

TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
SELECTBOARD/FINANCE COMMITTEE
JOINT MEETING MINUTES
TOWN HALL, 334 MAIN STREET
MARCH 24, 2015

FINANCE COMMITTEE
SHARON GREGORY
MICHAEL WISE
LEIGH DAVIS
WALTER F. ATWOOD III
THOMAS BLAUVENT

TOWN MANAGER JENNIFER TABAKIN

1. CALL TO ORDER:

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES JOINT MEETINGS OF FINANCE COMMITTEE AND SELECTBOARD VOTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE:

FEBRUARY 11, 2015

MOTION: Buddy Atwood to approve.

SECOND: Tom Blauvelt

VOTE: 5-0

MOTION: Buddy Atwood – on amendments made by Sharon Gregory.

SECOND: Tom Blauvelt

VOTE: 5-0

FEBRUARY 24, 2015

MOTION: Buddy Atwood to approve.

SECOND: Tom Blauvelt

VOTE: 5-0

FEBRUARY 25, 2015

MOTION: Buddy Atwood to approve.

SECOND: Tom Blauvelt

VOTE: 5-0

MOTION: Buddy Atwood – on amendments made by Sharon Gregory.

SECOND: Tom Blauvelt

VOTE: 5-0

MARCH 3, 2015

MOTION: Buddy Atwood to approve.

SECOND: Tom Blauvelt

VOTE: 5-0

MOTION: Buddy Atwood – on amendments made by Sharon Gregory.

SECOND: Tom Blauvelt

VOTE: 5-0

MARCH 11, 2015

MOTION: Buddy Atwood to approve.
SECOND: Tom Blauvelt
VOTE: 5-0

MOTION: Buddy Atwood – on amendments made by Sharon.
SECOND: Tom Blauvelt
VOTE: 5-0

III. Discussion Re: Outstanding Budget Matters.

The Selectboard and Finance Committee will meet on Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. at the Fire Station to vote on the budget and warrant articles. The mini Town Meeting will be April 29, 2015 and the annual Town Meeting is going to be Monday, May 4, 2015 at Monument Mountain Regional High School.

David Magadini said he is running for Town Moderator. He stated he is concerned about the public process and people having the opportunity to participate. Everyone who votes is an interested party. He said he thinks the public hearing should be extended.

IV. Public Hearing FY 16 Budget – Conducted by Finance Committee.

1. Public Input

A motion was made by Tom Blauvelt to open the public hearing at 7:16 p.m. It was seconded by Buddy Atwood. Vote: 5-0

Sharon noted that the purpose of the meeting is to comply with the Great Barrington Town Bylaw, Article 2 Section 7-4 that requires the Finance Committee to hold a hearing on expenditures. Before any Town Meeting the warrant, which calls for the expenditure of money or the disposal of any town property, the Finance Committee shall hold at least one public hearing at which all persons interested may be heard on any article contained in the warrant, and said Committee shall make due report thereon at the Town Meeting. The purpose is to hear public input and comments on the FY 16 Budget. The Finance Committee will wait to deliberate on the public comments until the hearing is closed. The budget will be voted on March 25, 2015 with the Selectboard.

Jennifer Tabakin began with an overview of the budget. Jennifer said she wants to thank everybody who participates in local government. Jennifer presented a power point overview of the budget process. She noted the sewer rates are set in June and the tax rate is set in August.

Charles Williamson – spoke on the school budget. He said he cannot vote for the school budget. He is concerned about school choice – they do not pay their fair share.

Patrick Fennell – Commented on why we keep the same Town Counsel? If you look at this budget all the mistakes are costing us money through Town Counsel.

Karen Christensen – said the expenses are not allocated to department and function. Jennifer stated that everything is allocated in the budget. Michael Wise stated that the Finance Committee requested a hand out detailing a pro forma allocation of some of these expenses by function. The chief ones are fringe benefits for employees, health and life insurance, and capital costs. He said it would be beneficial to have full cost of these across all departments in regard to all the personnel costs. Jennifer noted we manage our budget according to the DOR regulations. Leigh Davis said she has been very happy with the data and she said there has been full transparency in the budget process.

Dana Dapolito – asked what the underpass design is in the budget. Jennifer said it is to repair the stairs and make sure it is stable and restore it back to its original condition. Joe Sokul advised that they are taking a look at the drainage situation. Dana also asked about the Housatonic School and what progress has been made in either using or disposing this property. Jennifer said there is an active group looking at it. An RFP will be put out and we hope to receive bids in the spring. Currently it is mothballed. There are no plans on relocating town offices there.

Anthony Dapolito – asked what the total bond debt is. It was noted that it's 11.9 million which is principal only. The sewer is \$642,000 of that and that goes until 2028. The fire trucks and fire station run through 2029. He also asked if a Capital Improvement Fund has been established to level out capital costs. He also stated that our credit rating is good because we bill our taxes out in excess. He said he didn't understand "rolling ahead the free cash." Jennifer said we use 80% of what we call free cash for the following year. It is a way to manage cash flow without having to incur borrowing costs short term so it saves money. Lauren said this year we had 2.9 million in free cash and the boards in this budget are looking to reduce the tax rate by using 2.4 million of it.

Derrick Gentile – said there is talk about decreasing state aid and if the town has taken that into consideration. Jennifer said we have the numbers from the Governor's proposed budget and our local aid increased by \$24,000, but that hasn't been voted on yet. Derrick noted that while we think school choice reimbursement per student is really low, that big cities who could lose money think it is way too high and they are lobbying to lower it. Jennifer said we are waiting for the amount the State will pay for their state land which impacts Great Barrington more than other places. The State pays in lieu of taxes for state parks.

Dana Dapolito – re: Lake Mansfield Road – Having an engineer come in and look at it and decide how to repair it or is it a broader consideration. The Lake Mansfield Alliance has done a large amount of work as to how to protect this valuable asset and safety of residents that use that road. Deb Phillips, who is on the Lake Mansfield Task Force said the recommendation is to get a consultant to work on this. Information was gathered about engineering for everything from a park road to a one way road, etc. The idea of hiring a consultant is so there can be a series of community meetings that are moderated by someone who has a lot of information and at the end of that process it will be up to the Selectboard to make a decision as to what seems to be the best plan for the road and park.

Vivian Orlowski – wanted to thank everyone for putting this all together. It is a tremendous amount of work and we should recognize the effort that goes into doing all this work both by the

Selectboard, Town Manager, Lauren and the school committee. She said she would like to encourage the town boards and staff to make it as accessible as possible.

Fiscal Year 2016 Summary Sheets – General Government – line items 1 through 77 – Town Manager recommended - \$1,355,195. 2.95 increase over FY15.

Public Safety – Line Items # 78 through 130 – Town Manager recommended \$2,106,933. This is a 3.4% increase over last year.

Public Works – Line items 131 through 177
Town Manager recommended \$2,057,240 which is a 3.2% increase.

Public Health – Line Items 178 through 185 – Town Manager recommended \$71,959 or a 4.7% decrease.

Community Service – Line Items # 186 through 200 - \$380,056 or 1.6% increase.

Cultural and Recreation – Line Items 201- 218 - Total Recommended - \$581,255 or a 1.95% increase.

Health/Life Insurance – line item 223 which includes a free cash reserve is \$1,532,968.

Debt Service Cost declined – it is \$1,693,785 with a reduction of \$73,595.

Retirement and Medicare Line Item 225 and 226 - \$767,697 or 3.2% increase.

Miscellaneous Line items – 227 and 228 - \$10,433 up 40.4%.

Fund Transfers 229 and 230 - \$50,000. It includes the unfunded employees Benefits/OPEB.

Total Budget - \$10,899,922.

The expenditures proposed for FY16 Capital Improvement Requests are also attached.

MOTION: Buddy Atwood to close the public hearing at 8:25 p.m.

SECOND: Tom Blauvelt

VOTE: 5-0

Lauren Sartori said she was at the MMA Accountants training which is put on by the DOR. She said she attended a seminar on the bond rating. The person's name is Victor Medeiros, who is the New England Director of Standard and Poor's and he is in charge of approving all the bond ratings. Lauren said she asked him whether it mattered if we set up a restricted trust or was there some vehicle they looked upon more favorably? He said given the new GASB Pension that is coming out showing our unfunded pension liability for the first time broken out of the county along with everyone else, their interest now is that we look at funding that unfunded liability for pension and providing the documentation where we looked at funding the OPEB. Lauren said her recommendation is that we look not to fund OPEB trust because it will be restricted and we will not be able to get it out for any other purpose. We need to see what the actuarial report is for pension and then we will have the audit. We should regroup and meet and take a look at that information and come up with a plan. You can do a stabilization fund. The actuary who did the presentation on the pension who is not a Standard and Poor's employee said that the reason for doing the disclosures is for the bond rating agency. Lauren said her recommendation is to leave \$30,000 in that line item and putting it into the unfunded employee benefit trust so we have the line item open and we continue to fund it.

A motion was made by Buddy Atwood and seconded by Tom Blauvelt to adjourn.
The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Carolyn Wichmann, Secretary