

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes

February 14, 2013

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Thursday, February 14, 2013 at 7:30 p.m. in the Finance Committee Room, Room #112, Town Hall with the following members present: L. Pitman, J. Denneen, S. Ahmed, M. Kent, J. Burke, D. Bruce, D. DiCenso, S. Lawson, M. Iwanowicz, J. McDermott, P. Hinton, and D. Crowley Also in attendance was J. Cuneo, Assistant Town Accountant, Fire Chief T. Bailey, Finance Director M. Good and at 8:30 p.m. Town Administrators M. Boynton

7:30 p.m. – Quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by the Chairman, L. Pitman.

May 6, 2013 Spring Annual Town Meeting

Board of Assessors: E. O’Neil, J. O’Connor and D. Flis, Appraiser

Assessor’s Budget – They are in agreement with Town Administrator’s recommendation. Expenses have increased \$100 over last year. Under salaries, position that had previously been shared one half time with the Collector’s Office has been restored to a full time position. Department has always had three secretarial positions. There is the need for this work load as it requires more reports to the State, and is done efficiently and timely. Due to the union contract, if a position assume other responsibilities, receive a higher rate. Staff is limited to taking two weeks vacation at a time and they work this out amongst themselves. In State travel, is for reimbursement for the personal use of vehicles in the performance of their duties. Department does have an assigned vehicle. There has been a decrease in abatement applications from 80 to 40 for FY13. New growth number fluctuates based on permit applications.

MOTION MADE by J. Denneen, Seconded by D. Crowley to approve the Assessor’s Budget in the amount of \$287,676, Motion Passed (Unanimous) (12-0-0) (12 voting)

Article 20 – Real Estate Exemptions

This article deals with optional additional real estate exemptions for disabled veterans, blind, surviving spouse and elderly Town Meeting has adopted this since FY2001 and it requires annual approval by Town Meeting. Exemption is currently at 50% and they propose to maintain this level for FY2014. Programs eligible are in Section 5 of Chapter 59 of MGL. Last year 300 exemptions were granted and there are less and less receiving these benefits each year. This is an additional cost to the Town of \$77,388 and Town is reimbursed \$60,000 from the State. Total exemptions amount to \$286,000.

MOTION MADE by D. Bruce, Seconded by J. Burke to approve Article 20, Motion Passed (11-0-1) (S. Lawson abstained) (12 voting)

Town Clerk/Board of Registrars

Speaking to this budget was Town Clerk R. Fucile. He explained that his department is broken down into two budgets, Town Clerk and Registrars and Election. Anything that doesn't pertain to an election is handled in the Town Clerk's budget.

Mr. Fucile explained that this year there will be additional elections, due to vacant position of Senator Kerry. He anticipates that he will have to come back for a Reserve Fund Transfer to pay for these elections in the FY2013 budget. Depending upon who is successful in filling this position, there is the possibility of having two more elections in FY2014 Budget.

They are required to do the census in a mail out as it is required to do the street listing, a requirement of Town Charter and MGL. Town has over 16,000 registered voters and over 24,000 residents. In the presidential election last November, Town set a record for the number of people voting and registered and the number of absentee voters. There are now more unenrolled voters than there are democrats and republicans together.

There are no requests for the Capital Budget.

MOTION MADE by S. Lawson, Seconded by J. Burke to approve the Town Clerk Budget in the amount of \$139,283, Motion Passed (Unanimous) (12-0-0) (12 voting)

Elections

Discussion on Special Elections – Department request is for \$80,207, Town Administrator has increased this budget to \$94,857 in anticipation of having additional elections. Committee discussed this and felt that it was more prudent to wait and see if these funds are needed.

MOTION MADE by D. Bruce Seconded by D. Crowley for Favorable Action on the Elections & Registrars Budget in the amount of \$80,207, Motion Passed (11-0-1) (J. Burke abstained) (12 voting)

Town Accountant

Town Administrator explained that the difference in the Salary portion of the budget was due to the previous Town Accountant A. Mehta resigning and the hiring of J. Cuneo as the new Town Accountant at a lower step. Minimal increases in the expense portion of the budget.

MOTION MADE by D. Bruce, Seconded by D. Crowley for Favorable Action on the Town Accountant's Budget in the amount of \$183,697, Motion Passed (12-0-0) (12 voting) Unanimous

Treasurer/Collector

Budget is basically level funded. Department had previously shared a ½ time shared position with the Assessors but this has been restored to a full time position.

MOTION MADE by D. Bruce, Seconded by D. Crowley for Favorable Action on the Treasurer/Collector's Budget in the amount of \$464,905, Motion Passed (12-0-0) (12 voting) Unanimous

School Department

Present for this discussion on unemployment costs was Superintendent of Schools L. Lynch and Business Manager M. Friscia.

FinCom had questions had a previous meeting on the increase in unemployment costs due to cafeteria workers being laid off and this coming out of the Town budget rather than school funds.

Superintendent Lynch explained that unemployment costs is a major financial cost, eliminated positions with the change in the school lunch program. They have reorganized the department and negotiated a new contract, and have taking steps to correct a major financial program. Previously when a person resigned, not entitled to unemployment. Unemployment takes a different view for municipalities/schools and they are now required to pay unemployment. They appealed the decision and lost. Town originally had won, but then lost under a judge. Federal Government has increased the number of weeks eligible from 36 to 99 weeks. People originally had to visit the unemployment office, now they just have to do it over the phone, making it much easier to collect. Most of the employees started at the end of last year to collect benefits.

There has been a reduction in the number of people on health insurance. If the split of 66/33 is to change, he will bring it to the School Committee.

Mr. Friscia spoke to the school lunch program needed assistance, labor consisted of 60%, should be 45%. They reached out to the union and asked for concessions and had to develop their own plan. They decided on a centralized plan that would eliminate positions in schools. Plan has been successful to this point and hopes not to have a negative balance by the end of the year. They feel they offer better food and a better produce. Cafeteria workers contract settled for three years at 1%, 1 ½% and 1 ½%

FinCom members discussed that hands are tied by state requirements, voices need to be heard individually. Chairman will draft a letter to elected representatives to convey our concerns for the committee's review and make changes. Suburban Coalition could be included.

It was also suggested that the FinCom meet with the Schools for an open dialogue and not wait for the evening that they present their budget.

Town Administrator

Winter Storm Nemo – 2/8 – 2/12/13 Projected Costs

Snow and Ice balance as of February 7, 2013 was \$462,628, estimated cost for this storm was \$309,325 and a projected remaining balance of \$153,303. Cost of storm depends on when it hits and amount of storm. Costs incurred in Fire Department Budget due to staffing all three stations.

Minutes

MOTION MADE by P. Hinton, Seconded by J. Burke to approve the minutes of February 7, 2013, Motion Passed (9-0-3) (J. Denneen, S. Ahmed and J. Lowre) (12 voting)

MOTION MADE by J. McDermott, Seconded by J. Burke to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m., Motion Passed (12-0-0) (12 voting) Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril
Clerk