

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
September 24, 2014

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Meeting Date: September 24, 2014
Location: 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA

Called to Order: 6:00 PM

Finance Committee Members Present: John Harold, Michael Naughton, Lisa Adams, and Greg Garrison, Lynn Reynolds and Sharon Kennaugh

Selectmen Present: Mark Fairbrother was present. Christopher Boutwell and Michael Nelson arrived at 6:30 PM.

Others Present: Town Administrator Frank Abbondanzio, Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen and Jeanne Golrick

Minutes

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of September 3, 2014.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 2 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To approve the minutes of August 6, 2014.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 1 Abstained

Update on potential meeting to review Compact and town appropriation calculation

- Mr. Naughton reported that he met with Tupper Brown and Superintendent Sullivan and they came up with other proposals.
- The first proposal is that the Technical Panel update table B for future years. Mr. Sullivan is interested in using the updated Table B going forward. The assumptions of future school funding also need to be updated.
- A second proposal had questions about the size of the district Excess & Deficiency Fund and the impact on the proposed increased percentage of transportation reimbursements going forward. Mr. Sullivan is willing to come to a Finance Committee meeting to discuss those issues.
- The committee agreed that Table B should be updated.
- The committee agreed that Mr. Sullivan would be invited to a future meeting to discuss the issues noted in the 2nd bullet.

Special Town Meeting

The Special Town Meeting is tentatively scheduled for the week of October 20th or 27th.

Ms. Adams noted that renaming of Greenfield Road is required to be at an Annual Town Meeting.

Rescission #1 Article #23 of the May 5, 2012 Annual Town Meeting was for the Sheffield Parking Lot, and has a remaining balance of \$8,365.10. The project is complete.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend rescinding the remaining appropriation and unused borrowing authority for Article #23 of the May 5, 2012 Annual Town Meeting.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Rescission #2 Article #24 of the May 5, 2012 Annual Town Meeting was for \$15,000 for GMRSD ADA Projects, has not been spent, and is not needed.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend rescinding the remaining appropriation and unused borrowing authority for Article #24 of the May 5, 2012 Annual Town Meeting.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Establish Town Capital Stabilization

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend establishing a Town Capital Stabilization Fund.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Establish WPCF Capital Stabilization

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend establishing a WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Airport #1 would reimburse the town for the Reserve Fund Transfer made to the Airport for Fiscal Year 2014.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend that the Airport Enterprise Fund reimburse the General Fund for the Fiscal Year 2014 Reserve Fund Transfer in the amount of \$1,500, to be funded from Airport Retained Earnings.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Colle Reimburse Transfer would reimburse the town for the Reserve Fund Transfer made to the Colle for Fiscal Year 2014.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend that the Town be reimbursed for the Fiscal Year 2014 Reserve Fund Transfer to the Colle in the amount of \$6,000, to be funded from Colle Receipts Reserved for Appropriation.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Prior Year Bill-After taking possession of 30 E. Main Street and 34 E Main Street in Millers Falls, the town became responsible for paying past due water bills.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend the appropriation of \$300 to pay prior year bills, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Ms. Golrick stated that the Town does not own this building and therefore does not owe the money.

Dispatch Pay The Police Department is having difficulty attracting and retaining per diem dispatchers due to the pay disparity between Montague and other area towns. Chief Dodge is requesting to increase the pay for per diem dispatchers from \$13.00-\$15.00 an hour to \$17.00 to \$19.00 per hour. This will be effective going forward with no retroactive payments.

Mr. Naughton would like to hear back from the Police Department during the Fiscal Year 2016 budget process to see if the increase has been effective in solving the staffing issues.

Ms. Golrick asked that we be given the per diem dispatch rates paid by other towns so Town Meeting could have the information.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend increasing the pay for per diem dispatchers from \$13.00-\$15.00 an hour to \$17.00 to \$19.00 per hour.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements-

Mr. Abbondanzio asked that the BOS set the deadline for warrant articles for the Special Town Meeting 5:00 PM on October 1, 2014.

Selectmen Moved: To set the deadline for warrant articles for the Special Town Meeting as 5:00 PM on October 1, 2014

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Ms. Golrick submitted a letter to the Finance Committee concerning the number of special town meetings. Mr. Hanold proposed reviewing the issues raised and preparing a letter in response. Input from other members is invited.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting will be on October 8th to discuss the remaining special articles.
- Mr. Longo, DPW Superintendent Bergeron and WPCF Superintendent Trombley will be invited to discuss their requests

Meeting Adjourned at 6:55 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits

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- Minutes September 3, 2014
- Letter received from Jeanne Golrick (next page)

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Lisa Adams,
Finance Committee member

September 24, 2014

RE: issue of s inappropriate pending for consideration by the Finance Committee

Hello Lisa,

Enclosed please find this memo and some accompanying information. I hope that I will be able to address this at tonights' meeting, but I do not know your protocols for unanticipated topics. Should it be necessary, I would gladly come to your next meeting too if you would see that this topic is placed on another agenda. This topic has been brewing for quite a while as you can see by the list of the dates, so a short delay does no harm, but it really needs to be aired by the Finance Committee alone without 'Select' board input (solicited or given). I hope to discuss this with Fincom only. I will bring the hard copy of this signed letter to the meeting this evening.

'Thank you,

Jeanne A. Golrick
town meeting member precinct 2
September 24, 2014

A financial dilemma with political ramifications

Annual Town Meetings and an associated Special Town Meeting traditionally happen jointly on the annual day specifically established by law in writing to be held in the Springtime for the purpose of handling the leftover items from the prior year in a Special Town Meeting BEFORE beginning the new years budget and planning for the upcoming year in the Annual Town meeting.

History has shown however that in addition to the joint annual/special combo, exclusive specials are becoming the norm as is shown by the list attached. The question is why?

Special Town meetings are supposed to be held for "special" events unanticipated which need immediate town input, arguably for 'emergencies' However, this Town seems to think it can use specials to work on items NOT of an emergency nature... look at the warrants for these specials to see that this is true as the items are multiple and usually not of an emergency nature, but rather reflect an agenda from the Town officers..

Each town meeting costs about 3K to do, so again why is the Town spending this money needlessly when the items of these 'specials' could wait for the 'annual' and not cost the people more money from their tax revenues to hold an additional forum?

Does this pattern reflect poor management by town officers?

What can be done to reign in the overreaching/inefficiency of the powers of the select board who are responsible for setting Town meetings and managing town affairs?

The purpose of the Finance Committee by its original constitutional charter is to be the eyes and ears of and for the people , to 'watch dog' the municipal governments actions as far as revenue and spending is concerned. It is the duty of the town meeting to decide (with the input from the Finance Committee) to instruct/authorize the 'Select' (elected) board as to how to proceed politically and fiscally. It seems lately that the 'Select' board is attending Finance Committee meetings 'jointly' and perhaps this is effectively handicapping the Finance Committee from its charter because the Select board has formal say in an open and public meeting thereby influencing perhaps the Finance Committee..

Is the Finance Committee losing sight of its chartered obligations and losing its way? Perhaps it is time to effectively and literally separate (READ no more joint meetings) the 'Select' board from the Finance Committee so that the Finance Committee will not have a jaundiced eye or cuffed hands when reviewing revenue and spending on behalf of the people. I suggest that the Finance Board assign individual members to review and report back to the Fincom about boards and meetings routinely to see and

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learn what is happening rather than to jointly meet regularly with the Selectboard (or other boards) . If additional information for the annual/special town meeting is needed by the Finance committee, then surely an occasional joint meeting with whomever is in order and should be set by the Fincom, but short of a specifically stated need/request of the Finance committee, the Finance committee should meet and act independently for the most part which brings me back to the source of this long letter to you. I wish the Fincom to study and report to Town Meeting about the matter of special town meetings. To that end, I have given results of my records through you to the Finance Committee for its consideration...

What is the opinion of the Finance Committee on this matter of claimed needed additional spending for unnecessary *special* town meetings?