

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes**

**March 23, 2009**

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Monday, March 23, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the Finance Committee Room, Town Hall with the following members present: T. Jalkut, C. Lane, M. Hickey, M. Boragine, M. Kent, M. Barry, S. Connell, M. Gallivan, L. Donovan. T. Bowen, J. Stadler, 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.

#### **FY2010 Budget Discussion**

**Council on Aging Budget** – Present for this discussion was B. Coghlan, Council on Aging Director, L. Smith, Chairman of the Council on Aging and interested citizens S. Maguire, T. Ryan and R. Moody.

B. Coghlan had provided they committee with a packet of information explaining exactly what the Council does and the duties of the Director, also provided was as a sample of the Council on Aging newsletter that goes out to every resident over 60, and summary of the proposed cuts impacting the Council on Aging Budget, (31% reduction ).

Estimated dollar value of services provided through the COA (Hessco - \$384,862, EOEA Prescription Program - \$44,304, Self Help Fuel Assistance -\$106,684 and Property Tax Work Off Program - \$23,746).

FinCom questioned what the impact on services would be if this reduction goes through. It would have an impact on the position of Director (50% cut in Director's salary), there are also two part time positions (van drivers) at 17 ½ hours a week. Staff works together as a team, and it would be impossible to continue the programs they provide. Van drivers and Outreach Worker would remain in place but there would be a loss in the continuity of services and Director serves as the liaison with employees and town departments. She is the only full time employee of Council on Aging and cut would have an impact on coordination and delivering of services. Council doesn't just provide bus trips, they provide life saving services.

L. Smith spoke to feeling that it would not be workable with this reduction. Council not only provides entertainment, they provide health issues and keeping older residents involved in the community. They offer talks on Veterans' affairs, health and legal issues. Need to keep older residents involved. If program goes under, question is how long it could continue. Council works very hard with what they have, accommodations aren't

great, and the Director brings in a lot of money in grants to perpetuate the programs. Seniors are appreciative of what they are offered, there is a need.

Town Administrator spoke to his proposal for FY2010 Budget Restorations dated 3/12/2009, he is recommending full restoration of funding for this position. If the proposed numbers go forward, there won't be a budget reduction for the COA. Recreation could help provide some of the services. If the Council didn't have the Friends group providing some funding, the COA would be in trouble. They provide a lot of services providing outside sources, supplements that would have to be done through the taxpayer.

S. Maguire spoke to being involved to close to 30 years, Finance Committee needs to know what happens at the Council on Aging. Staffing hasn't changed, what has changed is the number of people that they service, it went from 1800 to over 5000 today. It is a quality of life issue.

M. Barry asked for an explanation on the difference is on the COA and the Friends Group. Friends group is a 501C3 non-profit, that was initiated originally so that the Friends group could get non-profit status for the newsletter, they also provide for a number of other activities. COA is regulated by the town and appointed by the Town. They have received a Grant for the van and Friends group paid the balance of \$12,000.

Specialized instructors, some are paid through Department of Health, and some programs are paid by the Friends group. If they receive State funding, out of towners are allowed in. Yoga program is excellent, they receive \$4.00/hour in a Grant, balance is paid out of Friends group for the instructor.

Work Off Program – There has been some revisions this year to the program, they can now accept 30 people in the program, there were 23 participants last year and they receive compensation at a minimum wage (\$8.00), some people will do a season and fill in on different jobs and might work less hours. There are some individuals in the schools that are only compensated for 92 hours (\$750) but volunteer additional hours.

**Article 21- Property Tax Deferral, Clause 41A.** This article requests that the town determine the income requirement for this deferral clause by the income guidelines set annually by the Commissioner of Revenue – Mass Dept of Revenue for the Circuit Breaker Income Tax Credit. Currently an elder's income cannot exceed \$40,000 to qualify for the 41A in Walpole. If this article passes, the income guideline will be determined each year automatically by guidelines set by the Department of Revenue when the Circuit Breaker eligibility is set. The Circuit Breaker is a state income tax credit granted to residents of Massachusetts who meet residency, age and income guidelines, funding for this credit comes from the State Budget. 41A deferral allows a resident to delay paying property tax up to 50% of the property value. The town recovers the debt, plus interest, at the time the property is sold or inherited. The interest for

Walpole residents who take advantage of this deferral is currently 4%. At the present time, only eight Walpole residents defer their property tax

**8:05 p.m. – DPW Budgets/DPW Director Bob O’Brien and the DPW Superintendents**

B. O’Brien spoke to the DPW having many different divisions, Cemetery, Sewer and Water, Building Maintenance, (this budget maintains all the town buildings, municipal and schools), Highway, Parks, Recreation. Engineering, Street Lighting and Snow and Ice. (Deficit for this year is \$817,000) Budget issues have the affect of the performance of these departments. Lost some position in 2003 and have never been reinstated. There is an increase of one half position in Sewer and Water. Engineering Department has received a 1.5 Million dollar Grant for Washington Street from Common Street to the Foxboro Line, and anticipate a savings of \$250,000 by doing the work in house with staff. Adrienne Road, they were able to save \$130,000. The superintendents were present to answer any specific questions on their departments.

Building Maintenance/Don Anderson, Superintendent - Department is losing two people, they maintain 950,000 sq ft of buildings, schools and municipal. They have completed 144 work orders for the schools but will be unable to continue the work due to cuts and will have to outsource some of the work. East Walpole Civic Center might have to be outsourced. Most of the work had previously been done in house. He hopes that the department doesn’t continue to lose people. Any big projects for the schools has to be held for vacation times, they are limited in what they can do when school is in session. Three custodians are under this budget and do maintenance work in their buildings. There was savings in personnel costs as D. Anderson came in at a lower step than previous superintendent.

Town Administrator spoke to all the work that is done by this department with the exception of HVAC, electrical and plumbing, this is mostly outsourced. He would like to restore the craftsman’s position, it would allow for flexibility of work crews. Department is in good shape this year with the heating bills and they received a good price on gas, and feel that they will be o’kay.

Major projects coming up that they would like to do would be to finish the East Walpole Civic Center, Town Hall floor, painting projects at Bird Middle and Boyden Schools. They don’t spend any money on the Deacon Willard Lewis House, Historical Commission pays the bill, and they share joint maintenance of the building with Historical Commission. Department would like to take a look at making the buildings more energy efficient, there are some old buildings with old systems.

Engineering/M. Walker, Town Engineer, Budget is recommended for reduction, department has had changes, presently staffed by two full time employees, part time clerk and part time inspector. The part time inspector position with no benefits is being

cut, they also have an engineering aid. With the reduction, there will be delay in inspections Town Administrator feels staffing is adequate for the department and maybe there will opportunity in the future.

M. Walker spoke to the department instead of outsourcing project on Washington Street, elected to do it in house, saving \$220,000, allowing for more construction money. They will be working on sewer on Pine Street, have been put in charge of trench permits, oversee Type I contracts and do all the site reviews for all boards and commissions, and markings for gas installations. They are requesting a truck for engineering to be funded ½ out of capital and ½ out of water and sewer. GIS is done by D. Dennehy and is paid with a stipend, M. Walker and C. Quigly also do some work on the GIS. More technical issues are hired out.

DPW Administration, Department consists of DPW Director and his secretary, D. Dennehy. Senior Staff Assistant handles the payroll, overtime lists, accounts payable. Department deals with public and has interaction with state and federal agencies and handles confidential issues. He has a small staff, they also handle the drug testing mandated by the Federal Department of Transportation.

Senior Staff Assistant position has evolved over time is located at the DPW Garage, committee question whether or not this position is necessary and wouldn't it be better to have a position reinstated in the Building Maintenance Department. This position provides the Administrative Secretary to spend more time on GIS. Position had previously been included in the Building Maintenance Budget but has been moved to DPW Administration.

Highway Department – Bob LeBlanc, Supt of Highway Parks and Cemeteries. Department consists of eight employees, eleven trucks and one back hoe, one sweeper. They handle 500 miles of roads and also land miles associated. They do the street sweeping, catch basins and pot hole patching, culvert and manhole repairs. Pipe replacement, roadway signage, fence and guard rail installation, welding cutting, of chain links, snow and ice operations, crosswalk paintings, etc. The proposed reduction of one employee is a 12.5%% reduction in force of Highway Department. There was a reduction in 2003, that hasn't been filled. Expenses – \$30,000 spent last year on catch basin cleaning, and they have a three year contract. They clean 1200 basins, only able to do 950 basins with the proposed cut and 300 basins wouldn't be cleaned out, this avoids basement flooding. . Supplies/roads represents asphalt picked up at plant, do overlays, berms, patch work,etc. Asphalt last year cost \$56, this year \$58. and department will be able to do a little less due to this increase. Department busy with road repairs, hope to do some work under Chapter 90 projects.

Snow and Ice Budget –This year deficit of \$800,000, budget has been increased from \$370,000 to \$640,000, this is a reality number. Most towns don't use sand anymore, use straight salt, they don't do this due to having our well fields being affected, they use

adhesive chloride that doesn't affect the wells. They bring the street sweepings to an outside contractor. Deficit number today is 817,000 includes contractors and salt bills. Hopefully not anymore storms.

Street lighting – This budget is based on the number of street lights and poles, also covers the overhead traffic lights. It costs approximately \$25,000/month.

Cemetery Department is made up of two full time employees, one vehicle, a one ton dump truck. Department maintains 19 acres of turf, four cemeteries are maintained, plus three others. They do trash and debris clean up. There are approximately 51 interments each year and do flowers, groundwork and foundation installation, and minor headstone repairs. Won't be affected by budget reduction. Department had previously had summer help.

Vehicle Maintenance – Tom Perciaccante, Superintendent of Vehicle Maintenance. Mr. O'Brien thanked the committee for reinstating a position last year. This position has saved the town money. They now have three full time mechanics handling 120 pieces of equipment along with sanders and snowplows and pump stations. They pretty much handle everything in house other than warranty and body work. They have limited amount of money to outsource jobs. Outside labor rates are astronomical. They don't do fire trucks, only the Fire Chief's and ambulances. Question was asked on a possible savings of doing the fire trucks, it was explained that the shop isn't large enough to do the work and can't tie up the lifts. This would essentially be a problem in the winter, as they need them for snow removal equipment. Department has limited overtime, mostly under snow and ice, they purchase parts at cost. They are trying to get a mutual aid contract through the legislatures enabling towns to help each other.

Parks Department – Department consist of six employees, four vehicles, tractors and sidewalk machine, and turf maintenance equipment. They maintain 32 acres of athletic fields plus the turf around municipal buildings. Daily duties consist of trash pick up field lining, infield raking, bench and goal movement, daily roadside vegetation mulch flower beds, maintain the Robbins Road Compost Facility, Adams Farm, Allen Dam, clean up after all the festivities, trash at pools and traffic islands. They also maintain the Town Common and provide and maintain the dams, sidewalks, tennis and basketball courts and playgrounds. Proposed reduction of one craftsman, this will be an impact on trees and maintenance, they are also losing summer help.

Committee questioned whether there was private sponsorship available for the upkeep and beautification of the traffic islands, Mr. LeBlanc -there is some money available, and they can accept private donations. They don't know how the unions will feel due to the proposed reduction.

Mr. O'Brien wanted it noted all the work the department has done on the Bacevich Memorial located on the Common across from the Post Office.

Town Administrator spoke to Parks Department doing many other things, they are involved with the flag pole repair at the center of Town and will have to do some of the legwork. Cost approximately \$40,000 and is paid by the insurance, but there is a \$10,000 deductible. Area has to be excavated and portion of the war memorial headstone has to be repaired along with the sidewalks in the area. Santa's house is also in need of attention.

Committee questioned getting outside groups volunteering and getting involved in projects throughout town. They are looking at some Eagle Scout Projects.

Compost site – Parks Department maintains the site and it is open April through Memorial Day, plus other limited days. Residents purchase a sticker and drop off leaves, brush, grass. Money from the stickers goes into the General Fund. Site costs approximately \$36,000 per year and town receives \$13,000-\$15,000 for the stickers, this helps offset some of the maintenance costs. Question was raised on the number of manhours if Christmas trees weren't picked up, residents could bring them to the compost site themselves. Town Administrator spoke to this being a Board of Selectmen decision to pick up the Christmas trees, any decision to change it would have to be made in the Fall.

Capital Budget –\$30,000 being requested for fields, small projects. Last year money was set aside, and hoped to do work at Turco and Fisher. The prep work will be done in house, excavating the soils, and sub contract the paving out. This field work will help the field situation.

Budget adjustments - Funds that will be available to the School Department will come in through the Schools. They are looking at \$500,000 in Federal Stimulus, State Chapter 70 adjustment of \$111,000 and \$110 in Federal Building Maintenance School Construction money, (approximately \$721,000 for the schools). There is a realization that appropriations to the schools that there is a lot of the municipal side that goes into the schools, need to share the direct dollars. Administration is trying to finish the bids on Property, Casualty and Worker's Comp. Feels comfortable of savings about \$100,000 range. There is 1.2 Million to be spread out, \$819,000 for schools and \$422,000 for the municipal side.

Town Administrator is proposing in his Budget Restorations dated 3/12/09 School Department - \$277,472, Library Personnel - \$54,945, Library Expenses -\$6,000, Council on Aging Personnel - \$35,729, Assessor's Personnel -\$22,724, Treasurer/Collector Personnel-\$22,724 and DPW Administration Expenses - \$800. Other issues out there are additional police officer, building maintenance position. He would like to see funds being restored to accounting and animal/veterans position and restoring the EAP monies, also some funding for the Board of Health Agency Support and putting \$24,000 back into Recreation Department for part time person. His goal is to reduce layoffs. These adjustments have all been done without any concessions for any of the unions.

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Monday, March 30, 2009, there is a joint meeting of the Finance Committee, School Committee and Board of Selectmen to get a consensus of the money.

Committee would like to see in the School Budget, revenues, expenses and grant money received.

**Minutes**

**MOTION MADE** by M. Boragine, Seconded by M. Barry to approve the March 19, 2009 Minutes, Motion Approved (8-0-3) (M. Gallivan, M. Hickey and J. Stadler abstained) (11 voting)

10:00 p.m. – Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril  
Clerk