

Town of Ayer

Finance Committee

Ayer Massachusetts, 01432



Location: Ayer Town Hall, Great Hall
Finance Committee Minutes

Tuesday January 4, 2011

Present: Brian Muldoon; Chairman, Jesse Reich; Vice Chairman, Scott Houde; Clerk, and member Andrew Crowley

Absent:

One committee position open

Called to order at 7:04 pm by Brian Muldoon

- Mail
 - None
- Minutes
 - Minutes for 5/12/10, 5/26/10, 6/9/10, 9/8/10, 9/22/10, 9/29/10, 10/21/10, 10/27/10 and 12/16/10 were presented for approval
 - Motion to approve minutes for 5/12/10, 5/26/10, 6/9/10, 9/8/10, 9/22/10, 9/29/10, 10/21/10, 10/27/10 and 12/16/10 as presented

Motion	SH
Second	AC
B. Muldoon	Aye
J. Reich	Aye
S. Houde	Aye
A. Crowley	Aye
Vote	4 - 0

- Outstanding minutes are 12/8/10.
- Budget Review
 - Building Inspector Gabe Vellante presented a budget of \$40,486.00 with a 3% decrease and \$39,866.00 with a 5% decrease
 - The assistant position was funded at \$15,000 annually in 2005 and now only \$1,500. This decrease is manageable now but will have to be addressed if the housing sector grows.
 - 5 years ago there was a specific line item for microfiche of \$1,000 which now comes from office supplies due to budget cuts.
 - \$2,000 was voted at town hall for education expense. Gabe has concerns of the training needed for the inspectors to stay up on codes due to cut education budget. Currently, the town pays for all seminars or courses but not for the time the inspectors spend in class.
 - The fees for plumbing and electric inspections have not increased in years. The electric and plumbing inspectors are paid a percentage of the fees collected. The fees for Ayer are well below average when compared to the surrounding region. There is concern that the inspectors may leave their positions due to no increase in pay.
 - Inspections raise between \$80,000 - \$120,000 in revenue for the town. That money goes directly into the general budget and not back to the department directly. The only exception is the electric and plumbing which are percentage contracts. The department is currently budgeted for \$41,000. The department is a cash cow for the town.
 - BM – Affects of the cuts?
 - The department is manageable given the current state of the housing market.
 - Should there be a revolving fund for microfiche?
 - The funds go to the town but not back to the department. Currently the department is well behind in microfiche conversion of all building plans due to budget constraints.
 - The fees charged are user fees and only affect the individuals requiring services.

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- Town of Ayer Assessors – Tom Hogan; Assessor, Paul Bresnahan and Ed Cornellier; Board of Assessors
 - The budget presented for FY2012 is \$151,317 with a 3% decrease and \$148,117 with a 5% decrease. The Consulting line item was the only cut for each budget.
 - One area of concern is if any cases for assessors goes to appellate court it could cost the town \$10,000 or more. The current budget is not sustainable for the future.
 - The Commonwealth has the power to make demands of the municipalities and if they do not comply have the work completed and then charge the municipalities back through the Cherry Sheet.
 - Consulting work is primarily on personal property. In FY2011 the town is spending \$15,000 to have existing personal property valued and taxed. New tax dollars realized were \$75,000.
 - The Commonwealth recently adopted to stagger the towns across three years of requirement for reassessment. There is no change to the town's schedule.
 - Money is still available in the FY2011 budget to get through the remainder of the year. Most appellate cases are settled by Tom Hogan before they go to court and that keeps costs manageable.
 - There may be some staffing issues. The current assistant, Claire, is ill and it is no timetable for her return. The department is getting by with assistance from others in town hall but a temporary worker may be necessary.
- Town Accountant Lisa Gabree presented a Finance budget for FY2012 of \$195,984.62 with a 3% decrease and \$191,943.70 with a 5% decrease.
 - The second assistant position that was budgeted for \$12,000 in FY2011 has been reduced to \$300 for FY2012. The position will become a college internship. Assistance is really only needed at year end August and September.
 - Town Administrator Robert Pontbriand is currently preparing the IT department budget. Should computer hardware and software fall into this department? The Finance department has historically maintained the MUNIS software and any hardware for town hall employees. The hardware does not fall under Capital Planning due to the cost below \$10,000
 - JR – Can the purchases be pooled to be greater than \$10,000?
 - FinCom will follow up with Capital Planning
 - The school department work does not go away completely with regionalization. There are grant specific to the town that have to be administered until they run out.
- The Finance Committee budget has not been submitted to Lisa Gabree
 - Motion to submit a budget for the Finance Committee of the current \$700 less 3% and 5% by Jesse Reich
 - Motion to amend the current motion from reduction of 3% and 5% to \$500 (reduction of 28.5%)

Motion	AC
Second	SH
B. Muldoon	Aye
J. Reich	Aye
S. Houde	Aye
A. Crowley	Aye
Vote	4 - 0

- Discussion of the current opening on Finance Committee
 - A notice regarding the opening has been posted in the Public Spirit and the town website. No responses to date.
 - The Board of Selectmen has asked Pauline Conley to serve as the fifth member of the Finance Committee. The Board has left it to the discretion of FinCom to request she be placed on the board.
 - After discussion the committee is not unanimous in the choice of Pauline Conley and prefer for keep the position open for a few more weeks.
 - Next meeting is 1/5/2011

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- Motion to adjourn at 8:54pm

Motion	JR
Second	SH
B. Muldoon	Aye
J. Reich	Aye
S. Houde	Aye
A. Crowley	Aye
Vote	4 - 0

Brian Muldoon, Chairman _____ Date _____

Jesse Reich, Vice Chairman _____ Date _____

Scott Houde, Clerk _____ Date _____

Andrew Crowley, Member _____ Date _____