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Advisory Board  
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### April 3, 2012 Meeting Minutes

Attending: Harold Simmons, Christine Muir, Dan St Jean, Dana Metzler, Ron Mikol, Joe Dean  
Meeting opened at 7:00 p.m.

#### Prior Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes from March 5, 12, and 20 were unanimously approved.

#### Transfer Requests

There were no transfer requests to consider tonight.

#### Fire Department Wages

New Chief Brian Rich informed the board that he estimates a \$7000 shortfall in the department's wages. Firefighters are paid only twice a year, so the balance in the account overstates the actual balance available. The current balance is \$7010, and \$9350 is due for service from December through February. The department had estimated 4 hours of training per person, but then learned of the state requirement to pay for all hours of mandatory training attended. We are told that the amount requested for FY2013 is accurate.

Joe asked if we can defer payment and propose an article for Special Town Meeting that would allow free cash to be used to make the payments. The board feels that \$7000 is too much to withdraw from the Reserve account at this time.

It was suggested that the firefighters be paid quarterly in the future to allow for everyone to have a better understanding of the department's budget. Andy thinks it might violate employment laws to make payments a certain amount of time after work is done (in which case we should evaluate the current practice).

Brian offered to send the Advisory Board information each month or quarter, letting us know of the wages accumulated in that period, but the Board feels that is beyond our scope. We can't keep track of money notices in multiple places; we rely on the "burn sheet" for accuracy.

#### GDRSD Stabilization Fund Request

Jim Frey and Alison Manugian returned with Jerry Martin to discuss the school district's request for a Stabilization Fund. They clarified that the person responsible for reviewing certain expenditures is someone in DOR, not Jerry. This gives an extra layer of oversight and security for the towns to know that the money is being spent responsibly.

They also clarified the ways in which money is transferred into such an account. It can happen by a separate article in Town Meeting, or it can become a line item in the budget. The board was more comfortable with the article option, detailing very clearly the specific amount requested from each town.



The school district's representatives also said that they could add language (Memorandum of Understanding) to the account requiring town meeting approval, of both towns, in order to take money out of the account. If either town did not approve the expenditure, it would not happen. Jim also noted that it would be possible for E&D funds to roll into stabilization in any particular year.

Jerry stated that having this account would increase the district's bond rating, even if the account balance seemed relatively low. Andy agreed that this would definitely be a positive thing.

### Police

The Police Chief sent a letter to the Board alerting us to the possibility of a shortfall in his account for fuel. It is possible that gas prices will rise to \$4.50 or more, leading the Chief to anticipate a potential deficit of \$5000-6000 in Vehicular Supplies. Dana suggested that we add a placeholder for a STM article, and leave the FY13 request as is until we see what really happens with the prices.

### FY13 Budget Review

We removed the wage increase in Zoning Board wages as that is really a stipend and not subject to COLA.

We raised the Town Hall Energy estimate to \$15,000 from \$10,000, based on past expenditures.

Dana questioned whether to put two separate line items for town rental properties together. The board felt it was okay to leave them separate.

We raised Police Other Supplies by \$350 to \$19,799. The new contract allotted an additional \$50 per officer for uniforms.

We changed the Fire Dept Training from \$7000 to \$5000.

We confirmed the Greater Lowell Voc/Tech School amount at \$151,765.

We discussed the Minuteman School line item and questioned whether it was needed again this year. Some think the student attending this school is in his last year, so we won't need the amount in FY13. Andy will call Pat Spencer at Minuteman to find out whether we should expect future bills.

The Highway Chapter 90 account has a balance of about \$90,000 and they anticipate a payout of \$130,000 in September or so. They submitted an estimate of \$40,000 for the design work related to a new salt shed.

We cleaned up the Town Debt and Interest line items so that the Requested and Recommended amounts are the same for each line item.

We agreed to keep the Unemployment Compensation fund at \$5,000.

We raised the Health Insurance line by \$5405 to account for an additional full-time employee (new fire chief). For the same reason, we increased FICA by \$609.

Dana noted that the Transfer Station budget needs to be finalized.

Building/Vehicle Liability Insurance was raised to \$89,494.



Dana asked whether Mary Beth Pallis had resubmitted the library's budget with the \$7500 increase Ron had suggested for HVAC service contract and removing mold from the back of the library building. The increase has not been added to our spreadsheet yet. Harold asked if this increase would be factored into the formula required to determine the book budget each year. We do not know.

#### Board of Selectmen

The BoS is okay with our recommendation of \$15,000 for Town Hall Energy.

They would like to put the Fire Chief salary in at \$42,000, plus \$5000 for Chief-only training (separate line item). The salary amount was reached after comparing salaries of Fire Chiefs in towns with similar population (3000-5000 people). Dana asked if we should prorate this salary figure for the remainder of FY2012, which would require an additional \$5300 (probably a transfer from Reserves). We would also need to add FICA and health insurance costs.

The BoS agreed to monitor the Fire Training budget so that if it runs low, some training can be deferred.

#### *Articles*

Dana asked the Board of Selectmen their stand on the following articles:

- Fire Dept Rescue Tool Upgrade: This is a cutting tool that will get through the steel on newer cars, which is different from older models. Ron said this is something that Dunstable will definitely use. The BoS might support this, but Walter suggested that we urge the Fire Dept to consider planning for items like this in the regular budget.
- Police Surveillance Cameras: The BoS does not support this article. Ken said cameras can be put in one by one over time, without this much cost all at once. At this point, Dana suggested that the Advisory Board should only consider those articles that have come from the BoS office, not directly from the various departments.
- Repair Town Hall Roof/Ceiling: The BoS supports this article, in the amount of \$5000.

#### *Town Administrator*

This position is being put off because it requires changes to the town charter.

#### *Additional Police Officer*

Dana asked if the BoS would support hiring an additional officer, especially as the Overtime budget keeps increasing each year. They are not opposed to the idea, as much for the financial point as for the town's general safety in having another officer on duty.

We questioned the police budget for new cruiser lease. Dan and Dana recalled that at some point, years ago, the Board realized that it was necessary and practical to replace the cruisers on a regular basis. The cost of repairs and maintenance were too high not to get into a regular replacement schedule.

#### *GDRSD Stabilization*

Harold asked if the BoS had considered the school district's request for a stabilization fund. They had not discussed it yet, and still had some questions. The Advisory Board was able to respond to some of those questions after hearing from Jim, Alison, and Jerry earlier tonight.

We adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

