

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes

March 27, 2008

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Thursday, March 27, 2008 in the Finance Committee Room, Town Hall with the following members present: T. Jalkut, R. Knobel, M. Boragine, M. Hickey, S. Kelliher J. Muti, T. Bowen, M. Barry, S. Rose, J. Stadler. Also in attendance was Town Administrator M. Boynton.

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

Fire Department – Present was Chief T. Bailey and Deputy Fire Chief M. Laracy

Reserve Fund Transfer – Fire Department – Salaries/Overtime

\$89,507 being requested due to unexpected firefighter injuries and illnesses totaling \$60,013 and emergency call backs to date at \$54,487. This request will cover overtime costs through the remainder of the year. Department is required to have 8 firefighters man to man on all shifts. Department has had a rash of injuries and illnesses (9) some have been long term and two firefighters are still out. One is out on injury and one is out indefinitely with prognosis not very good. They have filled one vacancy in the department. Department will soon be out of overtime the first or second week in May. Firefighter has to be out 60 days before they are allowed to bring in a provisional firefighter. This saves half time costs on personnel and cuts down on overtime. Appointment of a provisional firefighter has to be approved by the Board of Selectmen. In the past two call firefighters have taken provisional appointments. Provisional appointments are paid at the bottom step and receive no benefits.

Firefighters are able to keep their employment as long as they have sick time. Town has the ability to ask for a volunteer retirement. .

Expense update – Chief Bailey feels department is in good shape on expenses but will not shift any monies from Expenses to Salaries at this time.

At the end of the discussion, Chief Bailey spoke to being confident that they will not be requesting any additional money but cannot predict for sure in case anything major or multiple incidents happen.

Town Administrator spoke to not being aware of any other departments that are running low in their budget.

Town Administrator spoke to 8 firefighters are required to operate two stations. If the number is dropped below that, there is the potential of closing a station for some period.,

adding a couple of firefighters won't necessarily cut overtime costs. It works to have minimum staffing lower than your regular staffing.

Members questioned possibly contracting out the ambulance service and having the Fire Department being operated as a Fire Department. Town Administrator doesn't feel that this would work, would have to reduce staff significantly and would do fewer transports. It would be difficult to make this change and have it work.

Chairman spoke to this Reserve Fund Transfer being required, employees are contractually required to be paid. Town has an obligation to pay under the contract.

Committee will wait to take any action on this request due to their five day requirement that they should have the Reserve Fund Transfer Request five days in advance of Committee deliberations. It is a procedural matter of the Finance Committee. Straw vote of the committee was taken and no one had any objections to this request.

Fire Department Budget

Budget comes down to overtime issue. Ambulance crew is relied on heavily for all calls. If necessary, all 8 are out and they staff fire apparatus. Present staffing levels cannot handle all calls. Law requires that you have 15 firefighters on a scene within 4 minutes. They are looking to coming back at a future time for additional personnel enabling them to cut overtime. Problem with not having minimum manning to drop back to. Overtime is covered in one line item, apparatus repairs are done in house at a cost of \$34.76/hour, this saves the department money. The department is still working on sick time issues. They stagger EMS training for EMT's and Paramedics. Hoping they won't have any unexpected injuries, no control of illnesses. There have been 2312 calls to date of which 1332 are ambulance. East Walpole Station responds with engine prior to ambulance getting there. Most of the department's injuries are back and shoulder.

Ambulance billing – Committee members questioned billing for auto accidents. Some towns do it (Sharon). They are looking into this. They have attempted, in the past, to bill for telephone pole accidents but have not been very successful.

Capital Budget – Department is requesting three items: Ladder Truck, retrofit for a fire engine, and new computer service to help ambulance reporting and efficiency. This will improve the ambulance billing. State is still paying the Medicaid funds for Cedar Junction runs. There were 80 runs last year, problem is that it ties up the ambulance for at least two hours. Ambulance collections are improving over previous years. Held for further discussion with Capital Budget Committee.

Ambulance Fund – \$600,000 is applied towards salaries and expense, and money is set aside for capital projects. An ambulance last six years, and one is replaced every three years.

Committee felt gasoline and oil amounts were low in the FY09 Budgets. Chief Bailey has no problems with Town Administrator's recommendations on the budget.

Article 43 – Use Table

Board of Selectmen have reopened and closed the 5/5/08 SATM warrant and approved the removal of this article (Use Table) and have inserted a new Article 43 dealing with Zoning Bylaw - Parking Regulations in its place. Finance Committee had previously voted No Action on this article.

MOTION MADE by S. Connell, Seconded by R. Knobel for Reconsideration of Article 43, Motion Approved, Unanimous (10-0-0) (10 voting)

Further discussion on this new article will be held after the Planning Board's public hearing on the parking regulations.

Zoning Bylaw Use Table and Zoning Bylaw Rewrite Phase 2 Committee

This is a newly formed Zoning Bylaw Use Table and Zoning Rewrite Phase 2 Committee formed by the Board of Selectmen on March 25, 2008. They are requesting a member from the Finance Committee to serve on this Committee as their representative.

Chairman Jalkut asked for a volunteer to be the FinCom Representative. FinCom Member Joanne Muti agreed to serve on this Committee as she had served on the Zoning Rewrite Committee.

MOTION MADE by T. Jalkut, Seconded by S. Kelliher to appoint Joanne Muti as the Finance Committee Representative to the Zoning Bylaw Use Table and Zoning Bylaw Rewrite Phase 2 Committee, Motion Approved, Unanimous (10-0-0) (10 voting)

Article 43 – Zoning By law –Parking

Town Administrator spoke to this new article dealing with parking regulations. With the development of the Clark Tower Site in East Walpole, present parking regulations can't be met. If they did, every parking space would be non-conforming. Planning Board has not held the public hearing.

Motions

Town Administrator provided the committee with Version #3, dated March 26, 2008 of draft motions. Article 5, Employee Fringe benefits account, number has been updated. Articles 16 and 17 have been corrected due to wording provided by bond counsel. All of the money articles with the exception of snow and ice and capital are correct. He is still

awaiting what the Assessors are going to recommend for Overlay Surplus. Article 6 should be correct if we don't change the bottom line of the budgets.

Town Administrator spoke to the Finance Committee seems to be in support of the part time clerk for the Police Department, problem is the Committee, if it funds this position, will have to come up with where the money will be coming from. He will put together a scenario for the Committee. Committee has to decide where the money is coming from. He is also recommending a full time Economic Development Officer, present individual is part time. Committee Members questioned whether there is any money available in street lighting, Town Administrator will look into it. There might possibly be money in the unemployment budget. Anticipated layoffs in the School Department are lower than expected.

Article 45 – Rezoning Highway/Business District

Problem with access to parcel off Pine Street, it is Highway/Business and you can't access one zone to another zone. Proposal is to allow residential properties that abut Highway/Business to be eligible for AQV use.

Minutes

MOTION MADE by R. Knobel, Seconded by M. Boragine to approve the March 3, 2008 Minutes, Motion Approved (8-0-2) (M.Hickey, S. Rose abstained) (10 voting)

MOTION MADE by R. Knobel, Seconded by S. Kelliher to approve the March 13, 2008 Minutes, Motion Approved (9-0-1) (S. Rose abstained) (10 voting)

MOTION MADE by R. Knobel, Seconded by S. Rose to approve March 20, 2008 Minutes, Motion Approved (8-0-2) (M.Boragine and J. Stadler abstained)

Auditor's Report – John Stadler updated the committee on the Auditor's Report and Management Letter. Audit went well, management is doing well dealing with operations and growth. Our Free Cash number is 31st for FY07 in State. Highlights of the management letter dealt with funding Gasby45, there doesn't appear to be any solution to this. Town is now paying as you go. Report was good. He would like to recommend the Finance/Accounting Department for employee of the month.

Economic Development Committee Articles – Committee expressed concerns regarding the parcels that have been recommended by the committee, properties are contaminated and property owner don't appear to want to sell. Question is whether the Town wishes to own these properties. Economic Development Committee is coming back before the Finance Committee on April 14 and will answer any questions on these articles by the Finance Committee. Committee members would like to see the Committee focusing on downtown area and East Walpole or areas that there is potential

for development. South Street parcel, owner stills owes the Town 1.6 Million in back taxes and it is questionable on the assign rights are under a foreclosure.

Town Administrator is recommending the funding of the Economic Development Officer be full time. He feels there is enough work downtown, East Walpole and working with Town Planner on Table of Uses and Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce. Job description hasn't changed since 2004, and position is going back to what it was full time, presently only funded part time.

Chairman Jalkut asked the Committee Members to forward to him any comments they have on the articles and on Main Street property. Town Administrator spoke to giving the EDC direction on the Main Street property, that the Committee doesn't feel it is feasible. There are many unanswered questions on tax implications, who receives the money?

MOTION MADE by R. Knobel, Seconded by M. Barry to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m, Motion Approved, Unanimous (10-0-0) (10 voting)

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril
Secretary