

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM  
1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2018  
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The Chair opens the meeting

- Meeting was opened at 6:02 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room
- **Finance Committee members present:** John Hanold, Jen Audley, Fred Bowman, Michael Naughton, Richard Widmer, and Chris Menegoni. Greg Garrison was absent.
- **Selectboard members present:** None
- **Others present:** None
- The Finance Committee Chair announced that the meeting is being recorded by MCTV and asked if anyone else was recording the meeting. No one else was recording the meeting.

**Minutes**

The minutes of September 5<sup>th</sup> were unavailable.

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of September 19, 2018 as revised.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

**License/Appointment and Public Records Software**

Town Clerk Deb Bourbeau and Executive Assistant Wendy Bogusz were unavailable. Mr. Hanold provided some information he received from Assistant Town Clerk Mandy Hampp that the appointment software makes it easier to produce information than searching hard copy records.

**Budget Cycle/Process- discuss any proposed changes**

Mr. Widmer would like Jon Dobosz to come in. Mr. Widmer sees Park & Recreation as a high performing segment of town and wonders what they could accomplish if their budget were increased. Mr. Widmer also wonders if there are ways for departments to strengthen each other, and how Parks and Recreation interacts and works with the schools.

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Mr. Bowman would like to know how the Libraries have progressed in the building needs study. He is concerned that money has been appropriated but not yet spent. Mr. Naughton wonders if that question should start with the Finance Committee or the Capital Improvements Committee.

Mr. Bowman stated that the CIC is looking at various projects and infrastructure needs.

Ms. Audley suggested that the budget process included updates on all current special articles.

Mr. Hanold noted the intention to notify CIC of the amount available for capital items in December and suggested that the preliminary CIC report may not be necessary.

Mr. Hanold suggested having non-money discussion with departments prior to the regular budget process.

Ms. Audley requested a way to ask departments if they want to expand services, and what that would cost, before they submit their budget request.

Mr. Hanold summarized that there is interest in having the Town Administrator initiate with departments what service changes they are considering, and get endorsement from governing boards before budget creation. Mr. Naughton added that the finance committee should first have a meeting in early December with the Selectboard, Town Administrator and any departments with a vision for the future.

Ms. Audley would like departments to have the opportunity to say "this is what we'd like to do" instead of developing budget in terms of what are we going to cut this year. Ms. Audley would like to get more vision into the budget process.

Mr. Widmer noted that we seem to spend the largest amount of time on the smallest amounts of money and that we should be asking how best to spend the money we have available.

Mr. Naughton questioned if asking what it would cost to continue current services is the best approach.

Mr. Bowman asked if we should be preparing for another recession in the next four or five years.

Mr. Naughton noted we spend a lot of time talking with departments without making decisions, but the decision making time seemed compressed and without time for discussion. Asked for one or two meetings to discuss and compare needs prior voting recommendations.

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Ms. Audley asked to adjust the meeting schedule so that there is time each week to discuss the department hearings of the previous week, as well as writing pieces of the Finance Committee Report to Town Meeting as part of the discussion.

Mr. Bowman wants a complete review of the WPCF and a thorough discussion of what happened and why it happened. Mr. Menegoni asked that we make every effort to re-establish the Montague Process.

Mr. Hanold accepted responsibility to revise the budget calendar and incorporate items discussed tonight.

**Stipends**

Mr. Hanold asked for a conclusion.

Mr. Bowman said the inspector stipends need to be increased. There was general consensus to support an increase to \$35, but it was felt that this needed to be presented to the Selectboard first.

There was interest in knowing if permit fees covered the costs of inspections. It was unknown if Mr. Rice has presented his request for new inspector stipends to the Selectboard.

Mr. Naughton is willing to vote for \$35 per hour for inspectors with the caveat that we hear back whether the fees are covering the cost of the service. Mr. Naughton further noted that the new permit software should easily enable this determination.

Mr. Menegoni is in favor of the \$35 per inspection only if the permit fees cover the cost.

Finance Committee Moved:

To support the Building inspector's proposal to increase stipends for part time inspectors to \$35 per inspection and look forward to hearing more information once he has brought the proposal to the Selectboard.

Vote: 6 In Favor      0 Opposed      0 Abstained

Mr. Bowman noted that for the animal and barn inspectors are paid for their expertise rather than their time. Mr. Bowman recommended a 2% increase for these two inspectors.

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Mr. Naughton asked how often stipends will be reviewed. The committee previously discussed revisiting the stipend amounts every three to five years. Mr. Naughton prefers a 5% increase to 2% as the 2% over three years is insignificant.

It was decided to increase all non-board stipends by 5%, rounded to the nearest five dollars.

Board stipends will be determined by increasing the Selectboard by 5%, paying the Board of Health and Board of Assessors 75% of the Selectboard, and paying the chairs 10% more than the members, with all amounts rounded to the nearest five dollars.

It was also decided to do future adjustments every five years.

Ms. Audley will produce a list of proposed stipends for a final vote at the next meeting.

**Taxing to Levy Limit – review policy- postponed**

**Presentation of budget information to Town Meeting members - postponed**

**Next Meeting Date:** October 17, 2018. Topics will include facilities evaluation timeline, finance policy questions, review of presentation of Town Meeting information

**Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements - None**

**Meeting adjourned at 8:24 PM**

**List of Documents and Exhibits:**

- Minutes of September 19, 2018
- Draft FY20 Schedules I and II