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Chairman John Hanold opens the meeting

- Meeting was opened at 6:00 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room
- **Finance Committee Members Present**: John Hanold, Fred Bowman, Greg Garrison and Michael Naughton. Chris Menegoni and Patricia Pruitt were absent.
- Selectmen Present: Michael Nelson and Chris Boutwell. Richard Kuklewicz was absent.
- Others Present: Town Administrator Steven Ellis, Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen, Police Chief Chip Dodge, Dispatch Manager Marsha Odle, Airport Commissioner Peter Golrick, Timmie Smith and Richard Widmer.
- The Finance Committee Chair announced that the meeting is being recorded by MCATV, and asked if anyone else was recording the meeting. No one identified themselves.

Minutes -

Selectmen Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 25, 2017. Vote: <u>2</u> In Favor <u>0</u> Opposed <u>0</u> Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 25, 2017. Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Airport Commission

Mr. Golrick stated that the Airport snow removal budget is now overspent after 8 snow events that required plowing. This is a higher than usual number of events. The airport will probably need money before the end of the year, but the amount is not known at this point. This is a courtesy visit to notify the Finance Committee that a transfer will be needed. At this point, it is expected that the request is unlikely to exceed \$3,000.

Department Budgets

Numbered and underlined questions with answers in a different font are from previous e-mails. Additional information received at meeting follows the questions and answers.

Animal Control

1. No specific questions, beyond your confirmation that you expect charges in acts 5247 and 5300 in Fiscal Year 2018.

There have been none so far in FY2017, but they are expected by the end of the fiscal year. The only new thing is the budget is a request for a percentage of the cost of a new vehicle.

Dispatch

1. Please give us an idea of how the higher P/T Dispatch rates have affected your recruitment and staff scheduling. Total of P/T and O/T wages seems unchanged, and both are running high at mid-year Fiscal Year 2017.

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Marsha will explain in more detail but I can tell you that we are getting more parttime help now that the rate has increased.

We had to hire 2 new fulltime dispatchers at the beginning of the fiscal year so we ended up having to spend more money than budgeted on overtime and part-time help while the new dispatchers received the training they needed to work for us fulltime.

Ms. Odle clarified that the increase in per-diem wages has resulted in per-diem dispatchers filling one or more shifts every week. While the pay is less than what Greenfield pays, it is more competitive than it was.

2. <u>Training, Seminars & Travel were increased in Fiscal Year 2017 (over Fiscal Year 2016 experience)</u> and again in Fiscal Year 2018, in spite of low usage so far this year. Is this driven by class schedules, and will it actually occur?

The trainings are only available at certain times of the year. We are currently waiting on some necessary trainings which will use some more of our training budget.

Ms. Odle clarified that these lines are budgeted for the full amount of training each year, but that the town applies for, and usually but is not guaranteed to get, an annual state training grant. Since the town is not notified that we've received a grant until after the budget process, the expense is always budgeted, but if we get grants, the expenses are charged to the grant rather than the operating budget.

Police

1. <u>It appears you have already had one retirement in Fiscal Year 2017 and anticipate another in Fiscal Year 2018</u>. Yet, all named officers are included for full 1975 hours in Fiscal Year 2018, including names we thought were part-year-only or already gone.

No retirements occurred in 2017. Because neither officer has provided me with an official retirement date, I have to go with the information I have available to me at this time. I am anticipating 2 retirements in the future, however neither has confirmed this or has given me an actual retirement date. To be sure I don't cut my FY2018 budget too short I chose to budget as if they weren't retiring.

2. What changes in staff use are reflected in the rise in P/T Wages and Full-Time O/T — Is this growing reimbursed Detail work (if so, where does offset appear)? O/T is now 15% of F-T Wages, including Lieutenant and Staff Sgt.

We have hired some new reserve officers and I plan to hire a couple more. It is my expectation that they will work more hours than the current staff of Reserves. Reserve Officer shifts have been going unfilled at times which is why I am looking to hire more. This will cause me to spend additional part-time officer funds.

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I am able to save overtime money when Reserve Officers fill any open patrol officer shifts.

The main factor for the increase in my overtime budget is the IBPO Contract. The cost of living increases and step increases have a significant impact on the amount I spend each year on overtime. I am also increasing this line item because I suspect we will be coming up short again this year.

It only takes a single incident such as the Railroad Salvage fire to take a chunk out of my overtime budget. The money in the overtime budget is used to cover officers' vacation days off, personal time off, sick time off, etc. as well as all other police operations that must be performed beyond the normal work schedule.

To put my overtime expenses into perspective: The current Staff Sergeant works a significant amount of overtime each year at a current rate of over \$52 an hour. Every three 8 hour Overtime shifts worked by the Staff Sergeant uses up 1% of my current entire overtime budget. The Sergeants have first pick for any open Sergeant shifts. There are approximately 80 vacation days off amongst just the Sergeants and 16 personal days. If the Staff Sergeant worked even half of these days off as overtime, he would earn approx. \$20,000 or 17% of the OT budget. This is just an example of one officer's overtime for the year.

The only way to bring our overtime expenses down would be to hire an additional fulltime officer who would work all open patrol officer shifts (caused by vacation, personal, sick, etc.) instead of filling them with overtime. The obstacle is the IBPO Union on this one. This also wouldn't cut down on the Sergeant's overtime.

- Staffing is 16 officers, one of which is funded entirely from the FCTS.
- The current budget included an extra officer for 6 months to fill shifts while new officers were at the academy, with the expectation that he would fill a position vacated through retirement, but the retirement did not occur.
- The Fiscal Year 2018 budget assumes no retirements in estimating staff wages, but does include buyout costs for one retirement. There is a state mandated retirement age of 65 for police officers, but no current employees are approaching that age.
- 3. We recently read that the status of J Holland has changed in mid-2017. Does this affect your forecast for Fiscal Year 2018?

It has no effect on my 2018 budget as of right now due to the unknowns. We hired Jamal to help cover the open patrol officer shifts while they were in the police academy. It helped cut down on the overtime spending. I had also anticipated that Sgt. Suchanek was going to retire prior to December of this year, based on information given to me, so Jamal would have slid into his open slot, saving more overtime money. Because the Sergeant hasn't retired, I had to put Jamal back to a part time officer status.

Jamal will be hired back on as fulltime as soon as we have a retirement.

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4. Rise in 5480 Vehicle Maintenance seems a lot in view of improving condition of Police fleet.

I am budgeting this line item based on our current use and the pattern I have observed in our spending. We can take a chance and not increase this if that is what the board suggests, however I would not be comfortable reducing it. At the ½ year mark we have already used \$14,000 of our available \$25,000 line item.

You are absolutely correct that because our cruisers are getting better we should have less expenses, however we still do have some older cars on the road that require additional work beyond the normal wear and tear items. We are getting to a time when most of the cruisers will be in newer condition.

This line item also covers minor fender bender repairs on our cruisers, paint jobs, snow tires and normal tires, brake repairs, police equipment not covered under that extra Equipment Article (if approved), etc.

5. <u>Drug Investigation line 5501shows higher level of cost, though drug-response activity has been ongoing for years.</u> What has changed?

When I became the Chief of Police I signed us up to be a part of a newly formed DA Anti-Crime Task Force. This provided us with additional funds for illegal drug transactions. We are currently not a member of this group and therefore we are incurring additional expenses to cover our investigations. When the opportunity presents itself again I will look into rejoining the Task Force if it still exists.

6. Seminar spending grew sharply in Fiscal Year 2017 and again Fiscal Year 2018. What is new?

Training requirements keep increasing each year. The state is requiring officers to attend more and more training each year. Most specialized trainings require having to travel a long distance and others require having to stay overnight due to the distance traveled. Chiefs are being required to attend more training than the patrol staff due to specialized training requirements. These requirements force me to have to budget more money.

The state is actually considering requiring even part time officers to attend a fulltime police academy, just to have them work part time for us. If this does occur, we will have to make some important staffing decisions.

To be a good leader and department head I have to attend more educational and professional courses.

I am also spending more under this line item because I am trying to get my Lieutenant trained as well. If he is to be an effective second in command he must have the same training as I am getting. The Lieutenant is making very important decisions for our agency on a daily basis and he needs to have a great working knowledge of both the law and our operations. He must also have the necessary knowledge to run our departments during any of my absences.

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We have currently spent over \$5,000 on training which has exceeded our \$4,000 line item.

To help keep these expenses from rising out of control, I have sent some of our officers off to become training instructors. We are now able to provide a significant amount of the required trainings right here at home. Other agencies are able to enjoy this training benefit as well. We have become a training location for our officers and surrounding agencies and I am very proud to be able to offer this. The Lieutenant has created a great training program and we are constantly complimented on how well our trainings are.

7. Comment on insurance agent's recommendation deserves some explanation.

I would be more comfortable talking with you folks before I consider increasing our insurance. This could be very costly. The insurance agent recommends that we purchase over \$50,000 worth of insurance each year, however to do this I would need more money. I recently attended a training with our insurance company and this is where we got the idea that we may have to look at increasing some of our policy. This is definitely worthy of more discussion with the boards.

Police officers are not covered by Workers Compensation. An officer injured on duty receives full pay while out of work and his shift is usually filled at overtime rates. This insurance reimburses the town for part of the cost incurred.

8. We customarily ask for an inventory of the use and condition of Police vehicles — odometer readings, condition, type of use. Please provide this again in support of the Cruiser Replacement request, and indicate destiny of retired vehicle.

Our oldest line cruiser is a 2009 Ford Crown Vic with 156,766 miles and our newest line cruiser is a 2017 Ford Explorer with 6,665 miles. To avoid placing a lot of mileage placed on just 1 or 2 cruisers, we assign a cruiser to a group of officers. This causes officers to take better care of their cruiser and it cuts down on the usage, both mileage and idling hours.

When a cruiser shows it has 100,000 miles on it you can add another 50% of usage time to the engine from all of the idling our cruisers do, especially the K9 cruisers.

I don't want to make any promises (and I hate to even say this right now because I can't predict the future) but after this fiscal year I may be able to go a year, Fiscal Year 2019, without purchasing a new cruiser. This will be a wait and see but it is my hope to be able to skip a year to save the townspeople some money. You may vote against this idea so we don't cause any confusion or problems the following year when we will need a new cruiser again, but we can talk about this at our meeting.

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CRUISER LIST as of Jan. 30, 2017

<u>Year</u>	<u>Make</u>	<u>Model</u>	<u>Mileage</u>	<u>Assign</u>	<u>Condition</u>
2017	Ford	Explorer	4,364	Chief/UC	Excellent
2010	Ford	Crown Vic	Over 100K	L1	Below Average
2011	Dodge	Charger	100,177	D1	Average
2010	Chevy	Equinox	87,755	D2	Good
2010	Chevy	Van	71,710	Van/UC	Average
2016	Ford	Explorer	37,500	C1	Excellent
2013	Ford	Explorer	101,459	C2	Good
2013	Ford	Interceptor		C3	Totaled - OUT OF SERVICE
2017	Ford	Explorer	6,665	C4	Excellent
2009	Ford	Crown Vic	156,766	K9-C6	Poor
2004	Ford	Expedition	100,665	K9-C5	Poor
2014	Ford	Explorer	65,931	C7	Good

- The Fiscal Year 2018 budget includes a new cruiser, but Chief Dodge noted that the percentage of cruisers with over 100,000 miles has decreased over time.
- While an old cruiser was recently totaled, the town's replacement value insurance allows it to be replaced with a current model. A direct replacement with a sedan would have taken over 6 months to get, but we were able to upgrade to a new SUV by using \$7,000 from the equipment article. Delivery is expected this month.
- Not all cruisers will be replaced when they reach the end of their useful life. The Expedition will be replaced with a less expensive model. When Sunny retires, John Dempsey will no longer be a K-9 officer, so only one K-9 vehicle will be needed. The other K-9 vehicle will be replaced through a gift account
- Mr. Naughton noted difficulties in comparing vehicle inventories from year to year due to the lack of a single vehicle identifier that does not change over time. Suggested incorporating an identifier for each vehicle that would not change over time, to make it easier to follow the vehicle as it changed designation from cruiser to detective vehicle or to another designation.
- When the new cruiser is purchased in Fiscal Year 2018, it will likely become C2, and the current C2 will probably be re-identified as L1 or D1 to allow the retirement of one of them.
- Mr. Ellis suggested adding the context of "we need X main cruisers, X other" versus what we desire, and what we actually have.

We are also interested in anything else you think we should know, as we prepare our recommendation to May's Annual Town Meeting. One example might be the status of your discussions with the Gill-Montague Superintendent about a School Resource Officer (SRO); we meet with him in about a month but value your input at this time.

I support the Board of Selectmen's and Finance Committee's recommendation that the school pay for the SRO. To help show them how important this position is for them I have sent them copies of all the calls we responded to at the TFHS in 2016. There

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were some pretty serious incidents that had occurred. The Superintendent saw this and stated he was going to present it to the School Committee during an executive session. I guess we will have to stay tuned to see how they vote on this.

If the school is only willing to pay for a part of this new SRO position I am hoping the town may be able to cover the remaining balance.

Mr. Hanold noted that the SRO was discussed in a January meeting with the GMRSD and Gill. Both the GMRSD and Chief Dodge favored a SRO, but neither has funding available. It was suggested at the meeting that the cost of the position could be split 50%, but due to the assessment allocation Montague would end up paying almost 93% of the cost. Chief Dodge referenced a straw poll at last town meeting and recalls that a majority of town meeting members indicated that they would be willing to pay more taxes to support a SRO at the GMRSD. Mr. Naughton noted that since Montague assesses taxes up to our levy limit, a Proposition 2-1/2 override would be required to increase tax resources for this purpose.

General budget issues:

- Chief Dodge provided a pie chart showing that regular wages make up 75% of the budget. As wages are set by the union contract, the Chief has no control over the cost other than by reducing staffing levels, but he already considers that to be a bit thin. The other line items do not allow for much reduction.
- Former Town Administrator Frank Abbondanzio used to ask Chief Dodge to reduce his overtime budget request, but when he did he ended up back at town meeting asking for more money.
- You can't run a shift with one officer, and you can't control when they use leave time.
- Chief Dodge regularly spoke to Mr. Abbondanzio about hiring an additional officer. Having an extra employee on shift allows one to be absent without filling the shift. Officers are against it because they'll lose overtime.
- Mr. Ellis asked what percentage of overtime is paid to patrolmen versus sergeants and the ratio of leave time filled by reserves versus officers.
- The Lieutenant is saving a lot of money by being the department's IT person and by increasing inhouse training.
- Chief Dodge would like to add two more line items and reallocate the budget to provide better information. Specifically he would like to add a line for the K-9 stipend and a line for rental/lease/support contracts for fixed cost items currently included in Equipment Repair and Maintenance. This was viewed favorably.
- Regarding insurance, Chief Dodge has spoken with our insurance representative and asked what coverage we should have. The representative recommended that we more than double what we currently have. This will be looked at in detail along with the town's other policies before recommendations for changes are made.

General Insurance Budget

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1. <u>In the past this has generally been forecasted at the bottom line, not by detail, and the actual spending tends to come in below budget.</u> It looks like Fiscal Year 2017 is turning out that way, as well. Was any history, or specific quotation, behind the request?

The initial request was based on an understanding of past MIIA invoices and a 5% increase that was suggested by our MIIA agent. Since that time I've had additional meetings with MIIA and town staff. It appears that we can get by with about a 1% increase as opposed to the larger increase suggested in my previous budget. This is based on actual Fiscal Year 2017 billing figures, and credits and discounts that appear firm. We are meeting with MIIA next week to continue to update our asset inventory. This could result in further adjustment, upward or downward, to this line. I also hope to learn more about the insurance credit system and implement a planned approach to pursuing credits beyond those we've received in the past. Final note: we carry a separate rider for Strathmore insurance (about \$5500/year) that is also included in this budget and was last year as well. We do not appear to carry similar insurance for any other town owned property.

The town has a new agent with our insurance company and Mr. Ellis has spoken with her at length about the town's policies and coverage. Mr. Ellis feels that the revised budget request is a good estimate for next year. Mr. Ellis noted that there were some substantial misalignments in the town's property list, and while work will be done to make corrections, these are unlikely to have a major impact on next year's cost. Mr. Ellis also noted that many credits are available that have not been taken advantage of, and they will be evaluated for future possible discounts.

2. There is a line for Law Enforcement insurance here, and one in the Police Department budget. Are they addressing different risks?

It is my understanding that when lines were consolidated three years ago, the police line was transferred out of this budget and to the police. The police insurance line does not appear on invoices to this town account. WPCF expense does. I've discounted the WPCF share from our bottom line cost based on last year's proportionality. About 11.5% of the cost of insurance that is invoiced to the town was re-charged to the WPCF in Fiscal Year 2017. I've held that as an assumption and it is already deducted from the bottom line figure in this budget.

3. <u>Does our own claim history or "perceived risk" affect the forecast? Does the town make a specific effort to avoid or prevent risk in these areas?</u>

I'll learn more about this subject when we meet with MIIA, but increased claims are assumed to affect rates on some level. There are a variety of preventative actions that might result in credits to our insurance. These range from training to formation of committees. We'll look closely at those preventative savings opportunities in the coming weeks.

Intergovernmental

1. Which of these pieces are estimates, and which are specific assessments we've received. Let us know what might change in future weeks.

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I was able to collect what I believe to be final figures for each of the five components of the intergovernmental services budget, over which we appear to have little or no control. I completed that work this week and attached you will find an update of that budget sheet. Two lines drive a substantial proportional increase in this budget area – those related to emergency communications (FRCOG) and the Veteran's District. The Veteran's District cost, as I understand it, is driven by our census, but I've asked for clarification of this. The emergency communications costs are affecting all FRCOG towns. I'm told they are essential and that a letter will be circulated with an explanation of those costs in the coming week or so.

2. Are you or the Selectboard aware of changes in services or work-scope that affect either Fiscal Year 2018 or future years, and therefore our assessments

I have also updated and attached the BOS budget page. The budget will show a decrease from Fiscal Year 2017, which included expenses related to Frank's retirement, but it will show greater than typical growth as a trend. If we were to assume this budget had increased by 3% from Fiscal Year 2016 to Fiscal Year 2017, the Fiscal Year 2018 increase would be 7.5%. This accounts for increases in training (procurement, specifically) and increased travel to professional association, civic and business, and other out of town meetings (court, FERC, etc.). It also includes a professional services line for production of meeting minutes. I can speak to why I believe this is appropriate and necessary tonight.

Special Appropriation for Legal

1. Legal services were not on the agenda as a Fiscal Year 2018 matter, but they are included as part of preparation for Special Town Meeting because of high usage to date in Fiscal Year 2017. What was "unanticipated" about recent usage, and is this a part of the sizable increase in the Fiscal Year 2018 request?

The month of August saw a particular spike in legal fees from KP, as they are detailed at about \$12,800 in that month (much attributable to a ZBA dispute), with other monthly totals in the \$3,600 to \$5,800 range through August. However, there are itemized expense lines for the Crabapple purchase that are not attributed monthly and may increase the values on either side of this range. Note that the December billing total was much lower at \$2,339, but it was a short month due to the holidays and counsel suggests it is universally a light month for legal expenses (not a figure to build around).

Invoices suggest that \$5,000 / month would be a reasonable figure to budget on a monthly basis, but everyone I speak with suggests that legal is an unpredictable line. I used this as my base cost/month in my final budget request for Fiscal Year 2018.

2. A brief idea of what general matters are ongoing or anticipated would be useful. We realize this is not something for us to discuss/critique, nor is it something we or town staff can control, but it informs us about general conditions and may alert us to interconnections with other spending requests.

I've spoken to counsel and it is very difficult to predict what our final cost of legal services will be this year. I'm proposing we plan for \$70,000. We have not yet been billed for representation in the Railroad Salvage

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case, but it involved many meetings and at least a full day in court, and we've received numerous records requests subsequent to receiving our court order to selective demolition. We are about to embark on the FERC relicensing process and have already found need to meet with counsel in relation to elements of that process. We have also overhauled our records request process and are consulting counsel judiciously but as needed to ensure we remain in compliance with new and still emerging requirements and procedures. And of course we are about to have an STM and ATM in the coming months. Note that although we are actively in litigation related to work performed for the WPCF by Penta Corp, that cost should be on the WPCF's budget.

Legal Budget – should supplemental appropriation come from Special Town Meeting Article or Reserve Fund? It appears that we will need 16-20k for this year.

Mr. Hanold noted the pros and cons of two options.

- The Reserve Fund is limited in use for unexpected expense, and is less clear to the public.
- There is more visibility to the public if it comes from Free Cash via a special article at town meeting. A Special Article also preserves the reserve fund for other items.
- Mr. Hanold feels that the General Stabilization Fund is not an appropriate source of funding for this item as it is intended for reductions in state aid or capital items.

Mr. Naughton's preference is to bring supplemental appropriations of this size to town meeting. Mr. Garrison agreed, and noted that he wants to make sure the public is aware of the causes of the additional amounts needed. The flip side is that there is limited Free Cash available for all needs at the special and annual town meetings.

Mr. Ellis's hope it to preserve as much flexibility as possible regarding use of reserve fund and free cash.

Ms. Olsen stated a preference to use a reserve fund transfer to preserve Free Cash for use at town meetings, and reminded everyone that the Selectmen and Finance Committee can jointly transfer between appropriations at year end if other transfers are needed.

Finance Committee Moved:

To state the preference for a reserve fund transfer for unexpected legal expenses.

Vote: <u>4</u> In Favor <u>0</u> Opposed <u>0</u> Abstained

Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements None

Next Meeting Dates:

February 8, 2017 Planner, Public Works, and Buildings Maintenance Study

February 15, 2017 WPCF, and STM Article recommendations

February 22, 2017 FCTS, Initial meeting with CIC

March 1, 2017 GMRSD

March 8, 2017 Town Administrator

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March 15, 2017	Final Revenue Estimates, final Affordable Assessment due, Preliminary Budget
	Recommendations, March 22, 2017 Final meeting with CIC
March 29, 2017	Draft warrant to KP-Law, Review Special Article Requests
April 5, 2017	Draft Finance Committee Report, vote on Special Article requests
April 12, 2017	Revise Finance Committee Report and Policy Actions
April 19, 2017	Final votes, reconsiderations, approve Finance Committee Report
May 3, 2017	Any pre-Town Meeting actions needed
May 6, 2017	Annual Town Meeting
May 10, 2017	Any post-Town Meeting actions needed

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits:

- January 25, 2017 Minutes
- Police, Dispatch, Animal Control, Intergovernmental and General Insurance FY2018 Budget Requests
- Handouts from Police Chief Dodge

Minutes Approved February 8, 2017						
John Hanold, Finance Committee Chair	Richard Kuklewicz, Selectboard Chair					