

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM
1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
March 15, 2017

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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, Michael Naughton, Chris Menegoni and Patricia Pruitt. Greg Garrison was absent
- **Selectmen Present:** Richard Kuklewicz. Michael Nelson and Chris Boutwell arrived at 6:05 PM.
- **Others Present:** Town Administrator Steven Ellis and Accountant Carolyn Olsen.
- The Finance Committee Chair announced that the meeting is being recorded by MCATV, and asked if anyone else was recording the meeting. There was no one in the audience.

Minutes -

Selectmen Moved:

To approve the minutes of March 8, 2017.

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of March 8, 2017.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements

GMRSD Director of Business and Operations Joanne Blier provided the actual Fiscal Year 2018 debt payment amount for the school window project. The actual debt payment will be \$645 higher than the placeholder. This will change the affordable Assessment from \$9,355,915 to \$9,356,560.

Finance Committee Moved:

To revise the Fiscal Year 2018 Affordable Assessment from \$9,355,915 to \$9,356,560.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Budget Discussion and Deliberation

- Mr. Hanold noted that the DPW Discretionary Account request is shown at \$100,000, but the CIC only recommended \$75,000. It was also noted that there was a reserve fund transfer request for this account this year, indicating that the annual appropriation may not be sufficient. Mr. Bowman would like to keep DPW discretionary account at \$100,000.
- Next year a DPW maintenance and vehicle replacement schedule should be provided at the beginning of the budget process.
- Mr. Ellis noted that the request for an air exchange for the Carnegie could not be incorporated in a Green Communities grant.
- Due to the changes in public records requirements, software has been developed to assist towns in meeting the new requirements for recordkeeping and tracking of public records requests. The software contains prompts, reminders, and maintains archives of both requests and materials provided. This has resulted in a special article request for \$4,500 for software to handle public records requests. This request includes purchase, installation, and the first year's annual maintenance and license fee of \$2,000 to \$2,500.

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- Mr. Naughton noted that is it unusual that we'll be able to make all transfers to various stabilization funds from taxation as provided by our financial policies.
- Ms. Olsen suggested that funding all requests would result in a General Town Stabilization Fund balance about \$300,000 below the recommended minimum per our financial policies. If this trend were to continue, the General Stabilization Fund could be depleted in a few years.
- Ms. Olsen also offered the suggestion that it may be prudent to defer appropriations for less critical special articles until a fall Special Town Meeting, at which time they could be funded from available Free Cash, if any, rather than depleting current reserves.
- The special article request to increase the burn dump appropriation by \$50,000 will likely be withdrawn because the past cost estimates to cap the burn dump have turned out to be woefully lower than what is currently needed The new cost estimate is in excess of \$2 million.
- Mr. Ellis suggested that the Library articles for the air exchange and roof repair are needed immediately. Mr. Ellis is not suggesting that building study should be delayed, and noted that if the study is required for grant applications, that timing should be taken into effect when determining the timing of the study appropriation.
- Mr. Ellis hopes to have final numbers for the Insurance and Legal requests next week.
- There was lengthy discussion on the proposed DPW facility, effects of capping or not capping the burn dump, impacts of various DPW facility sites on the overall viability of available Industrial Park lots, and reiteration of the Libraries' needs.
- Mr. Hanold asked if anyone had any suggestions for reductions in the operating budget requests. Mr. Naughton did not feel any pressure to find places to cut as it appears we will have adequate funding, but continues to be concerned about the Legal budget and suggests that the Town needs to figure out how to spend less money on lawyers. A discussion followed about possibly getting regular reports on what legal expenses have been paid for, such as Appellate Tax Board cases, tax title costs, collective bargaining negotiations, etc.
- Mr. Hanold took a hard look at the departmental budgets, specifically looking for multiple tweaks within a department that may have resulting in modest overestimates of total costs. He found 3 areas of interest. The first is a personal issue for him, but since it's only for \$300 he's willing to let it go. This is the request for updated zoning maps that never gets done, as well as the questions of who's responsible for defining needs, starting process, and paying for it. The second area is buried in the DPW WPCF Subsidiary. This was regularly budgeted at \$59,000, recently dropped to \$50,000, and still shows no appreciable expenditures. Mr. Hanold would suggest reducing this appropriation by \$5,000. The final area is that he is left with an uncomfortable feeling with the Public Works Budget in general, and would propose a total reduction of \$4,000 to offset perceived caution in a number of areas. Mr. Hanold took the same approach to Police and Dispatch, but felt there were enough uncertainties with new employees that the size of the budgets may be justified.
- Ms. Pruitt spoke said that she feels the DPW Superintendent has a good understanding of what he needs to spend, and she does not see any need to make a general reduction in his budget at this time.
- Ms. Olsen offered the possibility of reducing the Reserve Fund request in light of the apparent approval of all operating budget requests.
- Mr. Ellis noted that the Conservation Trust currently has a balance of \$50,000, and the additional appropriation to that fund may be something we can delay funding.

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Next Meeting Dates:

March 22, 2017	CIC update, budget deliberations and recommendations
March 29, 2017	MEETING DOWNSTAIRS. Budget Recommendations
April 5, 2017	Final meeting with CIC - Discuss Carnegie roof, library building needs study and Dry Hill Road articles, vote on Special Article requests, review draft Finance Committee Report
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 8:17 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits:

- March 8, 2017 Minutes
- Summary of requests and potential sources

Minutes Approved March 22, 2017

John Hanold, Finance Committee Chair

Richard Kuklewicz, Selectboard Chair