

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes

April 3, 2008

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Monday, April 3, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. in the Finance Committee Room, Town Hall with the following members present: T. Jalkut, S. Connell, L. Donovan, S. Rose, R. Knobel, M. Hickey, S. Kelliher, M. Gallivan, J. Muti, J. Stadler, T. Bowen, and S. Rose. 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.

School Department

Members of the School Department present were L. Lynch, Superintendent of Schools, School Committee Members N. Gallivan, (Chairman), D. Bergen, J. Desmond and E. Nadeau. Also B. Connolly, the new School Business Agent was introduced to the Committee. Mr. Connolly spoke looking forward to work closely with Finance Committee, Capital Budget Committee and Building and Parks Departments.

Town Administrator's Budget Update

Town Administrator spoke to the Assessors releasing additional revenue, allowing \$30,000 more to be available (Schools \$19,800, Municipal \$10,200) for the FY09 Budget. He has recommended changes to Town Clerk-Salaries, Election & Registration Salaries (due to Federal Election), Economic Development Expenses (attend regional meetings) and Recreation Expenses (tree work).

\$458,000 deficit in Snow and Ice recommended funding in the amount of \$200,000 from Overlay and \$218,000 from Employee Benefits and \$39,144 from Free Cash. This number should hold providing there are no additional snowstorms. He is not recommending filling the part time position in the Police Department due to lack of available funding.

Superintendent Lynch – January, 2008 tentative budget was for \$32,193,618, and have made reductions in the amount of \$700,000 due to staff exchanges, special education reorganization, transportation reserve and reduction in new staff requests. School Committee's adjust request is \$31,493,618. Town Administrator's recommendation is \$31,358,899, resulting in a gap of \$134,719.

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School Department is working to accelerate Medicaid reimbursements, this would help with the gap. The way reimbursement is received in the Health and Human Services is changing and could impact the Schools reimbursement in the future, they want to make sure they receive the money this year. It could affect Walpole by as much as \$300,000 in the year 2010 and we need to be prepared. Schools are working with Congressman Lynch's Office on this. They anticipate voting \$623,479 at the Fall Town Meeting.

Budget Drivers – are transportation costs (contract expires 6/30/08) SPED Clinical Services and catch up of instructional materials.

Staffing– 3/5 positions being added, a reading teacher elementary level, .5 English language teacher at high school (mandated) K-12 music teacher and English/Social Studies teacher at high school. They have reduced an instructional aid teacher. Feel staff is basically level funded and they reserve the right to adjust staffing.

Enrollment Numbers – New positions at high school will help with class size, but there is still some need for improvement but it is being addressed at this moment, feel they could do more with elective subjects. There are some issues at the middle schools and they are looking to adjust those class sizes. They would like to improve math class numbers. They are reducing some programs and modernizing others. Health is a big issue now and would like to step it up. They are also looking to offer on line class in the summer and beefing up summer school along with working with Recreation Department. This is a revenue generator.

School Committee has voted to adopt a five year Strategic Plan and establishing a sub-committee with a framework for the next five years. This will be part of the budget process. They have been very successful with Capital Budget recommendations and have looked at equipment needs and ranked them in priority order. They are looking at a \$300,000 expenditure of the Bird Middle School roof in the future.

They are confident that the schools are receiving what they need and getting their fair share. Committee questioned what they receive in mandated reimbursements. They only receive 2 -3% for the no child left behind programs. They have no say or discussion in these programs and continue to work with the legislatures on them. Superintendent feels that some of them are good for children, some are not fair, but doesn't feel that the Town should pick up the bill as they are not allowed a say.

Town Administrator spoke to any additional funding they might be able to bridge the \$134,000 gap.

N. Gallivan spoke to the Suburban Coalition Legislative Breakfast will be held on April 7, 2008.. This is an opportunity to work with other towns that have same issues, Legislatures have listened to some issues due to the pressure put on by the delegation. .

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Superintendent Lynch said they have completed the five year capital plan and are working on the five year strategic plan, and B. Connolly is working on a five year financial plan. They are looking at FY10. They will work with the Town to obtain additional revenue and will work to keep within the budget.

T. Jalkut spoke to the budget gap being 3/10 of 1% of the budget, small amount (\$134,719) compared to area towns we are in great shape. Budget also represents an assumption of the collective bargaining process, and if every assumption comes through, would be \$134,719 short.

Superintendent Lynch, they have 4,000 students, they don't have assistance in elementary schools and only two at high school. Teachers are able to teach, principals deal with discipline, etc. If the two middle schools were combined, they could reduce administrators. They are also looking to going green in the schools, but this is not necessarily less expensive.

Town Administrators spoke to the need to decide where we are going with the Town's facilities, this has to be taken away from independent groups, has to be a dialogue. This is a policy decision of the Selectmen. He also feels there is an over reliance on Capital Budget, feels the new health care regulations are a problem.

N. Gallivan will provide the committee on the specifics on Medicaid. Committee will be discussing it at their meeting next Monday. Schools can't lose half of our Medicaid funding.

Minutes – March 27, 2008

MOTION MADE by R. Knobel, Seconded by J. Stadler to approve the March 27, 2008 Minutes, Motion Approved (10-0-1) (S. Connell abstained) (11 voting)

May 5, 2008 Spring Annual Town Meeting

Mr. Jalkut reminded the Committee that the budgets will be voted on Monday night, and the two issues before the committee are whether we agree with the Town Administrator's recommendations on the full time position for the Economic Development Officer and the part time clerk for the Police Department. Town Administrator is opposed to the hiring of the clerk for the Police Department. Budgets will be voted on after the report given by the Capital Budget Committee on their articles.

Article 12 – Snow and Ice Deficit

R. Knobel spoke to being against the way we fund the Snow and Ice Budget. He feels the Committee is not doing their job by underfunding this budget every year. He would like

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to see \$50,000 out of the reserves for this budget and if the money isn't used, it can go back.

Article 44-Rezoning/ Baker Street

Mr. Jalkut left the meeting due to a potential conflict as he lives at 142 Baker St and is an abutter to an abutter. He feels he cannot be objective.

Vice-Chairman S. Connell took over chairing the meeting.

Speaking to this article were the petitioners and owners of the property at 156 Baker Street, Paul and Katie Thurston. They explained that this parcel consists of 3.57 acres of land and has one single family home located there presently. Property has been filed with MassHousing Finance Agency and have received site eligibility for 20 units. Parcel is zoned rural, Abutting property on Carriage Lane is zoned Residence B. Property also abuts the Walpole Country Club. They do have plans for a 40B project at this location. The intent had always been to build condo's there.

It was explained that they would like to rezone property from Rural to Residence B and have approximately 4 – 6 house lots. They would sell the lots off. If the property is not rezoned and is developed as a 40B program it would help the town meet their affordable housing goal, but would take away any opportunity to have residential homes in that area. 5 of the 20 units would have to be affordable, other units would be market rate. There project date is 2010, but are unsure what the real estate market will be at that time.

Some members of the Finance Committee felt that when you purchase a piece of land zoned rural, you know what you were doing, this appears to be a disregard for the zoning.

Discussion

C. Jackson – On Board of Governor's of Walpole Country Club has empathy for the area residents. There are many issues with this concept i.e. frontage, fire prevention, conservation. Trees have been removed and there is a Title V problem on the property. Baker Street is a scenic way. Mr. Thurston spoke to having the right to cutting the trees on the land and they have received releases from Conservation, Building Inspector and Health Department. There is a law suit pending with Walpole Country Club.

9:20 – Committee Member J. Stadler left the meeting.

D. Valley – Carriage Lane – Residents feel they have recourse to a 40B project. Baker Street is only 17 ft wide and is residential. School buses are not permitted to pick up students in this section. He doesn't feel zoning should be allowed to change. Petitioner is aware of this when he purchased property. He feels they should abide by the rules.

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C. Sulkala, 12 Carriage Lane, spoke to his property being a rural lot abutting proposed rezoning.

M. Smith, 196 Baker St. – This should not be a discussion of a 40B project. Mass Housing does consider it a threat to use property as a 40B project as a discussion. Lot is encumbered and there is a law suit pending and a decision maybe made by the middle of May. Proposed units are close together and would not allow for safety vehicles to make turns and there is no room for snow removal. It has to be decided on what is the best interest for the Town. The issue before the Committee is how many Residential B lots does the Town need and how does this affect other areas in Town. What is the benefit to the Town to change the rezoning, we will lose forever the rural effect. There are health issues and there have been violations of Planning Board in removal of trees, permit was not taken out.

R. Knobel – The proposed action of a 40B project has to be considered and feels it should be discussed.

Resident of 20 Carriage Lane – This 40B Site Eligibility will expire the end of this year.

T. Bowen – Spoke to petitioner knowing what he bought the property, when you buy rural, you know it is rural. Zoning shouldn't be changed to accommodate everyone. We create zoning rules then change them.

J. Muti spoke to it not making sense that the neighbors are objecting. All lots surrounding property are Residence B.

MOTION MADE by R. Knobel, Seconded by S. Rose to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril
Secretary