

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes – April 5, 2016

Meeting brought to order at 6:30 pm

Members Present: Dylan, Ralph, Mary, Jeff, John, Bill

Members Absent: Skip

Others Speakers Present: Doug Finn

1) The first item was to accept the minutes from the March 29nd meeting. Vote was unanimous

2) The next item discussed was the FY17 Budget Overview

- The current budget, including FinCom Recommended budgets for ones we had voted, and Requested budgets for any we had not, and assuming \$100,000 is put towards stabilization and free cash is used to pay off the Energy Loan, leaves the town with \$268,096 in Free Cash
- Discussion followed regarding Free Cash target. John was in favor of a target of \$700,000 and a minimum of \$500,000
- The BOS has not expressed an opinion to Doug on their Free Cash target

3) The next item discussed was the Selectman's Salary budget (122-5100)

- The Finance Committee had previously recommended the \$7,000 requested, which was unchanged from FY16
- Since then, the request had been revised to \$17,000
- After a discussion about this increase, and while agreeing that a lot of time and effort goes into the role of Selectman even if the stipend were increased, due to the restrictions on the FY17 budget the Finance Committee could not recommend this increase and so took no action, leaving their previous recommendation of \$7,000 in place

4) The next item discussed was the Selectman's Staff Salary budget (122-5110)

- There was a grade reclassification for the Admin Assistant
- There was a request for a new part-time position within the Administrator's office to help manage the Planning Board meetings and minutes, among other tasks
- There was resistance from Dylan to increasing staff/hours given the budget constraints the town is facing
- This budget was tabled and would be taken up at next week's meeting

5) The next item discussed was the Accountant's Salary budget (135-5110)

- A 4-step increase was requested for the Town Accountant, based in part on the informal study conducted by the Town Administrator's office
- The Committee agreed that the Accountant was doing a good job, and that the feedback from the study did warrant a conversation
- Due both to the budget constraints this year, and also the lack of a larger overhaul of the classification schedule, the Committee was reluctant to recommend such a large increase
- A recommendation of 2 steps was suggested, which would hopefully articulate to the Town Accountant the importance we place on their position and it being fairly compensated, while at the same time remaining cognizant of the concerns previously mentioned

A motion to recommend an Accountant Salary budget of \$37,647 passed 4-1-1. This equates to a 2-step increase

6) The next item discussed was the Legal Expense budget (151-5110)

- This budget had been previously voted, but it appeared the requested budget had been revised
- Upon further review, the Legal Expense budget previously submitted and recommended by the Finance Committee was the correct one, so no further action was taken at this time

7) The next item discussed was the Contracted Services budget (159-5410)

- This budget was revised higher mainly due to the addition of the FCAT funding being added, \$77,000
- This expense was previously handled in a revolving fund, but now the revenue was being taken into local receipts and the expenses showing up here
- Doug was able to reduce the revised requested amount down on a couple of line items, bringing the new amount to \$171,850, which represents only a \$600 increase from the previous year once the FCAT addition is considered

A motion to recommend a Contracted Services budget of \$171,850 passed unanimously

8) The next item discussed was the Police Payroll budget (210-5110)

- Since the previous version, this budget had been revised higher to fund a new full time police position. Additionally, the Quinn Bill and Overtime pay line items were also increased as a result of the increased staffing
- This budget was held, to be discussed at the joint session with the BOS, and then will be voted the following week by the Finance Committee
- John abstained from all parts of the discussion regarding Police payroll

9) The next item discussed was the Deerfield Elementary School budget (300-5400)

- Dylan suggested a reduction of \$8,900 to the overall budget. This was the amount which was broken out into a new line item to fund tablet leases which is already being done in FY16. There was not, however, a reduction related to the part of the budget this was funded from in FY16
- This is something that has been seen in a number of budgets, and Dylan opposes this manner of budgeting

A motion to recommend a DES budget of \$4,460,323 passed unanimously

10) The next items discussed were the Frontier (312-5400) & Frontier Transportation budgets (315-5800)

- These two budgets were going to be brought up in the joint meeting the following night, so will be held for now and taken up again next week

11) The next item discussed was the FCTS budget (320-5410)

- The tech school was commended by many on the committee for the job they do in preparing and articulating their budget
- There was a reduction in the assessment from the previous year, driven by a reduction in students attending. There was an increase in the per student cost
- There are multiple capital projects underway at FCTS to repair the roof, windows, and driveway. These will be bonded, and will cause increases in debt services costs in future years, though not affecting FY17

A motion to recommend a FCTS budget of \$238,156 passed unanimously

12) The next item discussed was the Highway Expense budget (422-5420)

- Kevin had provided a revised budget request in the amount of \$245,400
- The committee very much appreciated Kevin's work on the budget this year, and decided to agree with his requests on all line items except one, Tree Work
- For the Tree Work line item, the committee also agreed with Kevin that it needs to be increased from the previous year amount of \$22,000, the question was how much we could afford to increase it to
- The committee suggested various amount from \$30,000 to the full \$36,00 requested – most of the suggestions were at \$32,000, which would result in a budget of \$241,400

A motion to recommend a Contracted Services budget of \$241,400 passed 5-1

13) The next item discussed was the Senior Center Expense budget (541-5420)

- The reason this was held off was that the Committee had not felt completely comfortable with the requested budget which did not include any amounts for Health Insurance, even though there is one person in that department who is eligible to receive them
- Doug agreed that he had some discomfort of this arrangement, but that he stopped short of not supporting the budget as it stood

A motion to recommend a Senior Center Expense budget of \$24,108 passed unanimously

14) The next item discussed was the Tilton Library budget (610-5400)

- This budget had been resubmitted to exactly a 2.5% increase
- There was some discussion about the fact that there was no mention during the initial budget presentation that there were also requests going through the capital committee
- The Committee reflected on how they had originally planned to recommend a budget of \$160,250, which was about a 2% increase, when presented with the initial 9% budget
- There was disappointment from the Committee that the library budget still had additional hours in it, when during the presentation it was made to seem that the amount up to the original request was for the extra hours, and the rest of the budget was as low as it could be: only to see most of the additional request withdrawn, yet the additional hours remain

A motion to recommend a Tilton Library budget of \$160,250 passed unanimously

15) The next items discussed were the Summer Swim (630-5400) and Tri-Town Beach (630-5410) budgets

- Both the Town Administrator as well as the Finance Committee have had little luck in receiving information regarding these programs, or budgets
- Doug was going to attempt to put more information together for next week's meeting
- Dylan made it clear that without additional information, his recommendation would be to reduce these budgets
- The question was asked about why the Rec Dept doesn't run the Summer Swim program – as per Doug, the head of the Rec Dept does not want to do it

16) The next item discussed was the Snow & Ice budget (423-5400)

- This budget was revised up \$2,000 as Kevin recognized some Snow & Ice related expenses that had been passed through his Highway budget but can be put into this one

A motion to recommend a Snow & Ice budget of \$85,000 passed unanimously

17) The next item discussed was Article 3 from the Special Town meeting Warrant

- This article contemplates paying off the Energy loan in full
- This article does not direct a revenue source – the Finance Committee will return to the source issue at a future date, it would come from Free Cash or Stabilization

A motion to recommend Article 3 passed unanimously

A number of other articles from Both Regular and Special Town Meeting Warrants were read and discussed, but not voted.

18) Next, a number of Articles were voted

- Article 9, ATM Warrant: WWTP salary, \$240,146. Expense was not yet voted
- Article 16, ATM Warrant: Unfunded Sick Leave, \$10,000
- Article 17, ATM Warrant: Reserve Fund, \$80,000
- Article 15, ATM Warrant: Smith Vocational tuition and transportation, \$17,556 for tuition, \$2,800 for SPED, and \$12,600 for transportation

19) The last two items discussed were:

- Article 20, ATM Warrant: Montague Legal Defense, \$10,000. This is an amount Deerfield would be giving to the town of Montague towards the legal costs in their case regarding Berkshire Gas and the NED pipeline project
- Article 21, ATM Warrant: Mosquito Testing, \$11,000. This is to test mosquitos in the town of Deerfield to check for what illnesses they carry which could be harmful to people in the area

Both of these items required more clarity, and would be brought up at the Joint meeting the following night. No further action was taken at this time.

Next meeting scheduled for April 6th with the BOS. The next regular Finance Committee meeting scheduled for Monday April 11th. Meeting adjourned at 10:10pm