

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES**

**September 14, 2017**

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Thursday, September 14, 2017 in Room #112, Town Hall, with the following members present: J. Vaillancourt, J. Burke, P. Stasiukevicius, E. Barmakian, T. Bowen, A. Flowers, A. Hamilton, L. Huempfer, S. Lawson, J. Leith, R. Mariani, R. Nottebart and M. Trudell and M. Clow Member absent P. Hinton. Also in attendance was Town Administrator J. Johnson and members of the general public and various Town Committees.

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

Due to the number of people in the audience and Room #112 being over capacity and in violation of the fire laws, the meeting was relocated to the Community Room at the Library.

7:30 p.m. – The relocated meeting was called to order by the Chairman J. Vaillancourt.

### **October 16, 2017 Fall Annual Town Meeting**

#### **Article 27- FY2018 Tax Rate Reduction**

Petitioner A. Ragosta and J. Hempton spoke to this article and passed out backup-information that had been prepared. Article is requesting \$1,000,000 from Free Cash to reduce the tax rate for FY2018. A. Ragosta spoke to Walpole has returned monies in the past and other towns do this. Tax money is the people's money. This provides an opportunity to really save the taxpayer money and feels excess tax belongs back to the people. Municipality budgeting depends on taxpayers. She did a comparison of towns with similar population. Not all towns are similar in per capita income. This is everyone's money, and returning money back to the taxpayer benefits everyone that pays taxes.

She spoke to looking at the needs of the Town, budgetary policy needs to be in place. Tax money is the people's money. This is an opportunity to really save the taxpayer money and understands that excess taxes belongs back to them.

Town Counsel has reviewed and approved the wording of the article.

Committee discussed that there are residents that can't pay the increase tax bills. There are programs available but residents don't always avail themselves of the various

programs. There are serious needs that we don't have money for. Needs don't go away, just increase.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Vaillancourt, Seconded by R. Mariani to move the Question, Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

**MOTION MADE** by J. Vaillancourt, Seconded by R. Mariani, for Favorable Action on Article 27 in the amount of \$1,000,000 to be transferred from Free Cash, Motion Approved (8-5-1) (S. Lawson, J. Burke, L. Huempfner, A. Flowers and A. Hamilton opposed ) (M. Trudell abstained) (14 voting)

### **Capital Budget Articles 3, 4., 5. 11 and 12**

Speaking to these articles was E. Forsberg, Chairman of Capital Budget and T. Gregory, Assistant Town Administrator.

### **Free Cash/Chapter 90 Discussion**

Discussion ensued on the use of Free Cash. Restrictions on the use of Chapter 90 Funds are put on by the State. Once the Town receives the certification on Free Cash, Administration puts forward a list of project. Town Administrator spoke to the Town has been appropriating money to parking lots and doing some sidewalks. Town can only use Chapter 90 Funds for streets. Money is appropriated in the Fall and put out to bid in anticipation that the work will be ready to be done in the Spring.

**Article 11 – Street and Drainage Improvements** \$1,035,967 being requested. Capital Budget voted 7-0-0 in favor of this article. Funding is in the amount of \$260,000 from Free Cash and \$775,967 Chapter 90 Funds.

**MOTION MADE** by T. Bowen, Seconded by P. Stasiukevicius for Favorable Action on Article 11 in the amount of \$1,035,967 to be funded by \$775,967 from Chapter 90 Funds and \$260,000 from Free Cash, Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

### **Article 12 – Street Improvements**

\$200,000 being requested and monies to be borrowed. This request is for Common Street from Washington Street to the Sharon Town Line. This \$200,000 will be used only for Common Street.

**MOTION MADE** by T. Bowen, Seconded by M. Trudell for Favorable Action on Article 12 in the amount of \$200,000 from Borrowing for street improvements, Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

### **Article 4 – Fire Department Ladder Truck**

\$1,250,000 from Free Cash being requested for this purchase. Chief Bailey explained that the current truck was purchased in 1989 for \$314,110 and it has exceeded its life expectancy as a front line piece of firefighting equipment. Repairs on this ladder truck have been \$211,070 since 2008. This new ladder truck will allow for more versatile technical rescue, increased pumping capacity and higher tip load capacity (1,300 lbs.) There is a need to have this truck due to the amount of construction (four and five stories) that is being proposed in the downtown area and throughout the Town. It will take at least one year to develop specifications and build the new truck.

Chief was questioned on the value of the old ladder truck and he spoke to it having a trade in value of \$5,000 to \$10,000. To keep it will help the Town with their ISO rating and will provide better utilization of the various fire apparatuses.

Total cost of this vehicle is \$1,500,000. \$250,000 has been paid by Siemen's under the negotiated TIF agreement towards this purchase and is being kept in a Special Revenue Account. It will be purchased through the Mass Firefighter's Association.

Committee had questions on the funding mechanism for this purchase and why it was being purchased in one lump sum instead of borrowing as this is a long term asset or funding from the ambulance funds.

Town Administrator spoke to the interest costs of \$325,312 spread out over the next 12 years. He anticipates that there will be school projects coming and like to see these projects done by borrowing. He feels that money is available. It is more of a policy question. Use of ambulance funds has traditionally been used for the purchase of an ambulance. Town Counsel feels that the money could be used from the Ambulance Fund but he is recommending the funding come from Free Cash.

Chairman spoke to the Ambulance Fund being around \$900,000. Town purchases a new ambulance every three years. Fund generates approximately \$1,000,000 in surplus each year. He would like to see a portion of the Ambulance Fund used for this article.

**MOTION MADE** by T. Bowen, Seconded by M. Trudell for Favorable Action on Article 4 in the amount of \$1,250,000 to be funded from Free Cash, Motion Passed (11-3-0) (J. Leith, J. Vaillancourt and R. Mariani opposed) (14 voting)

Committee members had questions on purchasing by borrowing. It could be done in a substitute motion.

### **Article 5 – Memorial Pond Dredging**

\$1,000,000 being requested for the dredging of Memorial Pond This pond was dedicated in 1924 as a Veterans Memorial. In 2012 Town set aside \$20,000 to conduct a feasibility and engineering study to develop a conceptual plan for the dredging of this project. Study to include sediment volumes, alternative methods, costs estimates, phasing

schedule and soil test. \$80,000 was set aside in Fall of 2016 for the design and permitting for this dredging. Capital Budget voted 7-0-0 for this article.

It was explained that the work will be done in the winter and will take four to six weeks. Town will look to move the silt up to the location of the proposed new athletic fields on Route 1A across from Cedar Junction. Committee had questions on whether this needed to remain a pond, Conservation Agent L. Hersey spoke to under the Walpole Wetlands Protection Act it cannot be done. There is also a flood plain issue. Project will have a life expectancy of 30 years. Only a portion of the pond is being dredged. Town had done inadequate maintenance on ponds over the years.

J. Leith spoke to being in favor of this project but would like to see the money borrowed over five to six years. This would allow for money to be put in OPEB. Town Administrator spoke to costing about \$276,000 over 12 years in interest and feels the money is available now.

**MOTION MADE** by S. Lawson, Seconded by M. Trudell for Favorable Action on Article 5 in the amount of \$1,000,000 to be funded from Free Cash, Motion Defeated (6-7-1) Voting in favor were S. Lawson, M. Trudell, L. Huempfner, A. Hamilton, A. Flowers and J. Burke) (P. Stasiukevicius abstained) (14 voting)

**MOTION MADE** by J. Leith, Seconded by M. Trudell for Reconsideration, Motion Passed (8-6-0) Voting in favor were M. Clow, R. Nottebart, L. Huempfner, A. Hamilton, A. Flowers, J. Leith, M. Trudell, and R. Mariani) (14 voting)

**MOTION MADE** by J. Leith to fund Article 5 by Borrowing, Seconded by A. Flower, Motion Defeated (1-13-0) (J. Leith in favor) (14 voting)

J. Leith spoke to feeling that article was consistent with projects of this magnitude and should be borrowed.

### **Article 3 - Fields**

\$500,000 being requested to fund the design of new playing fields on the property along the Norfolk Border on Route 1A. Capital Budget voted 5-2-0 in favor of this article

Discussion ensued with members of the Committee and audience on this article. It is felt that there are an insufficient amount of fields for all the various sports. Jarvis Farm has restrictions and cannot be used for all the different sports. Members would like to see an analysis on the use of fields. There is the question of whether fields are adequately maintained. Some fields are full size and can only be used for certain sports. Most of the fields are used 7 days a week for practices and games. Some of the fields are privately owned.

Town Administrator spoke to the Selectmen meeting with the various sport organizations and obtained the services of Weston & Sampson to provide a site analysis, conceptual

plans a projected budget. An outside company would be required to design the fields. Project would have to be bid out.

This request had not previously been before the Capital Budget or on the Master Plan. There is the need for more time to discuss this huge financial commitment. Additional input is needed as this affect a lot of people.

Park's Department maintains approximately 20 town owned fields and baseball/softball diamonds. And many fields have limited usage due to existing infrastructure or conservation/wetland restrictions. There are a number of fields maintained by private leagues or other entities.

Town Administrator spoke to this project being discussed for years. Was in the 2008 fields expansion plan. The request is for design monies only. Meeting has provided to the money to get to this point, this is a multi year project. Detail build-out of about 18 acres for this parcel and there is room for expansion at the site for a later time. Town Administrator would like to see a committee set up to oversee the project, similarly to Permanent Building Committee. It will take at least a year to design. There is a need to know the future costs.

Capital Budget was asked about the two dissenting votes. They were not against the project but wanted more information on build out, personnel needed, maintenance costs, etc. This project will double the size of fields and will need additional staff.

Some of the money from participants goes towards field maintenance. A breakdown of costs of synthetic fields will be provided. They are less costly to maintain, Town has a problem with providing watering for fields.

**MOTION MADE** by M. Trudell, Seconded by J. Burke for Favorable Action on Article 3 in the amount of \$500,000 from Free Cash, Motion Passed (13-0-1) (J. Vaillancourt abstained) (14 voting)

**Adjourn:**

**MOTION MADE** by P. Stasiukevicius, Seconded by A. Flowers to adjourn at 10:40 p.m., Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

Respectfully Submitted,

Clare P. Abril  
Clerk