

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes

March 13, 2017

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Monday, March 13, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in Room #112, Town Hall with the following members present: J. Burke, J. Denneen, R. Nottebart, D. Bruce, R. Mariani, S. Lawson, K. Guyette, M. Trudell, J. Vaillancourt, A. Healy, T. Bowen, J. Stasiukevicius, J. Leith, P. Hinton. Member absent E. Barmakian. Also in attendance was Town Administrator J. Johnson, Finance Director M. Thompson, Town Accountant J. Cuneo and Fire Chief T. Bailey.

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

May 1, 2017 Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant

Article 4 – Town Clerk's Budget

Speaking to this budget was L. Gaffey, Assistant Town Clerk

Town Administrator updated the committee on the status for the search for a Town Clerk. They have 32 candidates of which only four passed the initial screening for the position. Search Committee will be meeting next week and narrow the candidates down to three to forward resumes to the Selectmen. They will keep the position open if there isn't a qualified candidate picked.

Budget – Committee had held the budget due to questions on the Books and Periodicals Line Item. \$6500 being requested for the preservation of Town records. They have prepared a bound book indexing information back to 1949. All indexes are done. Books include information on births, deaths, marriages, street listing, town reports, town meetings, ZBA and Planning Board decision. On a question from the Committee, if the Town was to spend \$7,000 a year for this project it would take 25 years to catch up. There are approximately 110 volumes to be done. They have been compiling the older information first. These records should be put into permanent records and required by law to be in paper form. To do it all at once, would cost approximately \$175,000. Committee suggested maybe doing it under the Capital Budget in the future.

MOTION MADE by M. Trudell, Seconded by R. Nottebart for Favorable Action on the Town Clerk's Budget in the amount of \$170,294, Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting)

Historical Commission

Budget request is \$1896. Town Administrator is recommending \$315. Commission is requesting \$1266 for salaries. Town Administrator is not requesting any monies for this line item, at this time. Committee in prior years received \$300 for salaries. Estimated work load is 5 hours per month (10-12 months). Commission consists of five full members and two non-voting members

MOTION MADE by J. Denneen, Seconded by P. Hinton for Favorable Action on the Historical Commission Budget in the amount of \$315, Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

Police Dispatchers Update–

Town Administrator spoke to March 30 the deadline to form a union. There is no progress to date. Included in the Police Budget will be a number for this line item. Held for additional information.

Animal Control

Hold Released

MOTION MADE by T. Bowen, Seconded K. Guyette for Favorable Action on the Animal Control Budget in the amount of \$65,837, Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

Solid Waste & Recycling - Robin Chappell

Committee was updated on what has been done since the Selectmen voted the new trash contract with Russell. They have formed a Recycling Committee, which has met twice and they are still open for people to join. Four high school students have joined and thinks this is a good thing. They have come up with short term and long term goals Committee is concentrating on paper recycling and the promotion of apps and trying to educate people on the costs. Trash is up 7.8% from last year's budget, tonnage is going up due to increase in population costs of tipping fees.

If Selectmen had voted single stream trash collection, would have saved approximately \$100,000/year and Town would be eligible for a Grant (\$73,500) that would have paid for part of the cost of the new barrels. There would be a cost of \$10/household to offset the cost of recycling. R. Chappel will look into the status of the Grant. Presently can put out as many recycling bins as needed. Contract signed by the Selectmen is for five years and includes the purchase of two trucks for trash and one for recycling. Russel is presently in the fifth year of the contract and contract has been signed for another five years.

Discussion – FinCom suggested that the information should be brought to other committees prior to the next contract being signed. . The present contract is costing one half million more and we are spending money that isn't necessary. Selectmen's vote was

3-1 to leave as status quo and Committee wanted to know the reason Selectmen voted this way. We are spending money that is not necessary. This will come up at Town Meeting floor for discussion. It was felt that there was limited public notice of the Selectmen's Meeting.

MOTION MADE by J. Vaillancourt, Seconded by S. Lawson to review the contract and see if there are any options to opt out of the contract. Motion not voted. (**Motion and Second withdrawn**)

Committee will be meeting with Selectmen on March 20 on Revenue issues and would like to also discuss the trash contract with them at that time.

School Budget – Budget adjustments will be needed due to increase in sped costs and reduction in health insurance costs.

Assessment & Fringe Benefit Budgets – V. Donohue, Human Resource Administrator

Unemployment Compensation

MOTION MADE by Mark, Seconded by J. Denneen for Favorable Action on Unemployment Compensation Budget in the amount of \$150,000, Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

Employee Fringe Benefits

7% increase anticipated, rates haven't been set yet. Health Insurance goes up from year to year. Every change in the insurance has to be renegotiated with unions. Town Administrator spoke to revisiting the retiree portion of the budget New employees pay 40%. Budget Held till April 3, when the rates are set.

Casualty Insurance – Increase over last year due to significant amount of claims.

MOTION MADE by M. Trudell, Seconded by R. Nottebart for Favorable Action on Casualty Insurance Budget in the amount of \$1,066,260, Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

Employee Retirement Assessment County Assessment is a firm number, \$4,550,497, annual OPEB contribution of \$300,000. cost savings if we pay the bill up front. Budget held due to Committee members wishing to review the OPEB contribution further with the Town Administrator.

Article 25 - Cable Related Funds

Speaking to this article J. Dattilio, President of Walpole Media, Board Member P. Betro and J. Fountain, Executive Director. Walpole Media is a Massachusetts non-profit corporation.

Amount being requested is \$646,003 (\$399,803 for their budget and \$246,200 for capital). Budget is pretty much the same as it has been but there is an increase in workload.

They are trying to be competitive in trying to find highly trained people. They plan on offering free software classes and need to hire professional instructors to teach the classes. These will be held at the high school and have done a partnership with Walpole Recreation and Council on Aging. They plan to do more in the future. Studio is housed in the high school and pay a yearly rent of \$24,000 as per contract as they take up square footage in the building. Legal fees in the amount of \$2,000 is required as they are not a town department and need their own counsel. Under Capital portion of the budget, there is money being set aside for the COA multi-purpose room and Auditorium Audio Board. This is to pay for things that need to be done with construction of a new senior center and the need for two dedicated strands of cable. \$9,000 for production equipment is an annual expense due to equipment wearing out and keeping up to date with new technology. Board is looking into the 50/50 split for health insurance for the Executive Director and changing it.

Revenue – They receive \$650,000 in four payments from Verizon and four from Comcast, amount does fluctuate quarterly (approximately \$150,000) Town presently has a balance of approximately \$800,000, another \$400,000 due in. Purpose of the funds is to use them. There is an accountability. This is not a Town departments, funds are received by the Town and set aside. Town holds the money and the monies cannot be comingled with town funds, per MGL

MOTION MADE by S. Lawson, Seconded by P. Hinton for Favorable Action on Article 25, in the amount of \$646,003, Motion Passed, (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

Open Meeting Law –

Committee discussed possible violations of the Open Meeting Law. Only way to find out if there is a violation is to file a complaint and have an investigation. If more than eight members participate in an e-mail it is a violation. Some members spoke to being offensive if there are deliberations taking place outside of a meeting, minds are made up prior to the rest of the committee being included. Discussions need to be approached with an open mind and members need to hear the whole deliberations.

Adjourn:

MOTION MADE by J. Denneen, Seconded by M. Trudell to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m., Motion Passed, (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril
Clerk