

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM
1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2018
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The Chair opens the meeting

- Meeting was opened at 6:00 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room
- **Selectboard Members present:** Michael Nelson and Christopher Boutwell. Richard Kuklewicz was absent.
- **Finance Committee members present:** Jen Audley, Fred Bowman, Chris Menegoni and Richard Widmer, Michael Naughton and John Hanold. Greg Garrison was absent.
- **Others Present:** Town Administrator Steve Ellis and Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen
- The Finance Committee Chair announced that the meeting is being recorded by MCCI, and asked if anyone else was recording the meeting. No one else was recording the meeting.

Minutes –

Selectboard Moved:

To approve the minutes of November 29, 2017.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of December 13, 2017.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Review budget requests:

Mr. Hanold noted that there are several proposed changes in staffing, primarily increases in hours, and suggested that once positions become benefited, it becomes difficult to reduce hours and eliminate benefits at a later time.

Select additional questions for departments

Any additional questions not addressed by narratives or the budget explanations should be given to Mr. Hanold for distribution to departments.

Decide on additional departments for budget meetings

- The Building Inspector has requested to meet with the Finance Committee.
- Mr. Hanold would like to get more information from the Treasurer regarding her request for additional hours.
- Mr. Ellis suggested that the discussion with RiverCulture should engage the planning department generally. The calendar and agenda will be corrected to reflect this.
- Mr. Naughton would like to meet with the Board of Health since the narrative addressed the issue of the town nurse as well as the request for uniforms, protective gear and a departmental vehicle.
- Mr. Naughton would like a discussion about the increase in the IT budget for consulting. Mr. Naughton would like more information on the three things included in the description of the increased consulting request. The questions, when answered, may eliminate the need to meet.

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- Ms. Audley wonders at what point it makes sense to have an IT department rather than a consultant and if there would there be economy of scales to have one person handle cell phone contracts, and oversight of all systems. Mr. Ellis noted that while some software installations have little need for the consultant's time, with others, such as the implementation of the Citizen Serve software, the consultant acts as a project manager. The current consulting fees are well below the cost of having an IT Director on staff, and Mr. Ellis doesn't think that it currently makes sense to have an IT employee on staff. Mr. Naughton noted a 50% increase in three budget cycles and thinks it makes sense to bring up this question every year.
- Mr. Hanold proposed that the questions be assembled and he will send them out. IT current level of effort, and what the increase would include.

Mr. Naughton noted that the new format of the narratives and the information at the bottom of each budget request are very helpful. In prior years, questions were distributed and answers received, but they were not coordinated into a single document. Ms. Olsen will add questions and answers, both from e-mail and meetings, at bottom of each budget tab.

Stipends

Ms. Olsen provided copies of the May 3, 2008 Schedules I and II for historical comparison. Other than step and COLA increases for full-time elected positions, two requests for stipend increases were received. One came from the Board of Assessors, which is requesting an increase from \$1,500 to \$1,800. In Fiscal Year 2009 these stipends were cut from \$3,500 for the Chairman and \$2,940 for other members to \$1,000 for each member. The second was a request for a \$110 increase to \$5,600 from the Emergency Management Director.

The Board of Assessor's request arose because the stipend hadn't changed in many years and used to be much higher. Mr. Naughton noted that the Board of Assessors is required to have specific training, while the Board of Health and Board of Selectmen don't have this requirement. Mr. Bowman noted that the current stipends are not even close to what they were in the past, and is in favor of \$1,800 for the Assessors.

Mr. Hanold is bothered by the episodic approach and feels that there should be a general review rather than a response to specific requests. He notes this is a difficult year and is inclined not to have any stipend increases in FY2019.

Mr. Naughton would like a more general rule of thumb for stipends. And if we turn this request down, will there be an alternative review process prior to Fiscal Year 2020?

Mr. Ellis said that one basis for stipends could be the latest FRCOG study, which will be forwarded to members. Some bases for comparison between boards are certification and level of effort required, as well as whether the stipend is intended to be an incentive or a token of appreciation.

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Mr. Hanold asked if we want to act on it this year, and if so asks for a volunteer to study and come back with a recommendation. Mr. Bowman would like to know the time commitment of various boards and positions. Mr. Naughton would like to look at the study and come back next week to discuss it further.

Mr. Bowman suggested approving the current requests for change and then reviewing all stipends after the budget process.

Ms. Audley noted that, when adjusted to today's dollars, the Board of Health stipend is less than it was in 2008 and the Board of Selectmen stipend is about the same as it was in 2008. The Board of Assessors was cut back the most and has recovered the least.

Mr. Ellis suggested that, as people look at the FROCG study, they be aware that in some communities a particular board may be replacing a professional employee.

Ms. Audley also asked to know what BOA members and EMD are expected to have as qualifications, job description and time commitment/level of effort required.

Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements

Select Finance Committee member(s) to attend meet with a team from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) from 1-2:30 on January 23rd at the GMRSD Central Office. This is a review visit from DESE, with the focus anticipated to be on town officials' perspective on how the district manages its budget, setting priorities, communicating effectively, and the quality of town-district working relationships.

Mr. Naughton will attend.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits:

- Minutes of December 13, 2017
- Draft Schedules I and II for Fiscal Year 2019
- Schedules I and II for Fiscal Year 2009
- Updated budget calendar

Next Meeting Dates:

January 17, 2018	Police/Dispatch, Approve Schedules I & II, Review 2-15-18 STM warrant articles
January 24, 2018	DPW, Governor's Budget/State Aid Est., Recommendations for 2-15-18 STM warrant articles
January 31, 2018	GMRSD
February 7, 2018	Non-capital special article requests
February 14, 2018	WPCF, review potential 3-15-18 STM articles
February 21, 2018	Airport, FCTS, 3-15-18 STM votes if appropriate

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February 28, 2018	Final New Growth, Revenue Estimates, Affordable Assessment
March 7, 2018	Libraries, RiverCulture
March 14, 2018	Preliminary budget recommendations
March 21, 2018	CIC Recommendations
March 28, 2018	Final Budget Recommendations
April 4, 2018	Draft FC Report, Policy actions
April 11, 2018	Revise FC Report, vote on articles
April 18, 2018	final re-votes, if required, approve FC Report
EOY Recap	How beneficial/useful were the department narratives?