

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Town of Becket
557 Main Street
Becket, MA 01223

Meeting Minutes for October 17, 2013

Call to Order: 7:10 PM

PRESENT:

Committee (FC): Steve LaBelle (SL); Ann Spadafora (AS); Dan Parnell (DP); Maria Wallington (MW); Jeremy Dunn (JD)
Board of Selectmen (B of S): Jeanne Pryor (JP)
Town Administrator: Ed Gibson (EG)
Public: Marc Karlberg

AGENDA:

1. **Review and approve minutes:** JD moved and DP seconded that the minutes for August 8, 2013 and September 5, 2013 be accepted as amended. Motion **passed unanimously**.
2. **Correspondence and transfers**
 - a. ATFC Annual Meeting is coming up October 19.
 - b. CBRSD management is requesting a meeting with the FC and B of S. FC suggested meeting at the next FC meeting November 7.
 - c. No transfers
3. **Town Administrator's input**
 - a. Proposed Becket town By-Law amendments include a Section outlining the Finance Committee responsibilities for the town meeting. The FC would be the committee to assist the town administrator in establishing the capital plan, with which the FC members agreed unanimously. Voting by the town on By-Law amendments may be at a special town meeting or at the annual meeting. The B of S has not yet decided on when vote will occur.
 - b. EG has suggested to the B of S that a grant be submitted to Berkshire Regional Planning for acquiring computer automation capabilities for Health Board record keeping. FC supports this request if the additional costs for using the program are offset by revenues.
 - c. North Becket water issues: Mullen House and Art Center water systems have problems with their water supply meeting DEP requirements. Sand filters were placed with funds from municipal building repairs. Testing continues to see if this will solve the problem. A filtration system will be needed to comply with requirements from DEP which will cost several thousand dollars. It has also been mentioned as an alternative that a new well could be drilled for the use of Mullen House, Arts Center and the Athenaeum (which had similar water issues). This might not solve the issue in the long run since the current well is already a deep one at about 400 feet. EG also brought up the possibility that a water district for North Becket may eventually be needed to provide water for that whole area.
 - d. Three side doors of the town hall are rotting out. Other doors have closure problems. The front entrance way is not handicapped accessible due to steep grade of asphalt at the end of the ramp. Hand rails are needed. Alternative fixes are under consideration and will be reflected in funding requests.
 - e. Firehouse – ambulance bay floor has problems with swale and drainage. FC suggested looking at the contract for the work done a couple of years ago on the floor for contractor responsibilities to repair the problem.
 - f. The mower used to mow the grass around town hall and the ball park, etc. is past its expected lifetime and will need to be replaced soon. The machine EG is considering recommending will be more productive (reduce mowing time) but will cost around \$12,000 to \$15,000.

4. Revisit Stabilization and Free Cash Policies

- a. Discussion of the policy draft about the use of free cash, stabilization funds, and overlay surplus led to several recommendations which will be incorporated in a new draft by DP for **review at the next meeting**.

5. Discuss how Dept Heads can design and implement budgets (Ed and Dan)

- a. Some departments are doing budgeting well and some are not. Some work needs to be done with the way some departments prepare their budget. Highway and Police departments are doing reasonably well. Some departments and boards submit the same budget every year and request extra money when they run over budget. This suggests a more detailed budget preparation is needed by the departments. Department heads need to be held to their budget and therefore need to know how to do budgeting and monitoring of budgets throughout the year. Dan is willing to help with education for responsible parties as EG deems appropriate.

6. CBRSD calculation charge – is Becket's cost increased?

- a. Our lawyer confirmed that by taking no action on the changed budget amounts, it is the same as a 'no' vote at a town meeting. This is the approach the B of S is going to take. DP pointed out that the legislature over-turned the governor's plan to comply with the statutes setting the assessment process and delayed the implementation of the effort to adjust assessments to a fair level. He suggests we identify other adversely affected towns to help work on the legislature to go with the governor's plan and stop this unfair assessment of Becket for school costs.

7. Suggestions for Names for Finance Committee member replacement for JD starting next fiscal year.

- a. Marc Karlberg, who attended this meeting, expressed an interest in possibly running for the finance board. Several other possibilities are still being asked about their interest by FC members.

8. Any other business

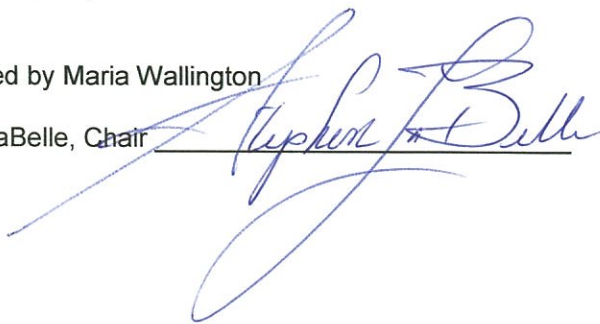
- a. JD asked about the law suit costs. Depositions are still being done and will probably result in more billing soon. We have not exceeded moneys already appropriated.

Next meeting: November 7, 2013

Adjourn: 9:52 PM

Respectfully Submitted by Maria Wallington

Approved by Steve LaBelle, Chair

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to Steve LaBelle, is written over the signature line and extends upwards and to the left.