there are too many unknowns, have to make hard choices.

C. Winston spoke to being in agreement with Mr. DeNapoli.

C. Snuffer supports the opening of the pools, as time gets more tense, it becomes a quality of life issue and Selectmen understand the problems with the library. The issue of East Walpole Civic Center, what to do with it and if we should sell it, or whether to continue to put any more money into it. They haven't discussed it or considered it.

M. Boragine spoke to the library being a quality of life issue for the town. The numbers using the library exceeds the pool, people using the library more and more due to the tough economic times.

**MOTION MADE** by T. Bowen, Seconded by J. Muti to release the Committee's hold on the pools, Motion Approved (9-2-1) (S. Connell, M. Boragine opposed, C. Lane abstained) (12 voting)

C. Timson spoke to the issue of trash fees vs looking at losing services that we need, town cannot continue to do business as we have been doing. Next year we will be in the same place or worse, need to change the way things are done. He would like to nail down the library number so they don't lose accreditation. He is not comfortable with the cuts in the Police Department but with the proposed changes by the Police Chief, he is comfortable. There has been talk about cancelling the Night Before the Fourth as they cannot absorb the cost of the police detail.

T. Bowen spoke to being opposed to trash fees, it wouldn't pass if it went to the voters. Town has spent themselves into this problem and it isn't going away.

A. DeNapoli – issue that bothers him the most is spending the \$800,000 out of Stabilization, this is one time money and will be facing this problem next year, Free Cash is being spent down and there is no surplus after this budget.

M. Boragine spoke to being willing to pay for trash fees.

T. Jalkut – his issues is the need to make Police Department whole or accreditate the library, can't do both. Need to look and see what the biggest impact is.

A. DeNapoli – Like to see what we can do for the library, like to get to a point that they can ask for a waiver so they won't lose accreditation. Library also loses \$30,000 on the Cherry Sheet if they lose accreditation.

M. Barry –spoke to the FinCom being appointed to make tough decisions, Selectmen voted to make the tough decisions, have to do the best we can to close the gap, and do what is best for the town and the people in the town and come up with a solution

R. Knobel – Fire Department is working on the numbers for ALS, if the town loses the accreditation, there is no way to run the advance life support. He has a counter view on the Police Chief on his department, feels that the Chief has a responsibility to the town and should not be accepting the cuts so easily, he should be fighting for his department, this is slowing down any program that has been made.

C. Winston spoke to the Board meeting with officers of the firefighter's union, conversation has improved, lot of work to do but everyone is taking this very seriously.

Town Administrator spoke to the issue of not having any success with the unions, there will be more cuts.

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T. Jalkut requested information on what waivers have been granted to libraries and what the number is to obtain the waiver. Is there a formula for this? M. Good agreed to find this information out. .

Committee discussed cutting positions, possibly the Economic Development Officer, and questioned whether the position has generated any revenue, Assistant Town Administrator's position and cuts in Building Inspector's Office, construction is at a standstill.

9:30 p.m. Meeting adjourned

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril  
Clerk