

Town of Fairhaven

Finance Committee

Minutes of the meeting for <September 25, 2014>at the BPW Administration Building,
Arsene St., Fairhaven, MA

Members in attendance:

Chairman-John Roderiques, Robert A. Furtado, Scott Fernandes, Padraic Elliott, Kathi Carter,
Lisa Plante

Members absent:

Therese Szala
John Mota

Town of Fairhaven:

Jeffery Osuch- Executive secretary
Town Government Study Committee-
Phil Washko- Chairman
Bernard Roderick
Mark Badwey
Patricia Pacella
Dick Douglass
Richard Griffiths

Meeting was covered by government access television. Member of the press was not present.

Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Announced that the meeting was being recorded by government access TV. Chairman has to be notified if anyone else present is recording the meeting by video or audio.

Motion made by Lisa to accept the minutes from June 26, 2014. Seconded by Pat. Vote:
Unanimous

- Chairman distributes copies of newsletters from the Association of Town Finance Committees, and information, invitation, and agenda to the annual meeting of the ATFC on October 18, 2014.

Chairman advises that members interested in attending should contact him. Depending on how many members are interested in attending, there may be money left in our budget to cover the registration fee.

- Chairman presents a bill from the ATFC, in the amount of \$ 236, for the committee's annual association dues.
 - Scott motions for \$ 236.00 to pay the bill. Seconded by Pat. Vote: Unanimous.
The committee members initial the bill.

- Chairman presents a Reverse Fund Transfer request from Harbormaster David Darmofal. Mr. Darmofal seeks \$ 2,000 for repairs to the Harbormaster's boat.
 - Mr. Darmofal states, in the attached letter, that one of the boat's motors was damaged when it stuck a submerged rock while patrolling West Island.
 - Mr. Darmofal's letter explains that the repairs are estimated to cost \$ 5,868.34. The insurance company will cover the repair, but it carries a \$ 2,000 deductible.
 - Chairman states he has questions about whether the Procurement Laws have been followed.
 - Mr. Osuch states he has not received 3 quotes, as of yet.
 - Chairman states that a Special Town Meeting has been called for December 9, 2014. Because we have no proof that this is an emergency, transferring this money from the Reserve Fund at this point would be taking a vote away from Town Meeting.
 - Scott motions to table the Reserve Fund transfer request. Seconded by Lisa.
Vote: Unanimous

- Chairman advises all present that the House has passed the Fairhaven Town Administrator Act.
 - Chairman advises TGSC to place a "place holder" article on the December STM Warrant, with the hope that the Senate and Governor will approve the legislation.
 - Chairman states that when the TA takes over, the budget process will change and be more streamlined.
 - The TA will coordinate the whole budget process and present everything to the Finance Committee.
 - Because of this, Chairman states that we will hold off on making any changes to the Reserve Fund procedure. We don't want to make any "lame duck" changes for possibly a different Fin Com.
 - Fin Com will abide by the DOR procedures, in regard to Reserve Fund transfers, until that time.

- 7:16 PM. Town Government Study Committee meets with the Fin Com.
 - Mr. Washko asks if the current process provides for enough diversity of members?
 - Scott answers yes and the committee in general wants to see equal representation across all precincts.
 - Chairman states that the current process does nothing to stifle diversity.
 - Mr. Washko asks what if there are not enough in 1 precinct, but more people want to serve than are allowed in another precinct.
 - Scott would like to see there be 3 at-large members.
 - Chairman states they could develop ways to fill vacancies.
 - Chairman states that he has seen communities with between 5 and 15 members on their Fin Com.
 - Mr. Badwey states in his research he has found that the larger committees also act as advisory committees on all Articles.
 - Chairman states that the 1933 legislation that established the Precinct Chairman appointments wanted to be sure that all areas of the Town were equally represented.
 - Mr. Washko asks if any 1 precinct has every influenced the vote on a recommendation.
 - Chairman states that he can recall this happening maybe once every 3 or 4 years.
 - Lisa states that you should represent your precinct.
 - Mr. Badwey states when he was on the Fin Com he tended to vote the way he personally felt was correct.
 - Chairman states he doesn't care, either way, about how Fin Com members are appointed. It is still possible to "stack the deck" with the Moderator making the appointments.
 - Mr. Badwey asks if there should be 2 from each precinct?
 - Chairman states he feels there should be 1 from each precinct.
 - Scott feels it should be mandated in the legislation.
 - Mr. Washko states that the Moderator appointing process is the most common with other towns.
 - Pat says he would have a hard time leaving the present system. He likes the even representation across the Town.
Pat feels a smaller committee would be better, but states you would have to be careful about attendance to avoid quorum issues.
 - Mr. Badwey states that in his research he has found that the committee was full through most years.

- Chairman states there is a difference between having a full appointment of members and those members serving out their full term.
- Kathi states that anyone is free to go to a Precinct meeting and ask to be appointed.
- Mr. Griffiths asks if anyone has any other ideas for appointment.
- Lisa states she would like to see three people make the appointments.
- Chairman states that Fin Com is an independent committee that acts as a watch dog for Town Meeting.
- Mr. Waskho asks if there is an imbalance in the committee.
 - Pat states he wouldn't want to see the committee filled with people from all 1 precinct.
Pat states that he votes with the mindset of what is best for the whole Town.
 - Chairman states he believes what Pat is saying, but everyone is influenced by their neighborhood.
- Mr. Wasko asks if members think the committee should be an advisory board on all Articles.
 - Scott states that it should be stated what Articles we would make recommendations on.
 - Chairman states he feels the Fin Com has no business recommending on zoning issues or liquor licenses.
 - Pat feels that the financial issues are the essential part. States that we don't get any additional information on these issues than TM members do.
 - Chairman states that it is already an issue trying to get all the information the Fin Com needs on time.
We get contracts at the last minute. Putting off voting on them would incur additional costs by requiring an addition TM.
Revenue figures are constantly changing.
- Mr. Douglass states that every Article can have a financial implication.
 - Pat states we usually go by the immediateness of the cost.
 - Mr. Douglass asks if we should ask for the money numbers for all Articles.
- Mr. Washko states that the appointment of members at the precinct level is a little loose.
Some precinct chairman make the decision themselves and some put it to a vote of the members.
- Mr. Washko states that there are issues with the precinct caucuses that should be cleaned up.
 - Pat states it would be nice to hear about vacancies ahead of time at the precinct meetings.

- Chairman states that if you are going to require Fin Com members to be voted by the caucus, some precincts have continual quorum issues.
- Pat states that if you take too much power away from the Precinct Chairmen, you will have problems with people taken on the position.
- Mr. Washko asks if Fin Com members should have specific qualifications before being allowed to be a member.
 - Chairman asks what qualifications he has in mind.
Chairman states he hopes the appointing authority would speak with the candidate and be sure they could do the job.
Would not want to see a committee made up of only accountants and lawyers.
Chairman states that over the years many members have served with diverse backgrounds and qualifications and it would be a shame if they had been disqualified.
 - Pat states that the diversity that is obtained now is good and very restrictive qualifications would limit the number of people able to serve.
 - Mr. Douglass asks if there is any training available or a handbook.
 - Chairman explains what is available from the ATFC, but states that there are no uniform standards that apply to every Fin Com.
- Question of term length.
 - Members feel that 2 years is the minimum. Possibly 3 years.
- Mr. Badwey asks if there is any 1 change that would be beneficial.
 - Chairman states he would like to see more support from the Treasurer.
 - Would like to see the TA or Executive Secretary receive more information from those submitting requests.
- Mr. Roderick asks what the maximum of the Fin Com is now, and how a quorum is established.
 - Chairman states that the committee max is 13 members. 8 Members are presently appointed. The quorum has historically been established based on the number of appointed members.

8:17 PM. TGSC leaves the meeting.

- Chairman advises members to be prepared to meet the 1st 3 Thursdays in November and the 1st Thursday in December, to prepare for the STM.

8:25 PM. Pat motions to adjourn. Seconded by Lisa. Vote: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted by:

Robert A. Furtado
Finance Committee Secretary
(accepted 11-20-2014)