

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
JOINT MEETING
GREAT BARRINGTON SELECTBOARD & FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2011
6:00 P.M. – TOWN HALL - BOARD ROOM**

PRESENT: STEPHEN BANNON
ANDREW BLECHMAN
ALANA CHERNILA
DEB PHILLIPS
SEAN STANTON
KEVIN O'DONNELL, TOWN MANAGER

FINANCE COMMITTEE

PRESENT: Bud Atwood
Tom Blauvelt
Mark Lefenfeld
Alice Reilly
Jim Stark

I. Call to order:

II. Approval of minutes by Finance Committee

February 22, 2011

MOTION: Mark Lefenfeld to approve minutes from 2/22/11

SECOND: Alice Reilly

VOTE: 3-0-2 Bud Atwood and Jim Stark abstains

March 22, 2011

MOTION: Alice Reilly to hold off on approval of minutes until amendments are made and reviewed

SECOND: Jim Stark

VOTE: 4-0-1 Bud abstains

May 17, 2011

MOTION: Mark Lefenfeld to approve minutes from 3/17/11

SECOND: Alice Reilly

VOTE: 3-0-2 Bud Atwood and Jim Stark abstains

August 15, 2011

MOTION: Mark Lefenfeld to approve minutes from 8/15/11

SECOND: Alice Reilly

VOTE: 3-0-2 Bud Atwood and Jim Stark abstains

III. Review of Revenues and Fees

Kevin O'Donnell reviewed a power point presentation outlining revenues and fees.

Kevin presented the numbers pertaining to free cash.

Steve Bannon stated that budgeting revenue in a more accurate manner would help to manage expenses and not create a 'large pot of money in the end.'

Lauren Sartori replied that free cash is generated from underestimating revenue and overstating expenses. Next year, the tax rate will be decreased by the percentage of money in free cash.

Kevin O'Donnell said that the meal and room tax went up to 6% from 4% previously. He said that any overages will go to free cash.

Mark Lefenfeld asked if there have been any collection problems in regards to this.

Kevin O'Donnell replied that the State deals with this but many employees have been working on it. Kevin added that they have maximized the localized tax options.

Chris Rembold explained the 'buildable land' slide and said that there is a lot of land to be built on, theoretically, but a good amount is unreachable. There is the possibility of 2700 new residential units. If this were to happen, the assessed value of the town would double. These are 'pie in the sky' predictions given current market conditions.

Andrew Blechman suggested that they focus on business or commercial instead of residential.

Kevin O'Donnell said that they need to identify at what point a single family household pays for itself, i.e. (services, schools, etc.). He said that this will tell them where to put the emphasis.

Sandy Larkin spoke about the demand fee for late tax bills. This is set by statute, but they are now allowed to increase the demand fee up to \$30. This would have to be a warrant article and voted upon. There are \$4800 in demand fee charges which can be doubled if increased by \$10. Sandy said that more people would pay on time if there was a higher late fee.

Sandy Larkin also spoke about using a collection agency to collect personal property taxes. She said that she would like an alternative to using small claims court. She will discuss this with Kevin.

The Board agrees to pursue using a collection agency.

Alana Chernila said she feels that the Board has heard the same thing at every meeting and much of it is negative. She asked if there is any positive side to how the community is and if there is any way they can draw on the strengths of how the community is divided and laid out.

Kevin O'Donnell responded that the second home community should be promoted.

Bud Atwood suggested that they encourage second home owners to bring their business here.

Lauren Sartori responded that it may sound negative but it is a challenge to increase revenue sources.

Deb Phillips replied that they are looking at ways to increase revenue and it seems that none of the ideas will help that much. She said that they must look at expenses, what needs to be done, and how to do it. She said that they will have to look at costs and how things can be done sustainably.

Alana Chernila asked how they can re-evaluate current services and how they are provided, as well as, providing a different level of service.

Sean Stanton replied that the scope of 'service' is broad and said they need to talk about specific things they want to subsidize and which to pay for.

Deb Phillips said that it would be helpful to know the consequences of the changes that may be made.

Steve Bannon said that all fees that are allowed should at least break even. He suggested that they should not make those that are not 'non profit' make up for those that are 'for profit.'

Sean Stanton said that they will no longer waive the fee for 'not-for-profit.' He said that they will change the policy so that there are no more 'fee waivers'.

It was suggested that they find out when the real estate sign license fees were last increased and go forth as such.

It was decided that the Board will revisit:

Real estate sign licenses

Driveway permits

Road openings

Junk Car Permits

Handicapped parking

All parking violations

Assessor's fees – Kevin will check who sets the fees

Clerk's fees – Kevin will check who sets the fees

Sean Stanton asked that the Cemetery Commission make a recommendation.

Kevin O'Donnell said that he will officially ask for a recommendation.

Kevin O'Donnell will work with the Library Board of Trustees about their fees and fines.

Kevin O'Donnell will research if the Conservation Commission costs are covered.

It was recommended that there be a wire inspection fee increase.

IV. **Adjournment**

On a motion by Deb Phillips, seconded by Stephen Bannon, the Board adjourned its meeting at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Cara Becker

Recording Secretary