

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes**

**March 5, 2015**

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Thursday, March 5, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Finance Committee Room, #112, with the following members present: D. Bruce, M. Trudell, J. Burke, J. McDermott, S. Lawson, J. Denneen, T. Williams, A. Ragosta, M. Iwanowicz, A. Walsh and C. Lane. Members absent were: P. Hinton, J. Lowre, D. Crowley and A. Healy Also in attendance was Town Administrator J. Johnson, Fire Chief T. Bailey and Finance Director M. Thompson.

7:00 p.m. – Quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by the Chairman D. Bruce.

#### **May 4, 2015 Spring Annual Town Meeting**

**Information Systems** – Speaking to this budget was M. Donovan, IT Director. Staff consists of IT Director and PC Support Technician. He explained that the cost of Munis Licensing Fees is the biggest expense in this budget. Last year increased \$2,000. On a question from the FinCom, he explained that he does support the Schools on a minimal basis and has worked on a couple of small projects with them. His relationship with the schools is good.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Information Systems Budget in the amount of \$286,382, Motion Passed (10-0-1) (C. Lane abstained) (12 voting)

**Personnel Board** – Speaking to this budget was the Personnel Board Chairman A. DeNapoli.

#### **Article 2 – Personnel By – Laws**

There are no proposed changes to the Personnel By-Laws, requesting No Action.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for No Action on Article 2, Motion Passed (11-0-0)(11-0-0) (Unanimous)

#### **Article 3 – Personnel Board Salary Schedule**

Mr. DeNapoli spoke to the proposed changes to the salary schedule: 2.5% Cost of Living Adjustment to the schedule, addition of P-4 Community Development Director that was

inadvertently deleted from the schedule in 2012, P-9, a new position of Assistant Recreation Director/Business Manager P-10 regrade of the Administrative Assistant

position from P-11 to P-10, (upgrades due to positions overseeing staff along with additional duties and allows for these positions to catch up to the union positions)(Three positions, DPW, Fire and Police) I-0, Inspection Schedule – added position of Deputy Local Inspector and G-1 – Grant Schedule – changed in Elder Service Advocate from a flat rate of \$15.50 to a range of \$15.50 to a maximum of \$20.50.

Health insurance costs for employees are not tied into the salaries but retirement benefits are.

Contract negotiations are made up of several representatives i.e. Town Administrator, Selectmen and other personnel and is handled in numerous ways, The Town Administrator discusses the parameters with the Selectmen prior to the beginning of negotiation of the contracts.

Committee members spoke to concerns with some of the salary items amounting to 6% or 7% increase due to cost of living adjustments and step increases. It was explained that this is the same as what happens in union contracts.

Town Administrator spoke to the average step increase is 2%. Committee members spoke to the Town cannot sustain this and the need to find a way to hold the line. Contracts set a precedent for the non-union. Committee requested clarification on R-9/Specialized Instructors, scheduled is \$10.00 - \$50 per hour or \$5.00 – \$60.00 per participant. There are approximately 80 non-union personnel and 50% of the non-union personnel are at the top of the schedule. Total cost of salary and hourly increases is approximately \$100,000. Adjustments to the schedule are needed to maintain quality of personnel.

Committee discussed that Unions don't give up anything unless they get something. In the private sector, companies are able to increase prices to pay for personnel costs, but Government does not have this option. Town has been trying to get medical costs under control in negotiations. In the private sector when economy is good, they are able to give bigger increases, government employees don't receive have this option.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on Article 3 – Salary Schedule, Motion Passed (9-2-0) (D. Bruce, M. Trudell opposed) (11 voting)

#### **Article 4 – Personnel Board Funding Costs**

No funds being requested.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for No Action on Article 4, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**Personnel Board Budget**

No funds required for Salaries for this Board as this position is split between Employee Benefits and the Town Administrator's Budget

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Personnel Board Budget (Expenses) in the amount of \$2950, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**Economic Development –**

Liz Dennehy, is a new hire for this position of Community & Economic Development Director. She has come in at the previous director's salary of \$86,974. In addition to the Community & Economic Development Director, she will be working with the Planning Board and providing technical assistance. Planning Board is agreeable to this. She will also be working with the Zoning Board of Appeals and providing general oversight of all components of the land use office. She will not be overseeing the Conservation Commission at this time. Town Administrator has to go to the Personnel Board regarding the salary for this position. Salary adjustments will be handled under Article 3. Town Administrator requested a hold on this budget, till after he goes to the Personnel Board. This position reports to the Town Administrator.

**Planning Board**

Staff consists of one administrative secretary. Budget includes \$15,000 for a consultant that Planning Board feels is needed in absence of a planner. They will use this money if any issues come up. They are agreeable to the Economic Development Director providing technical assistance to the Board.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Planning Board Budget in the amount of \$72,390, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**Zoning Board** – Town Administrator spoke to this budget being pretty consistent. He has budgeted extra money due to the work load being there. New employee does an excellent job and he is recommending more than asked. Barberry Homes and Islam Cemetery are two cases requiring additional work.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Zoning Board of Appeals Budget in the amount of \$27,790, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**Town Clerk/Elections and Registrations**

Town Clerk R. Fucile spoke to these budgets. He works 24 hours/week and this has been set up this way since 1995. Budget doesn't fluctuate other than the amount of elections.

held. Town Clerk is responsible for Town Meeting, and vital records of the town i.e. births, marriages and deaths. In 2014, preserved four town meeting books, anticipates doing four books this year for a total of eight and would like to do six other books. \$6500 will preserve three or four books. Historical Society has given him money towards this preservation and he is looking to them for additional money. This book preservation is needed due to the deterioration over the years, this needs to be done for the future. He is very satisfied with the company that has been doing this and will continue with them.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Town Clerk's Budget in the amount of \$152,266, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**Elections**

FY2016 there are two elections, one in March and another in June. This budget changes due to the number of elections being held. Election costs about \$20,000. State and Federal elections are less money due to providing the ballots. For a local election, Town has to supply the ballots. Election machines are owned by the Town and are beginning to show their age, and have had a lot of work done on them. Maintenance is done on them once a year. \$60,000 is the cost to replace the machines; they are needed in all precincts and one in the Town Clerk's Office. This one provides the back-up if there is a problem at one of the precincts.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Elections & Registrars Budget in the amount of \$94,292, Motion Passed (9-0-2) (C. Lane, J. Burke abstained) (11 voting)

**Conservation Commission**

Landis Hersey, Conservation Agent for the Town spoke to this budget. She has been the Conservation Agent for 12 years. Under salaries, \$64,425 had been requested, this was for an additional two hours, Town Administrator is recommending only one hour at a salary of \$62,125. This is needed due to work for Stormwater Management. Position is presently budgeted for 26 hours. There is also an additional two hours that is paid out of

the Wetlands Protection Act. One half of the filing fees go to the Town and one half to the State. Board of Selectmen have to authorize any use of money from the Wetlands Protection Act. \$750 is being requested for maintenance of conservation land, this will cover expenses and trees falling on conservation land. Commission would like to come up with a management plan in the future.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Conservation Commission Budget in the amount of \$105,736, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**Building Maintenance – D. Anderson/R. O’Brien**

R. O’Brien, DPW Director and D. Anderson, Superintendent of Building Maintenance spoke to this budget. Requested amount is \$2,093,966. This budget is one of the largest budgets in the town and deals with schools and town buildings. Money is spent from this account as they go along.

D. Anderson spoke to concerns with building up snow on the roofs, buildings are basically in great shape. A study was done three years ago and town receives a reduction from the insurance company. Shoveling has cost this year \$82,000 and this is contracted out and is covered under the Snow and Ice budget. Library was in good shape.

Questions on the use of the East Walpole facility - this is used for recreation and you have to go through Recreation to use it.

\$80,000 was requested for maintenance at the high school. Town Administrator reduced this down to \$66,000. This cost is high due to many contracts and inspections that are required that they have no control of. \$466,500 is the total requested for repairs and maintenance of all buildings.

Fire Station – Discussion ensued that a new fire station would not be built for a number of years, and capital expenses need to be spent now. Town has to maintain these buildings, needs should be addressed. Dollars need to be invested to make it better place for the employee. Town is looking to get an architect to come up with a plan of the present facility.

D. Bruce spoke to concerns with issues at Johnson Middle School and Old Post Road having many needs. Johnson needs a new roof (\$1,000,000) and replacement of windows. When the Town replaces windows they are replaced with thermo-pane, they look better and last longer. Committee questioned replacing the windows with one, bid, State won’t allow this.

Blackburn – Discussion on spending money on this building, building does get a lot of use. D. Anderson spoke to it not being rundown, department are presently painting it. Should the Town keep investing dollars in this building or use the space for better

purpose. Property is deed restricted for use for parks and recreation. If building is eliminated, the question is where would you put the programs that presently use it. \$160,000 has been requested under capital for repairs, chimneys and fire escape. Capital Budget is presently not recommending it.

Boyden School – ongoing issue with gas meter not working, two oil tanks have been removed and oil from town hall tank used at Boyden and Bird School.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Building Maintenance Budget in the amount of \$2,093,966, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

### **Snow and Ice Update**

DPW Director R. O'Brien spoke to putting in an application in for the money to be reimbursed for four storms. First storm cost was \$289,000, with the addition of three other large storms, he has applied for \$1,600,000. The maximum you can receive is 75%. Town usually receives about \$150,000. Norfolk County has been declared a disaster and takes a year to get the money back, it would come back in FY2016. Present deficit is \$408,000 and he has encumber \$180,000 to purchase salt for next year. He feels this is wise as price always goes up.

### **Board of Assessors/Articles 19, 20 and 21/Assessors Budget**

Dennis Fliss, Appraiser spoke to the Assessor's Articles and Budgets.

Budget is basically level funded. Expenses are less than last year. Requested amount is \$303,500, Town Administrator is recommending \$301,415 He is agreeable with the Town Administrator's recommendations/reductions.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Board of Assessor's Budget in the amount of \$301,415, (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

### **Article 19 – Real Estate Exemptions**

Town adopted this as annual article since 2001, provides for optional additional real estate exemptions for disabled veterans, blind, and surviving spouse and elderly to qualified people that meet statutory requirements. Allows for an increase of an additional 50% to the state exemption and is required to be approved on an annual basis. FY2014,

\$277,151 was abated of which \$89,389 was reimbursed by the State. Funding comes from the Overlay Account

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by D. Crowley for Favorable Action on Article 19, Motion Passed (9-0-2) (S. Lawson, C. Lane abstained) (11 voting)

**Article 20 –2017 Revaluation/Assessment Certification Program**

\$95,500 required for technical services of a consultant, appraisal firm and/or hiring temporary personnel, along with expenses to provide assistance to the Board of Assessors

in the implementation of the State Mandated Assessment Certification Program. 10,2000 accounts are scheduled for reassessment. Following breakdown is \$7,500 for personal Property Business Accounts, \$46,500 for Commercial and Industrial Valuation \ and \$41,500 for Residential and related Expenses (\$95,500 total) Approximately \$15,000 - \$20,000 is used for the Senior Work Off Program. They are seeking \$10,000 for temporary personnel due to a staff member using Family Medical Leave Act. Assessor's have no potential liability cases with the exception of Verizon.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on Article 20 in the amount of \$95,500 from the Overlay Account (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**Article 21 – Personal Property Exemption Threshold**

Adoption of Chapter 59, Section 5, Clause 54. Personal property exemptions are basically for businesses, i.e. taxes on equipment, inventory. This is required as a finding of the Town Auditors to raise the minimum fair cash value requirement of personal property threshold from \$5,000 to \$10,000 of assessed value for personal property accounts. 60 – to 70 business apply to the assessors every year, many accounts low value. There is no mechanism if a business leaves for collection. Town has 700 personal properties of which 250 accounts are under the \$5,000 thresholds. Adoption of this article helps eliminate the small accounts, not feasible to try to collect. Presently only generates \$14,500 in tax dollars.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on Article 21, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**Adjourn:**

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m., Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

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Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril  
Clerk