

## FINANCE COMMITTEE

### MINUTES

February 19, 2015

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Thursday, February 19, 2015 with the following members present: J. Denneen, M. Iwanowicz, J. Burke, D. Bruce, S. Lawson, M. Trudell, C. Lane, J. McDermott, P. Hinton, T. Williams. 7:20 A. Walsh. Members absent were: J. Lowre A. Ragosta, A. Healy, and D. Crowley Also in attendance was Town Administrator J. Johnson, @ 7:45 p.m. Finance Director M. Thompson, Town Accountant J. Cuneo, Fire Chief T. Bailey, R. O'Brien, DPW Director, M. Walker, Town Engineer, R. LeBlanc, Supt. of Highway and Parks, D. Hand, Asst. Supt. Highways and Parks and R. Chapell, Health Agent

7:10 – Quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by the Chairman D. Bruce

#### **May 4, 2015 Spring Annual Town Meeting/DPW Budgets**

**Engineering-** M. Walker, Town Engineer updated the Committee on her budget which is basically level funded from FY2015. Total request is in the amount of \$312,118. Staff consist of two full time and two part time personnel. Previously this department had a staff of four full time personnel . Uniforms in the amount of \$450. which provides for boots, shirts with Town's log, and safety vests for staff.

**Project Updates** – Dam inspections/\$10,000 budgeted for inspections. There are five different dams and department tries to do two inspections per year within a 5 year rotation. Costs between \$3,800 to \$5,000 for each dam inspection. Turner Dam – Purchase and sale details are being worked on with the Turner Trust on the land needed for this project, permitting work will be done through the winter and anticipated construction will be in late summer during the dry season.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Town Engineer's Budget in the amount of \$312,118, Motion Passed (9-0-1) (T. Williams abstained) (10 voting)

7:20 p.m. - Committee Member A. Walsh

**DPW Administration** – DPW Director R. O'Brien spoke to this budget. DPW Departments/Budget is the third largest budget of the Town. Staff consists of Director, Administrative Assistant and Sr. Staff Assistant who works at the DPW yard. Department handles the payroll, accounts payable, labor relations, customer service and GIS mapping. They also handle the bid process for Chapter 90 reimbursements and

apply to the State for any monies owed to Town. They anticipate receiving a portion of the 100 million in Chapter 90 bond authorizations for FY2015 that has been authorized by the legislature and signed by the Governor. This had previously been withheld by the previous administration.

Seasonal Labor consists of five college students during the summer that work in the Highway, Parks and Recreation Departments. All drug testing is done by this department.

**MOTION MADE** by J. McDermott, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the DPW Administration in the amount of \$275,025, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**Highway** – R. LeBlanc, Superintendent of Highway, Parks and Cemeteries and D. Hand, Assistant Superintendent of Highway, Parks and Cemeteries. Committee thanked Mr. LeBlanc and Mr. Hand for all the hard work by the DPW during the recent snow storms and getting the Town operational. Excellent job done by all the town personnel.

Highway Division Budget is \$833,219, of which Salaries are \$610,869 and expenses of \$222,350. Division oversees 127 miles of roads, 5,000 catch basins, 40 acres for athletic fields, 130 acres of green space, 6 cemeteries and other municipal facilities. Department did have two vacancies in personnel last year and any new hires come in at a lower figure.

**Cemeteries** –Division handles approximately 50 burials per year, and they sell approximately 20 lots. Cemetery plots can be repurchased in Walpole. Fee schedule for burials was updated a few years ago, Town is very reasonable in what they charge. Department consist of two employees. Department does do burials during the winter and does not use storage facilities.

Equipment Rentals is for specialized equipment, concrete cutting, road grader for use on gravel roads, parking lots throughout the Town.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Highway Division Budget in the amount of \$833,219, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**Parks** – Staff consists of 8 employees plus the addition of seasonal help to assist department. Department maintains all the green space, and athletic fields. They are presently in discussion regarding fees for fields with Recreation. Teams don't pay for utilities or water. Some teams maintain the fields themselves and some receive support for maintenance. Department maintains the grass and maintains lining. They are also looking into adopting a field program by support teams. Turco Field does require more maintenance, but hope to get another 5 to 7 years out of field. They have \$500,000 in an account towards the future replacement.

**Ponds** – Open space, some money has been put into the line item for ponds to support the Jarvis Farm. Administration is looking into reviewing the costs for salaries and benefits for a position at the Jarvis Farm. This falls under the Sewer and Water Commissioners. There is an increase in the utility line item due to water rates increase (14% over previous year)

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Parks Budget in the amount of \$590,925, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Cemeteries Budget in the amount of \$164,480, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**Solid Waste Budget** – R. Chapell, Health Director spoke to this budget.

FY2016 budget request of \$1,587,125 is down from \$1,666,820 this is a 5% decrease. Town is in the fourth year of a five year contract and contract language includes fuel adjustments. Recycling – Paper amount is going down due to increase use in electronics and plastic is going up. As economy get better, there is an increase in throw aways.

Committee requested that information be shared on the upcoming negotiations and what the different financial implications and options will be.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Solid Waste Budget in the amount of \$1,587,125, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

### **Vehicle Maintenance**

DPW Director R. O'Brien spoke to this budget in the absence of the Superintendent T. Perciaccante. Staff consists of four mechanics, they repair 151 vehicles and equipment. The budget has a line item of \$7,000 that is for outside services, that is all that is done outside. To send out the equipment it is very costly. Department does a good job and provides good value. Most of the repairs are done in house, rebuilding equipment, welding. Department did an outstanding job during the recent storms to keep the equipment up and running. Fire Department has their own mechanic, but DPW Department does maintain the ambulances. They do not do any work on the school fleet. School Department will be requested to provide for the numbers on maintenance of their vehicles. Town is unable to handle the school fleet due to lack of space at the garage and would require additional mechanics. This division saves the town a good deal of money and have been working around the clock during the recent snow storms.

Capital Budget Requests – Snow tracker is a priority at a cost of \$150,000. This is a crucial piece of equipment for the Town. This was a priority last year and changed with

the requests. Committee asked about the possibility of purchasing two new snow trackers and trading in one. R. O'Brien will look into this.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Vehicle Maintenance Budget in the amount of \$367,401, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**DPW Street lighting/Bob LeBlanc**

Budget request is \$444,750, Town Administrator is recommending \$420,400, FY2015 Budget is \$362,200. Committee questioned how many lights would be need to be turned off to level fund. It was explained that lighting includes intersections and roadways. throughout the Town. It includes all electrical services throughout the town, flashing lights at schools, downtown, Christmas lights, traffic lights, traffic control (police details). It is more costly to shut off lights than turn then on. Nstar is looking at 29% hike this year. Lights are owned by Nstar not the town. Committee questioned the use of solar lights at cross walks, this is an initial investment of \$14,000, and has a limited battery life. To do this would require approval from the Selectmen. J. Johnson is exploring solar power usage, anticipates that this would save approximately \$500,000.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Street Lighting Budget in the amount of \$420,400, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**Snow and Ice**

Budget request is in the amount of \$810,000. This amount is a guess and is based on weather conditions. Outside contractors are required to have insurance, workers comp. If they don't have it, they won't get paid. Snow plow rates are approved by Board of Selectmen. Budget as of this evening is \$92,345 over budget. FY2015 budget is \$771,400 and is for roof and snow removal. Town will be required to spend additional manhours this weekend due to expected rain. Salt costs have gone up. D. Hand, Assistant Superintendent, oversees this department, he calls in the contractors and oversees the routes. Most of the contractors are local and have the same routes each year. Town anticipates receiving three front end loaders from the National Guard for one day.

J. Johnson spoke to areas of concerns in the budgets, Schools, Fire and snow and ice are in deficit. Unemployment, health insurances, property and liability and solid waste budgets are looking good. He is looking at ways to fix these deficits. It was suggested that all budgets be frozen and doing only essential expenses. Need to cut back in expenses and not cut people. It was proposed to send out a memo to all departments. He is looking at state aid numbers. All departments have to hold the line including the School Department. Problem with special ed mandates increasing every year in the School Budget.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Snow and Ice Budget in the amount of \$810,000, Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

**Facilities Tour** - February 28, 2014

Any members unable to attend, please advise the clerk.

**Town Vehicles** – Committee requested an up to date pictures of the Town's vehicles. Also requested copies of the list of school vehicles, date purchased, mileage, year and the amount of money spent on repairs.

**School Budget** – Copies are available for the members. Committee will be meeting with the School Committee on Monday, February 23, 2015.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson to approve the February 5, 2015 minutes, Motion Passed (10-0-1) (P. Hinton abstained) (11 voting)

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m. (Motion Passed (11-0-0) (11 voting) Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril  
Clerk

