

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

March 26, 2014

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Meeting Date: March 26, 2014

Called to Order: 6:00 PM

Location: 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA

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

Selectmen Present: Mark Fairbrother, Michael Nelson and Christopher Boutwell

Others Present: Town Administrator Frank Abbondanzio, Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen, DPW Superintendent Tom Bergeron, WPCF Superintendent Bob Trombley, Director of Libraries Linda Hickman, Director of Assessing Barbara Miller, Director of Parks & Recreation Jon Dobosz, Airport Commissioner Peter Golrick and Jeanne Golrick

Minutes

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of March 19, 2014.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To approve the minutes of March 19, 2014.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Reserve Fund Transfer

The DPW is requesting an additional \$12,000 for the Public Buildings Utilities budget. Most electricity line items are running over budget, and the heating oil account will have a shortfall after payment of the next bill.

Ms. Golrick asked if the town uses waste oil. For a variety of reasons, the town does not use waste oil.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend the Reserve Fund Transfer request of 12,000 for the Public Buildings Utilities budget.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To transfer \$12,000 from the Reserve Fund Transfer to the Public Buildings Utilities budget (001-5-190-5213-422).

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Affordable Assessment

After last week's revenue estimate adjustments, the Affordable Assessment for the Gill-Montague Regional School District is \$8,293,458.

Reconsider Funding For School Security Upgrades

Funding the \$38,000 for School Security Upgrades from Town Stabilization rather than Taxation would reduce the current Fiscal Year 2015 budget shortfall from \$50,184 to \$12,184. Mr. Abbondanzio had recommended funding this from Stabilization, and last week Mr. Naughton spoke in favor of funding this article from Stabilization.

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Mr. Abbondanzio suggested that if this article is funded from Town Stabilization, that the Soil Stabilization Project be funded from debt rather than Town Stabilization. The Soil Stabilization Project will be discussed later in the meeting.

Selectmen Moved:

That the Selectmen reconsider their recommendation for the School Security Upgrades.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

That the Selectmen recommend \$38,000 be appropriated for the School Security Upgrades, to be funded from Town Stabilization.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

That the Finance Committee reconsider their recommendation for the School Security Upgrades.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

That the Selectmen recommend \$38,000 be appropriated for the School Security Upgrades, to be funded from Town Stabilization.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Fiscal Year 2015 Town Operating Budget

- The current requested budget is \$8,148,258
- The current budget assumes the use of \$125,000 Free Cash for the Town Operating Budget.
- The shortfall prior to the change of funding for the School Security Upgrades was \$50,184. The shortfall is now \$12,184.
- Some suggestions for reducing the budget to eliminate the shortfall are:

		T. A.	Hanold	Olsen	
		Option #1	Option #2	Option #3	
113	Town Meeting	500	500	500	Mail Town Mtg Handbook
122	Selectboard	1,500	1,500	1,500	Print T. A. Budget document
122	Selectboard	2,000	2,000	1,000	Streetscape Activities
176	ZBA	-	200	-	Advertising increase
190	Utilities	10,000	-	-	5% increase
422	DPW Basic	9,812	3,000	-	Supplies, misc. Personnel
423	Snow & Ice	6,000	3,000	3,200	O/T, Salt, Sand are main costs
433	Solid Waste	12,000	2,000	6,000	Recycling & Bulky Waste increase
		<hr/>			
		41,812	12,200	12,200	

- Ms. Golrick asked why the DPW doesn't use any remaining balance in the Snow & Ice budget to stockpile salt and sand for next year. The DPW does stock salt and sand for the beginning of the next snow season.

- Mr. Naughton brought up the libraries, because that is another budget where we can't really go back after it is increased. Mr. Hanold said that additional reductions have been made in the Libraries' requested budget to correctly reflect new staffing.
- Ms. Golrick asked where there are any slush funds or other extra funds that are available for use. Mr. Naughton noted that he's not comfortable with the use of the phrase "slush fund" and said that he's not aware of any "slush funds" within the town.
- Mr. Hanold noted that special articles carry forward, including special articles for Information Technology, Police Equipment, and DPW Equipment/Maintenance. These funds are annually reviewed in terms of how much of the current appropriation remains, and what the plans are for future expenses.
- Mr. Naughton pointed out that it would be imprudent to count on having available balances in Special Articles to fund the operating budget.
- Mr. Bergeron said that he would strongly prefer that no cuts be made to the DPW main budget or the Utilities budget. He was more comfortable with level funding Snow & Ice and reducing the Solid Waste budget.
- Mr. Bergeron said he could really use the Streetscape appropriation, and even an additional amount to upgrade and repair the sheds that house the water controls and electrical plugs. Ms. Hickman has been involved in the Streetscape program since it started and said it was really wonderful to have the water working this year.
- Mr. Abbondanzio suggested that the \$2,000 for Streetscape be kept in the budget.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend reducing the Town Meeting budget by \$500.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend reducing the Town Meeting budget by \$500.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend reducing the Selectmen's budget by \$1,500.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend reducing the Selectmen's budget by \$1,500.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend reducing the Snow & Ice budget by \$6,000.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend reducing the Snow & Ice budget by \$6,000.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend reducing the Solid Waste budget by \$4,200.

Vote: In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

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Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend reducing the Solid Waste budget by \$4,200.

Vote: In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend a total Fiscal Year 2015 Town Operating Budget of \$8,136,058 with \$125,000 funded from Free Cash and \$8,011,058 funded from Taxation.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend a total Fiscal Year 2015 Town Operating Budget of \$8,136,058 with \$125,000 funded from Free Cash and \$8,011,058 funded from Taxation.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

WPCF Operating Budget

- The current budget request totals \$2,122,370 and breaks down as:
WPCF Main Budget \$1,402,409
DPW Subsidiary Budget 54,959
Debt 461,198
Employee Benefits 203,804
- The main budget includes two new employees; one working 40 hours per week and one working 25 hours per week. Benefits for both new employees are included in the Employee Benefits Budget. The total cost for the new employees is budgeted at \$74,789.
- The taxation share of the budget is \$200,000, based on Mr. Trombley's estimate for the costs of treating inflow and infiltration

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend a total Fiscal Year 2015 WPCF Operating Budget of \$2,122,370 with \$200,000 funded from Taxation and \$1,922,370 funded from Sewer User Fees.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend a total Fiscal Year 2015 WPCF Operating Budget of \$2,122,370 with \$200,000 funded from Taxation and \$1,922,370 funded from Sewer User Fees.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Colle Operating Budget

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend a Fiscal Year 2015 Colle Operating Budget of \$86,738 funded from Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend a Fiscal Year 2015 Colle Operating Budget of \$86,738 funded from Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Airport Operating Budget

- The current budget request is \$45,512 and includes a 1% Cost of Living Adjustment for the Airport Manager.
- The Airport is requesting fund as follows:

Airport User Fees	27,165
Airport Retained Earnings	4,000
Article #23 10/20/11	5,000
Taxation	9,347

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend a Fiscal Year 2015 Airport Operating Budget of \$45,512 funded with \$27,165 from Airport User Fees, \$4,000 from Airport Retained Earnings, \$5,000 from the unexpended balance of Article #23 of October 20, 2011, and \$9,347 from Taxation.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend a Fiscal Year 2015 Airport Operating Budget of \$45,512 funded with \$27,165 from Airport User Fees, \$4,000 from Airport Retained Earnings, \$5,000 from the unexpended balance of Article #23 of October 20, 2011, and \$9,347 from Taxation.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Franklin County Technical School

The Fiscal Year 2015 Franklin County Technical School request is \$682,601 from Taxation.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend \$682,601 for the Fiscal Year 2015 Franklin County Technical School assessment, to be raised from Taxation.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$682,601 for the Fiscal Year 2015 Franklin County Technical School assessment, to be raised from Taxation.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Gill-Montague Regional School District

- The most recent request is believed to be an assessment of \$8,286,919
- The current Affordable Assessment is \$8,293,45
- If the Affordable Assessment is recommended, the funding is \$125,000 from Free Cash and \$8,168,458 from Taxation
- The Superintendent e-mailed Mr. Naughton after receiving the latest Affordable Assessment asking how to proceed. Mr. Naughton would prefer recommending the most current budget request given his lack of confidence in their budget process.
- Mr. Naughton proposed tabling the vote on the Gill-Montague Regional School District assessment until numbers can be confirmed; he will contact the Superintendent's office to get a correct assessment number.
- Ms. Golrick suggested that the accountant should request the specific number from her counterpart.

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- There were different views on whether to use the district's most recent budget which was cut to meet the original Affordable Assessment, or to assume that the district would re-vote the budget to incorporate the increase in the Affordable Assessment.
- Mr. Fairbrother and Mr. Garrison would like to use the lower number since this has been approved by the School Committee.
- Mr. Hanold and Ms. Kennaugh felt that the town should appropriate the amended Affordable Assessment. Ms. Kennaugh said that while she agrees that the school could have been more transparent in their dealings with us, we've dealt with the whole issue of their meeting our Affordable Assessment and it's changing the rules in the middle of the game if we say our Affordable Assessment has increased but we want you to stick to the lower number. Ms. Kennaugh thinks that fairness requires we use the higher Affordable Assessment amount.

Mr. Hanold left the meeting at 7:20 PM. Since there was no longer a quorum, the remaining items were tabled until next week.

Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements- none

Meeting Adjourned at 7:30 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits

- Minutes March 19, 2014
- Reserve Fund Transfer Request

Next Meetings:

April 2, 2014	Tabled votes from 3/26, including recommendations for GMRSD assessment and reconsiderations of Skateboard Park and Soil Stabilization projects, Draft Finance Committee Report to Town Meeting
April 9, 2014	Reconsider any previous budget votes; review Report to Town Meeting
April 16, 2014	Last chance for changes to recommendations; finalize Report to Town Meeting