

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes

September 12, 2016

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Monday, September 12, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in the Finance Committee Room, Town Hall, with the following members present: D. Bruce, J. Denneen, J. Burke, S. Lawson, R. Nottebart, P. Hinton, J. Leith, E. Barmakian, J. Vaillancourt, M. Trudell, K. Guyette, A. Healy, T. Bowen, and P. Stasiukevicius. Members absent were: R. Mariani, 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.

Article 8 – Memorial Pond Dredging

S. Ober from the Capital Budget Committee present for the discussion, along with members of the Pond Committee and abutters. \$80,000 being requested for the design and permitting for the dredging of Memorial Pond. Town has worked with a consultant to develop a scope of work. Capital Budget Committee voted 5-0-0 for this article. Permit is good for 5 years. Total cost of the dredging project would be \$500,000 to \$1,500,000, most likely \$800,000. Project would be bid out. This is a first step to obtain plan funds for design and necessary permits. Permitting can take up to a year. Second step is to test soils that are in the pond. Materials have to be stockpiled and retested. Sediment testing is included in the proposal. After that to obtain funding, possibly next Fall. Town could identify sites that might consider using the soil and could possibly be sold but it is a challenge to find buyers. Soil has some value. Oversight of project would be by the Ponds Committee, Town Administration and Selectmen. Funding for the project will be requested at a future Town Meeting from Free Cash, Borrowing, and applying for Grants. Town has been investing in the ponds the last 10 years and Ponds Committee has an ongoing maintenance plan and they do chemical treatments and monitoring to attempt to keep problems at bay. A lot of the problems are caused by storm drainage. Memorial Pond is an asset to the Town, but ultimately the decision is up to the Citizens. Now is the time for action.

Neighbors spoke to this pond being an awful eyesore and needs to be addressed. It is the center of the community.

Committee members spoke to exploring all options on paying for this i.e. Grant opportunities, next year's Free Cash, approaching the Army Corp of Engineers.

L. Hershey, Conservation Agent spoke to a number of things in place now that protect the ponds in the future.

MOTION MADE by T. Bowen, Seconded by J. Denneen to approve Article 8 in the amount of \$80,000 from Free Cash, Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

Articles 15, 16 and 17 – Water and Sewer Articles

Present to discuss these articles J. Spillane, Chairman of the Sewer and Water Commissioners and R. Mattson, Water and Sewer Superintendent. Article 15 – is a By-law change and Articles 16 and 17 are money articles

Article 15 – Increase in Water Fines –Commissioners are seeking to increase the amount of fines for violations of the Water Use Restrictions. On questions from the Committee, the vast majority of violators are issued warnings. Some residents have been known to try to pay the fines up front. Commissioners feel that the fines are a necessary deterrent for violators. They have issued 150 warnings of which only 8 actual fines have been issued. They try to target the problem areas. Mr. Mattson spoke to the tank levels being adequate at this time, but ground water is low.

Committee discussed in depth, that the issuing of fines should be used all the time, present system of issuing warnings is not working, it is not effective. Violators are putting the entire community in jeopardy, it is also a public health issue. This is a very serious situation. Resources have to be conserved. The policy of shutting off water should be looked at. Commissioners need to be more aggressive and using the Town's metering system should be utilized.

Sewer and Water Commissioners are meeting on September 13,2016 and comments from the Finance Committee will be brought to them.

Article 16 – Network Metering System,

\$50,000 being requested from (Borrowing) Water Retained Earnings to upgrade the current fixed network radio read water metering system equipment, installed in 2002. Upgrade will be for the existing meter transmitter units, allowing for more advanced technologies such as two way communication with meters, included will be a back up method of communication through a cellular link. System will allow for monitoring water usage on a daily basis This system upgrade is more advanced than present system.

MOTION MADE by J. Denneen, Seconded by P. Stasiukevicius, for Favorable Action on Article 16 in the amount of \$50,000 from Water Retained Earnings, Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting)

Article 17 – Spectra Northeast Pipeline Costs

\$50,000 being requested from Water Retained Earnings to cover funding any legal or consulting costs that may incur due to the gas line expansion.

MOTION MADE by P. Hinton, Seconded by T. Bowen for Favorable Action on Article 17 in the amount of \$50,000 from Water Retained Earnings, Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting)

Article 14 – Cable –J. D’Attilio, N. O’Neil, Board Members and J. Fountain, Director of Walpole Media Corporation.

Town Administrator spoke to on May 2, 2016 authority was granted to allow the Town to establish an account known as the “PEG Access and Cable Related Fund’ allowing the Town to take in cable funds and Town Meeting be allowed to appropriate funds for cable related purposes. Current balance in the Cable Access Account is approximately \$950,000. Town receives quarterly payments from Verizon and Comcast that is deposited in this account. Last quarterly payment Town received from Verizon was \$76,531 and Comcast was \$71,246.

Walpole Media Corp is a non-profit corporation and is not a Town department. Funds are restricted and they require the Town to appropriate the monies at Town Meeting in order to use the funds. They pay 20% for the TV teacher’s salary and position is needed to rebuild the training of high school students. They also spent \$10,961 for capital improvements at the high school, which is the education portion of the budget.

They spoke to having a long list of things to do in the future. They have 3 full time employees, 6 part time. They have increased coverage of the high school sports. They have to provide training for the employees. There is nothing in the By-laws to create any other revenue streams. They are not allowed to have commercials. .

MOTION MADE by T. Bowen, Seconded by S. Lawson that \$284,930 be appropriated from the PEG Access and Cable Related Fund authorized by General Laws Chapter 44, Section 53F3/4 for the Walpole Media Corporation in order to allow the Walpole Media Corporation to operate the Walpole Access and PEG Channels, Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

Article 9 – Paving of Town Roads (Chapter 90)

DPW Director R. O’Brien and Town Engineer M. Walker present for this discussion. Requesting the amount of \$778,897 from Chapter 90 funds. Article authorizes the borrowing and then they apply for the reimbursement. Funding is usually requested in the Spring but presenting it in the Fall allows Engineering Department to know which roads that have been approved by Town Meeting prior to bidding the work out in the later Winter/early Spring 2017. Also being requested is a chip/micro seal aspect as part of the bid specification for the bid specifications. Capital Budget voted 5-0-0 in support of the bidding process starting in the Winter. Chip seal is a consideration.

MOTION MADE by T. Bowen, Seconded by J. Denneen for Favorable Action on Article 9 in the amount of \$778,897 from Chapter 90 Funds, Motion Approved (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

Minutes

MOTION MADE by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the September 8, 2016 meeting, Motion Passed (12-0-2) (P. Hinton, P. Stasiukevicius abstained) (14 voting)

Updated Meeting Schedule

September 15, 2016 – No meeting scheduled. Planning Board to hold hearings on their articles in the Fall Town Meeting.

September 19, 2016 – Regular Finance Committee Meeting

September 29, 2016 – Joint meeting with schools on the status of school buildings.

October 4, 2016 – Public Meeting at the Library on Articles 3, 4 and 5

October 6, 2016 – Regular Finance Committee Meeting (Balance of articles to be voted)

October 13, 2016 – Finance Committee Meeting/Public Hearing

October 17, 2016 – Finance Committee meetings prior to Town Meeting (if necessary)

MOTION MADE by J. Denneen, Seconded by M. Trudell to adjourn at 9:15 p.m.
Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril
Clerk