

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND SELECTMEN MEETING
September 14, 2016

Page 1 of 7

Meeting Date: September 14, 2016 **Called to Order:** 6:02 PM

Location: 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA

Finance Committee Members Present: John Hanold, Fred Bowman, Greg Garrison, Chris Menegoni and Michael Naughton. Patricia Pruitt was absent.

Selectmen Present: Chris Boutwell and Michael Nelson. Richard Kuklewicz was absent.

Others Present: Town Administrator Frank Abbondanzio, Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen, Ariel Elan and Jeff Singleton

Minutes - Approve minutes of August 24, 2016

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of August 24, 2016.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 2 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To approve the minutes of August 24, 2016.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Special Town Meeting Warrant

Some general background:

- Agreements providing a 1% wage adjustment for all unions are expected to be ratified by the STM, and a 1% adjustment is also being requested for non-union employees.
- The adjustments for non-union employees require amendments to Schedules I and II.
- There will be an appointed Treasurer/Collector to finish Patty's term after she retires, so this position needs to be added to Schedule II. Since the retirement was not planned at the time of the annual budget, there is also a request for \$4,500 for the Treasurer's budget for a wage overlap for training.
- The article to fund the UE contract shows only a token \$100 because there are enough savings from unfilled positions and an employee on Workers Compensation to offset the increased costs for FY2017.

Article #1 – Amend Schedule I for the Town Clerk and elected Treasurer/Collector

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #1; amending Schedule I for the Town Clerk and Elected Treasurer by increasing the previously approved wages by 1%.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #1; amending Schedule I for the Town Clerk and Elected Treasurer by increasing the previously approved wages by 1%.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #2 – Amend Schedule II certain positions, add appointed Interim Treasurer/Collector.

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #2; amending Schedule II increasing the previously approved wages by 1% for regular employees and adding the position of Interim Treasurer/Collector.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #2; amending Schedule II increasing the previously approved wages by 1% for regular employees and adding the position of Interim Treasurer/Collector.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #3 – Fund IBPO Contract

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #3; funding the IBPO contract with \$18,050 from Taxation.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #3; funding the IBPO contract with \$18,050 from Taxation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #4 – Fund TOMEA Contract

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #4; funding the TOMEA contract with \$16,100 from Taxation.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #4; funding the TOMEA contract with \$16,100 from Taxation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #5 – Fund UE Contract

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #5; funding the UE contract with \$100 from Taxation.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #5; funding the UE contract with \$100 from Taxation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #6 – Fund Non-Union Wage Increases

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #6; funding the non-union wage increases of \$7,004 with \$208 from Airport Retained Earnings and \$6,796 from Taxation.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #6; funding the non-union wage increases of \$7,004 with \$208 from Airport Retained Earnings and \$6,796 from Taxation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #7 – Increase Treasurer/Collector Budget

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #7; increasing the FY2017 Treasurer/Collector's budget by \$4,500, funded from Taxation.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #7; increasing the FY2017 Treasurer/Collector's budget by \$4,500, funded from Taxation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #8 – \$60,000 to create classroom space on Hillcrest Elementary School Stage

- Mr. Bowman feels that Hillcrest is stressed for space, noted that the town is responsible for maintenance and upgrades to the school, and supports this article. The school was asked for a better estimate prior to the Annual Town Meeting, and they have done as requested.
- Mr. Naughton noted that neither the Building Inspector nor DPW have reviewed the plans. Mr. Naughton suggested that these town officials should be included in the planning process for permanent changes to town buildings.
- Mr. Hanold was earlier reluctant to add classroom space when district enrollment is declining, but after more recent information that the lower grades are not decreasing in size makes him more comfortable supporting this article.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #8; appropriating \$60,000 to create classroom space on the Hillcrest Elementary School stage, funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #8; appropriating \$60,000 to create classroom space on the Hillcrest Elementary School stage, funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #9 – \$10,000 to replace pillars at the Sheffield School

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #9; appropriating \$10,000 to replace pillars at the Sheffield School, funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #9; appropriating \$10,000 to replace pillars at the Sheffield School, funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #10 – Use of Sewer Retained Earnings to reduce the FY2017 Sewer Rates

Mr. Abbondanzio reviewed the causes of reduced sludge revenue, noted issues with DEP, and the impact of using various amounts of retained earnings on the sewer rates. The current plan is to use \$200,000 from retained earnings to keep the sewer rate increase to 17%.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #10; but appropriating only \$200,000 from Sewer Retained Earnings to moderate the increase in Sewer Rates.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #10; but appropriating only \$200,000 from Sewer Retained Earnings to moderate the increase in Sewer Rates.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #11 – Rescind Article #20 of the May 7, 2016 Annual Town Meeting, which appropriated \$200,000 to the WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund from Sewer User Fees

- Mr. Naughton feels we need to recognize that the need for substantial amounts of money for capital improvements has not gone away and will need to be addressed in the near future.
- Mr. Abbondanzio added that the town will be pursuing aid for some of these improvements.
- Mr. Abbondanzio noted that we are currently paying to send sludge out. Even when the process is re-started there will still be some residual sludge that will always need to be sent out.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #11; rescinding Article #20 of the May 7, 2016 Annual Town Meeting.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #11; rescinding Article #20 of the May 7, 2016 Annual Town Meeting.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #12 – Appropriate \$27,000 for a police vehicle

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #12; appropriating \$27,000 for a police vehicle, funded from Taxation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #12; appropriating \$27,000 for a police vehicle, funded from Taxation.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Questions and answers about the Software and Phone System articles

Software

1. What system(s) to the other towns use? Do we have comments/recommendations from any of them?

- In checking with other towns, I found Greenfield has Accela. We did review Accela, but the Board of Health and Building Department didn't like the program and the cost was very high.
- Many smaller towns are involved with the FRCOG and they use FullCircle. FullCircle charges per permit and is very expensive.
- CitizenServe, the company we agreed to use, has a client in the City of Somerville. The person in Somerville did the demonstration for us so that was presumed as a reference. I sent out 4 requests for references for CitizenServe. One has been received and the town really likes it, and considers the company to offer excellent service.

2. Mr. Naughton gathers that the benefits will be better/easier access for applicants, reduced workload for staff, and greater accessibility of this information to other town departments.

Is it expected to generate more revenue (e.g. more reliable collection of permitting fees)? If so, by how much?

There is a step that will be built in so all permits have to be paid in full BEFORE they can be issued. How much revenue this will generate is unknown. Permit fee prices may have to increase to keep up with the costs. Some building and zoning fees were increased in 2013, but some fees are considered low for the area.

- This will be a much more trackable method for verifying the process and ensuring payment.
- During the recent audit, the Auditors were very happy that permit software was being implemented for the Building Department. That issue had been raised in previous management letters.

3. Is it expected to reduce expenses? If so, by how much? [NB: the previous two questions are basically asking, "Is it worth it?"]

Direct expenses are not likely to be reduced, but staff efficiency will increase. So yes, this software is definitely worth it. When staff is out of the office due to illness, vacation or out doing inspections, this software continues to work. Contractors/property owners can continue to apply for permits regardless of the hour of the day.

4. How do ongoing inspections (e.g. for building permits) fit in?

Permits existing prior to the date of implementation will be put into the system.

5. Can it accommodate non-permit-related inspections and/or violations (e.g. board of health complaints)?

Yes. The research for this software program was done specifically for Building Department and Board of Health. This particular software was chosen for zoning /building code violations as well as Board of Health violations.

6. What about licenses and permits issued by other departments (e.g. town clerk, selectmen)?

There are currently no known software systems that produce permits for all town departments.

Phone System

1. The proposal mentions taking the opportunity to run new wires for workstations and printers. How does wireless connectivity fit in to the plan?

- There are no plans for wireless connectivity between computers or prints to the server. It's not reliable, consistent or fast enough for the work done in town hall and doesn't work long term.
- Wireless connectivity is ok for ad hoc personal devices such as smart phones and tablets. Note that the requested software will work remotely in the field through those personal devices.

Article #13 – Appropriate \$28,100 for permitting software

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #13; appropriating \$28,100 for permitting software, funded from Taxation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #13; appropriating \$28,100 for permitting software, funded from Taxation.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #14 – Appropriate \$25,000 for phone system for Town Hall and wiring for phone system and other technology

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #14; appropriating \$25,000 for a phone system for Town Hall and wiring for phone system and other technology, funded from Taxation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #14; appropriating \$25,000 for a phone system for Town Hall and wiring for phone system and other technology, funded from Taxation.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #15 – Appropriate \$73,346 to the Town General Stabilization Fund

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #15; appropriating \$73,346 to the Town General Stabilization Fund, funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #15; appropriating \$73,346 to the Town General Stabilization Fund, funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Article #16 – Appropriate \$20,000 for pipeline intervention expenses

Mr. Kuklewicz asked to convey his thoughts: “I support Article 16. I feel that we need to do all we can to end the intervention. It has already and will continue to negatively impact growth in town. With progress at the Turnpike Rd. industrial park we need to show DPU the negative impact and that Berkshire Gas has other options readily available.”

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend Article #16; appropriating \$20,000 for Montague’s participation in DPU Docket 16-103, funded from Article #33 of the May 7, 2016 ATM.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To recommend Article #16; appropriating \$20,000 for Montague’s participation in DPU Docket 16-103, funded from Article #33 of the May 7, 2016 ATM.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Next Meeting Date: September 21 – meet with Public Works Garage Building Committee

Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits:

- August 24, 2016 Minutes
- September 29, 2016 Special Town Meeting Warrant
- Sewer Rate information