

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

January 22, 2014

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Meeting Date: January 22, 2014

Called to Order: 6:00 PM

Location: 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA

Finance Committee Members Present: John Hanold, Michael Naughton, Sharon Kennaugh, Greg Garrison and Lisa Adams. Lynn Reynolds was absent.

Selectmen Present: Mark Fairbrother (left at 6:47 PM), Michael Nelson (arrived at 6:05 PM) and Christopher Boutwell.

Others Present: Town Administrator Frank Abbondanzio and Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen

Minutes

Selectmen Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 8, 2014.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 15, 2014.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Mr. Nelson arrived at 6:05 PM.

Schedules I and II

Mr. Hanold asked if anyone had any opinions on changing the stipends for the Boards of Selectmen, Assessors, and Health. Mr. Boutwell would like to level fund the stipends.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend level funding stipends for paid boards.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

There was no interest in increasing any other stipends.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend level funding stipends for the Moderator, Clerk to Board of Registrars, Tree Warden, Board of Registrars, Emergency Management Director and, Burial Agent and Animal Inspector.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend level funding stipends for the Barn Inspector, Computer Administrator, Forest Warden, Alternate Building Inspector, Gas Inspector, Plumbing Inspector, Electrical Inspector and the hourly ranges for Extra Clerical, Election Workers, Summer Highway, Snow Plow Drivers, Part Time Police Officers, Part Time Dispatchers and Parks and Recreation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Since two union contracts for Fiscal Year 2014 have not yet been settled, it was decided to wait on recommending any Cost of Living Allowance for the Treasurer/Tax Collector, Town Clerk, and the Other Non-Union Employees in Schedule II.

Preliminary Use of Reserves

Discuss and make preliminary recommendation for amount of reserves to be used for the Fiscal Year 2015 budget.

Of the current special articles, the ones that could reasonably come from reserves are the DPW Discretionary request for \$100,000, and the \$100,000 requested for Town Share of the Skateboard Park.

Mr. Garrison said that the Capital Improvements Committee has received a request from the Gill-Montague Regional School District for approximately \$38,000 for replacement and improvements to doors at the Hillcrest and Sheffield Schools and the administration building. Ms. Olsen suggested that part of the cost be funded from the existing, unused Article #24 of the May 5, 2012 which was appropriated for ADA projects.

Finance Committee Moved:

To fund the DPW Discretionary article, the town share of the Skateboard Park article, and the balance of the Gill-Montague Regional School District request (not funded from other sources) from Town Stabilization.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Mr. Fairbrother left the meeting at 6:47 PM

Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements-**Town Administrator's Budget**

Mr. Hanold asked how the Town Administrator's budget would be coordinated with the Finance Committee's budget. Mr. Abbondanzio sees his document coming out prior to the finalization of the Finance Committee Report, probably in March. It will not be presented to town meeting or sent to town meeting members, but will be put on the website. Mr. Abbondanzio sees no changes in the current process of the Finance Committee's recommendations and report going to town meeting. The purpose of the Town Administrator's budget is to create a document to give to bonding agencies that would meet more of their needs and hopefully improve the town's bond rating. A comparison would be to the Governor's budget at the state level.

Chapter 70

Mr. Hanold and Mr. Naughton went to a presentation by Jeff Singleton on Chapter 70 last night at the Turners Falls High School. Mr. Singleton described Ch 70 aid as taking a target budget of what should be spent, subtracting what the town can afford to contribute, and the balance is supposed to be funded with Chapter 70 aid. It doesn't work because the state doesn't have enough money and the formula itself does not work well, leaving 75% of schools with level funding and the remaining 25% with exorbitant increases.

The target budget is calculated from a matrix of per-head factors for grade levels and cost types from the 1990's which have not been updated. An annual inflation rate is applied to generate the Target (Foundation Budget). The town contribution is calculated from a mixture of property values and income levels. Adjustments to the resulting Target/Contribution figures results in no cuts to a district's aid, from year to year, but often many districts (including Gill-Montague) get increases of only \$25 per student in order to hold the districts "harmless." A commission was created to revise the Target calculation factors but little progress has been made.

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Meeting Adjourned at 7:25 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits

- Minutes January 15, 2014
- Draft Schedules I and II

Next Meetings:

January 29, 2014	Assessors/IT budgets, Mr. Abbondanzio update on MMA meeting.
February 5, 2014	Police/Dispatch budgets, GMRSD briefing
February 12, 2014	WPCF, DPW budgets
February 19, 2014	Libraries, FCTS
February 26, 2014	reserved for snow days
March 5, 2014	GMRSD
March 12, 2014	Capital Improvements Committee, decide final use of reserves, final Schedules I & II
March 19, 2014	Vote STM and ATM recommendations
March 26, 2014	Vote operating budget and funding sources for Town, WPCF, Colle, Airport and school districts