

FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

April 9, 2009

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Thursday, April 9, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. with the following members present T. Jalkut, L. Donovan, P. Stasiukevicius, R. Knobel, T. Bowen, M. Hickey, J. Muti, C. Lane, M. Kent, S. Connell, 9:05 p.m. – J. Stadtler. 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

May 4, 2009 Spring Annual Town Meeting

Article 2 – Personnel Board – Salary Schedule, 3% cost of living adjustment with no changes to Recreation & Grant Schedules. There are no other recommended Personnel Board changes. Town Administrator spoke to if the unions should agree to a salary freeze, they would then deal with the non-union personnel.

MOTION MADE by C. Lane, Seconded by P. Stasiukevicius for Favorable Action on Article 2, Motion Approved, (10-0-0) (10 voting) Unanimous

T. Bowen spoke to significant salary changes occurring over the last few years, and need to look back and focus on salaries and benefits. Other Towns are in same financial crisis and we should be following their lead. The ability of the populace to pay needs to be looked at, along with the State and local level. Town Administrator spoke to the need to be competitive with comparable communities, this is important with the union contracts.

Article 3 – Snow and Ice Deficit

MOTION MADE by L. Donovan, Seconded by S. Connell for Favorable Action on Article 3 in the amount of \$818,000 for the FY2010 levy and to fund this article the \$818,000 by transferred from the accounts recommended by the Town Administrator. Motion Approved, (10-0-0) (10 voting) Unanimous

Firefighters Contract

Town Administrator spoke to meeting yesterday (April 8, 2009) with the firefighters and negotiations went O'kay. Contract is still not settled, union has a meeting scheduled for Saturday morning and they will talk about health insurance issues and might possibly ratify the contract. Adjustments might be needed for the Fire, Ambulance and Health Insurance Budgets, if contract is settled. Contract will not be ratified by the Selectmen

prior to the Finance Committee booklet going to press. Committee will need to vote the contract for Town Meeting if ratified, April 23 is the last date to ratify the contract. Only other changes to the budgets are the salary reduction for the Parks and Highway Superintendent, R. LeBlanc, due to military leave. He is proposing moving \$19,500 from Highway Budget to Engineering and retaining the position of R. Prebis, Engineering Aide. D. Hand will serve as Acting Superintendent of Highways and Parks in Mr. LeBlanc's absence.

Article 6 – FY2010 Budgets

Department heads present for the budget discussions were introduced: D. Anderson, Building Maintenance Superintendent, T. Bailey, Fire Chief, R. Mattson, Superintendent of Water and Sewer, M. Walker, Town Engineer, S. Mercandetti, Economic Development and Grants Officer, R. Chapell, Health Director, R. LeBlanc, Highway and Parks Superintendent, A. Mehta, Town Accountant, D. Fliss, Appraiser and J. Johnson, Assistant Town Administrator.

Committee reviewed the proposed 2010 Budget Recommendations and holds were put on the following budgets for discussion: DPW Building Maintenance, Police Department, Inspectional Services, Schools, Tri-County Vocational, Board of Health, Unemployment Compensation and Employee Fringe Benefits.

Police – R. Knobel expressed his views, started on a path with police last couple of years, wrong time to stop proceeding with plan. It is needed more than ever, but hasn't heard any support from other members of the committee, he will let it pass. T. Jalkut, hard to support department heads don't stand up and fight and say comprising public safety. He is worried about savings of school traffic guards, this could be a loser. Town Administrator spoke to if this is an issue, it can be addressed at the Fall Town Meeting. If it is cut now, no one will be aware of it until September. He agrees in general that in down times, community ends up with more crime. Police Department is coming up with creative ideas to deal with the budget reductions. It doesn't take long to fill positions in the Police Department if you receive a layoff list from another town. Town has lost five positions in the Police Department, replaced one, and Police Department is in the process of reviewing the civil service list for two more positions. He feels that the Police Chief should have the opportunity to implement his plan, he really wants it to work. If the reduction in crossing guards becomes a political issue in the Fall, he will deal with it then. .

Inspectional Services – Town Administrator spoke to one layoff occurring in this department and wanted to bring it to the Committee's attention. They might need to come back and revisit this at a future date. Office will consist of two full time inspectors and one part time employee that works in the evenings. Building Commissioner feels he needs this position. Revenues for the department are down but home remodeling projects are going up. Planning Board subdivision filings are down. Department works in

conjunction with the Fire Department on inspections. Fire and Building Inspector have the responsibility for all liquor establishments and schools.

Schools – There is still a gap of \$841,000, school principals are meeting with the Superintendent on how to close the gap, there is some optimism for obtaining new revenue but doesn't know if this will happen. A plan will have to be put in place to close the gap.

Unemployment – Town Administrator spoke to 14 positions currently being slated to go from Schools, municipal side there is 5 or 6 eligible to go onto unemployment. Pending settlement of Fire Contract, there are positions there. If all employees stayed on for the full 30 weeks, there will be the need to transfer \$36,000 to Health Insurance, number could still go up if the schools are unable to close the gap and could go down if the employees get another job. He is basing his recommendations on the worst case scenario. Town Administrator anticipates coming back at the Fall Town Meeting to make adjustments.

Tri-County Vocational – Town has no say in the assessment. Tri County School Committee can vote the number up or down, Walpole has two representatives: T. Hoegler and R. Rockwood. All that is required for the vote is a majority of the towns to decide. Assessment is based on the number of students. Town and Tri-County are looking at changing DOE formula but don't know what the impact would be if changed.

Health – Town Administrator is proposing to add back in \$20,800 into professional services/agency. He feels to make a 100% cut isn't good, and maybe should ease into the reductions in services over a period of time. He feels that a 25% cut is more reasonable at this time. He has only heard from one agency on the proposed reductions, and doesn't believe that the Selectmen or Finance Committee have received calls regarding the cuts.

T. Jalkut spoke to this amount won't allow for a police officer, building inspector or other personnel, would only be enough for expenses. A better discussion on this funding should occur in the future, Town doesn't send money to other charitable organizations. Money might also be sufficient for a part time nurse. Budget also restores some significant services to the Walpole VNA. Some members spoke to putting the money in to the Reserve Fund, agencies have changed over the years and problem is how to decide which agencies receive the money. Most of the people that receive services are covered by insurance.

Health Agent spoke to the services provided by SNARC enables the families an opportunity to be away, and providing help with vocational training.

Town Administrator spoke to being cautious with picking and choosing support for the different agencies. Some members support putting the money back to the original request for the VNA, they service all the populace. VNA has direct responsibility to

Walpole, other agencies Walpole is a small part of their budget and this is the time to cut back as we are having money problem. No one knows why these agencies were chosen. Question is money going into the Reserve Fund. Members spoke to being opposed to putting the money into the Reserve Fund, like to see it go towards a person, maybe the nurse. It would be moving money from specific needs to public health. Some members spoke to when times are hard, all the agencies suffer, and would like to continue to see something given to them, history of why these agencies were chosen is interesting. If people were put in group homes, it would cost more. Town Administrator spoke against adding a position while still laying people off. He has no objections to removing the money. Agencies can make an effort at Town Meeting for funding.

MOTION MADE by T. Bowen, Seconded by C. Lane to remove the \$20,800 from Agency Support (521901) and recommend \$5,000 for this line item, and remainder be placed in Reserve Fund, Motion Approved (10-0-0) (10 voting) Unanimous

9:05 p.m. – J. Stadler

MOTION MADE by S. Connell, Seconded by C. Lane for Favorable Action on Article 6 in the amount of \$62,609,668 with recommended funding sources and that \$71,383 be appropriated to the FY2010 Reserve Fund Contractual Offsets by transferring \$71,383 from the FY2009 Reserve Fund Contractual Offsets, Motion Approved (10-0-1) (J. Stadler abstained) (11 voting)

Town Administrator spoke to a new motion would be required if the Fire Department Contract is settled. Usually at this time, the final budget is prepared, but doesn't feel that this is the case this year, they will be working on it through the summer and preparing for the Fall Town Meeting.

Town Administrator spoke to thanking all the department heads for the incredible amount of time that has been spent on working on the numbers and getting through tough times.

Article 17 – Revolving Funds

Finance Director to e-mail the Committee on the five year comparison on the revolving funds. Fire Alarm Maintenance is still ongoing, removing the old fire alarm maintenance system, should take about another year. Town will still be collecting for the fire alarms but there won't be the need for as much money as in the past. Fire Alarm Maintenance Truck might to given over to the DPW in the future. Committee had questions on the Early Childhood Education Revolving Fund and field maintenance at Turco Field. Finance Director to provide the Committee on clarification on these funds.

MOTION MADE by C. Lane, Seconded by T. Bowen for Favorable Action on Article 17, Motion Approved, (10-0-1) (R. Knobel abstained) (11 voting)

School Committee

School Committee may want to meet with the Finance Committee regarding their budget cuts. April 14, 2009 is the Suburban Coalition Breakfast at the State House.

Minutes

MOTION MADE by R. Knobel, Seconded by C. Lane for Favorable Action on the Minutes of April 6, 2009, Motion Approved, (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

Article 23 – Firefighter’s Contract

Update on the Firefighters’ Contract was provided to the Committee by the Town Administrator. They are meeting on Saturday, April 11, and if contract is approved it will be presented to the Selectmen on Monday April 13, 2009 and if it is ratified he will provide the Committee with Memorandum of Agreement with budget implications to be discussed at the FinCom Meeting of April 16, 2009. If it isn’t ratified, there won’t be a need for a Finance Committee meeting on April 16.

Chairman Jalkut extended his thanks to the Finance Committee Members for their attendance, it has been a difficult season and committee acted responsibly. He also extended his thanks to Town Administrator, M. Boynton and Superintendent of Schools L. Lynch for their cooperation, they made the job easier and worked together on the numbers and understanding the problems facing the town.

9:30 adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril
Clerk