

## ©FINANCE COMMITTEE

### Minutes

**April 30, 2009**

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Thursday, April 30, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the Finance Committee Room, Town Hall with the following members present: S. Connell, L. Donovan, R. Knobel, C. Lane, M. Muti. M. Kent, P. Stasiukevicius, T. Bowen, M. Gallivan and at 8:05 p.m. J. Stadtler. Also in attendance was Town Administrator M. Boynton and Finance Director M. Good.

7:30 p.m. – Quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by Acting Chairman S. Connell.

#### **State Aid Update**

Governor's number has been reduce by 1 Million, House Ways and Means number is higher, Senate Budget will be lower, Conference Committee lower and new revenue estimates have been issued based upon implementation of a higher sales tax. There is no guarantee that this is going to pass. House Ways and Means did not include current year's expenditures , they are lower than the Governor's He is more comfortable with the Governor's number. He has not put in any money for the sales tax, casino meals or motel tax, doesn't feel we can count on it. It is very difficult to anticipate what the State will do. Town will also be facing extra unemployment costs, these numbers will be adjusted in the Fall with a transfer from the Health Insurance Budget to Unemployment. He does not want to call a Special Town Meeting.

Cherry Sheet numbers are down \$239,600, difference is in general municipal aid which is down \$119,000. There is a problem with the Quinn Bill (Police Career Incentive) has not been acted upon, something is going to happen, at best, a 50% funding. Town has received indication that there is no funding for the Quinn Bill. He is recommending reducing the line item for the Quinn Bill, and when the State Budget is set, an adjustment can be made in the Fall to restore the funding. It is specific in the Police Contract, the whole issue is not sitting well with the Police. He is recommending a reduction of \$132,645 for this line item, leaving \$119,000 out of the overall budget. Charter and School Choice Tuition numbers are last year's numbers.

He anticipates that the Senate numbers will be taken up the middle of May and go on to the Governor the end of May. Governor has 10 days to review, then 10 days to veto. He feels it will be the middle to late June for the State Budget.

#### **May 4, 2009 Spring Annual Town Meeting**

**Article 4- Prior Year's Bills** - There are no known outstanding bills. No Action being recommended.

**MOTION MADE** by T. Bowen, Seconded by L. Donovan for Reconsideration of Article 4, Motion Approved (9-0-0) (9 voting) Unanimous

**MOTION MADE** by T. Bowen, Seconded by P. Stasiukevicius for No Action on Article 4, Motion Approved (9-0-0) (9 voting) Unanimous

**Article 6 – Budgets**

Town Administrator spoke to the House Ways & Means Budget reduction of the Quinn Bill. He is recommending a reduction of \$132,645 be made in Police Salaries to reflect the loss of the Quinn Bill reimbursements. If these funds are restored in the final state budget, funding will be restored to the Police Budget in the Fall.

**MOTION MADE** by T. Bowen, Seconded by C. Lane to reduce Article 6 in the amount of \$132,645 for Police Personal Services (Quinn Bill reduction) total General Fund Budget in the amount of \$62,477,023, Motion Approved (9-0-0) (9 voting) Unanimous

**Article 22 – Library Contract** – Library employees haven't reached an agreement with the Town, they are going to Mediation. Recommendation is for No Action.

**MOTION MADE** by T. Bowen, Seconded by C. Lane for Reconsideration of Article 22, Motion Approved (9-0-0) (9 voting) Unanimous

**MOTION MADE** by T. Bowen, Seconded by C. Lane for No Action on Article 22, Motion Approved (9-0-0) (9 voting) Unanimous

**Article 23 – Firefighter's Contract** Firefighters haven't reached an agreement with the Town, recommendation is for No Action.

**MOTION MADE** by T. Bowen, Seconded by C. Lane for Reconsideration of Article 23, Motion Approved (9-0-0) (9 voting) Unanimous

**MOTION MADE** by T. Bowen, Seconded by C. Lane for No Action on Article 23, Motion approved (9-0-0) (9 voting) Unanimous

**Reserve Fund Transfer**

Finance Committee Expenses - \$1200 is being requested due to an increase in printing costs for the Finance Committee Recommendations be mailed to all residences of the Town. C. Lane spoke to requesting that the five day rules pertaining to the Committee having received a copy prior to any action being taken by the Finance. This is being

requested as the Finance Committee does not anticipate having any meetings till the end of the fiscal year and the need to have money to pay the printing bill.

**MOTION MADE** by C. Lane, Seconded by S. Connell to waive the 5 day rule pertaining to Reserve Fund Transfer Requests, Motion Approved (8-0-1) (R. Knobel abstained) (9 voting)

**MOTION MADE** by T. Bowen, Seconded by L. Donovan for Favorable Action on the Reserve Fund Transfer request for Finance Committee Expenses in the amount of \$1200 for printing costs, Motion Approved (8-0-1) (R. Knobel abstained) (9 voting)

Committee entered into a discussion on coming up with a less expensive way to distribute the recommendations. It is in the Town Charter and would require a Charter change. Attempts to have the way it is distributed have failed in the past, but it is becoming very costly to print and mail the recommendations out to all residences. Town Administrator will bring this up to the Charter Committee. A new Charter Committee might be convened in the very near future.

### **Minutes**

**MOTION MADE** by R. Knobel, Seconded by T. Bowen to approve the April 9, 2009 Minutes, Motion Approved (8-0-1) (M. Gallivan abstained) (9 voting)

### **Swine Flu**

Town Administrator updated the Committee on the issue of the Swine Flue. He held a department head meeting earlier today and procedures have been put in place by the staff. He is recommending that residents go onto the Town's web site, under Board of Health for further information. No known cases have been found in Walpole, and schools are discussing the issues. Town is taking a number of precautions and trying to deal with it in a proactive way

**MOTION MADE** by R. Knobel, Seconded by C. Lane to open the Finance Committee Public Hearing at 8:00 p.m. Motion Approved (9-0-0) (9 voting) Unanimous

Residents attending the public hearing spoke to the proposed cuts in the SNARC Organization in Westwood and urged the Committee to reconsider and place some money back into the budget for this purpose. SNARC has been most helpful to the families and received many benefits with early intervention, respite care, social activities, seminars for the families on special needs children, social skills SNARC has been involved in Walpole for over 20 years. They help parents out when overwhelmed. They have allowed families to keep children at home in a residential setting and keeps families together. SNARC was originally established in Walpole, now is based out of Westwood. 185 people benefit in town for SNARC.

8:05 Committee Member J. Stadler

D. Witter, VP of SNARC – spoke to SNARC receiving support from the 12 towns, they receive a lot of private money from towns and donations. Walpole is only two towns that haven't supported them. They listen to what families want and try to retain services, they are an advocate for families. She spoke to understanding what the Towns are up against. They try to go out and obtain services, write Grants. With cuts, they would still do things, but on a limited basis. Department of Mental Health has also cut their budget. SNARAC total budget 6.5 million approximately. Counts group homes and life works (sister agency) They respond to emergencies.

Committee members spoke to the funding discussion over the years between Town and SNARC, and the difficult in obtaining information. Ms. Witter agreed to provide anything that is being requested.)

Discussed ensued by the Committee on where the money would come from to restore any agency support. Town Administrator suggested that the money be taken back from the money that was put aside in the Reserve Fund and suggested that other agencies, other than SNARC be looked at. Shouldn't take money from one group and give to another group. He recommends that the funding for the agencies be restored back to the budget, bottom line won't change.

J. Vallincort – Precinct 5 – spoke to having questions on Article 2, Personnel Board Schedule. He asked how the steps were determined and employees with experience sometimes starting higher than Step 1. Most senior employees near top of scale. It was explained that all changes have to be approved by the Personnel Board. There had been a discussion on a wage freeze, but the unions have all been granted salary changes. Difficult to penalize one group in the town. This would be subject to change if there is a consensus from the unions to forgo raises. Town Administrator spoke to the non-union personnel being a very small part of the organization. They manage the day to day operations of the Town. Town is looking at health insurance changes across the Board for savings, if one union agrees to make concessions, it is believed that they all will do it.

Town is a member of the West Suburban Health Group which is similar to GIC, health insurance changes cannot be changed except through collective bargaining. Employee Fringe Benefits budget in the amount of \$8,980,870 covers part time coordinator, Medicare and dental insurance, employee life insurance, retiree costs and most of the health insurance.

There were no other questions from the audience.

**MOTION MADE** by R. Knobel, Seconded by J. Muti to close the Finance Committee Public Hearing at 8:55 p.m., Motion Approved (10-0-0) (10 voting) Unanimous

**MOTION MADE** by M. Kent, Seconded by J. Muti for Reconsideration of Article 6, Board of Health Budget/Agency Support, Motion Approved (10-0-0) (10 voting) Unanimous

Committee discussed whether it is the Town's function to fund these agencies. To say no is the hardest thing to do, agency support and salaries and benefits need to be looked at next year.

Town Administrator spoke to the State getting out of funding these types of programs and services went away from big institutions to the community level. They provide direct care to residents of the community, money doesn't go to a bigger organization for specific programs. There is also additional funding for programs through SPED.

**MOTION MADE** by M. Kent, Seconded by J. Muti to restore the monies for SNARC and other agencies (increase to \$32,600), Motion Approved (6-3-1) (R. Knobel, C. Lane and T. Bowen opposed) (L. Donovan abstained) (10 voting)

Health Agent to be asked to provide the Committee on what the different agencies do. This would allow the Committee to have answers before the next budget session, difficult to pick and choose what agencies to support.

9:25 p.m. – Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril  
Clerk