

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
JOINT MEETING
SELECTBOARD & FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2011
6:00 P.M. – TOWN HALL - BOARD ROOM**

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

Finance Committee: Tom Blauvelt – Chairman
Mark Lefenfeld
Alice Reilly
Jim Stark

1. **Call to order:** Sean Stanton called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.
2. **FY 12 Budget Overview by Town Manager**

Kevin O'Donnell began the overview by stating that the FY12 budget represents the 3rd straight year that the operating budget remained level funded. He stated that the most challenging part of the budget will be the CIP. He said that State Aid is continuing to decline. The only new service is the K-9 program, which is funded by donations.

Kevin O'Donnell went on to review the school budget numbers, stating that its operating budget went up 3.3%.

He stated that the Town needs to rely on something other than the property tax. In regards to the CIP, decisions will need to be made on where to spend the money.

He stated that, in the future, higher EPA standards will need to be met so more upgrades will be needed for the waste water treatment plant.

Tom Blauvelt asked what are the consequences if the Town does not comply with the new standards.

Kevin O'Donnell replied that they would be cited in violation of the EPA, and they would be fined on a daily basis.

Jim Stark asked what percentage is from 'inflow'.

Tim Drumm replied that it is 10-15%, which is an improvement from what it was before.

Kevin O'Donnell suggested that they look at not borrowing for road improvements projects for the next few years.

Sean Stanton asked how long we plan on borrowing to do road improvements.

Lauren Sartori responded that 10 years is the maximum amount allowed by law.

Kevin O'Donnell also stated that he is anticipating federal ear-marks to be a thing of the past. This may put improvements to Dewey Court House in jeopardy short term.

Anne Just spoke to the plan of hiring a consultant to do a study for improvements to Ramsdell Library, stating that if they use the Board of Commissioners planning and design grant, they will have an approved plan for when they apply for the renovation grant.

She stated that she wouldn't mind waiting to see how things change in the world and in the libraries to see what is needed.

Kevin O'Donnell stated that some options for the CIP are:

- a. reduce road improvement allocations
- b. refrain from spending \$22,000 for a consultant for Ramsdell library
- c. defer the \$129,500 park improvement funds over the next 5 years
- d. defer bridge improvements- \$900,000 over 5 years
- e. defer storm water improvements indefinitely
- f. only make improvements to the Court house using existing \$172,300
- g. allocate a percentage of the existing levy capacity for the CIP
- h. continue to identify specific capital improvements for overrides in CIP above and beyond the current plan.

Kevin O'Donnell stated that they are not at the point where they have to downsize departments since the Town is minimally staffed.

3. FY12 Budget

Kevin O'Donnell reviewed a power point presentation of the following budgets:

- a. **Selectboard/Manager**
- b. **Finance/Accounting/Technology**
- c. **Assessor**
- d. **Treasurer/Veteran Services-** Laurie from the Veteran Service Operation said that Great Barrington has the largest amount of veterans. She explained that the increase she asked for is based on need with 75% reimbursed to the Town.
- e. **Town Clerk-** The clerk's office needs a copier, which reflects the only increase in the clerk's budget
- f. **Conservation Commission-** level funded. They are searching for a new agent presently.
- g. **Town Planner**
- h. **Library-** an increase of 1.5%. Anne Just is working with the library trustees to increase the hours with the use of volunteers.
- i. **Council on Aging-** an increase of 1.6%
- j. **Misc.-** Insurance is level-funded

It was stated that the population of 55 and over has an impact on the Council on Aging. Sean Stanton said that more money is spent on the elderly than the middle aged. Deb Phillips stated that there is a lot of talk about subsidizing seniors so they can stay in their homes and asked if we also look at ways to help younger families buy houses in the area.

Kevin O'Donnell stated that the current cost of an average home is \$387,000.

Bud Atwood said that they may consider split rate if the money raised is enough.
Lauren Sartori said that the money raised is very low.
Alana asked what is the percent increase for split rate.
Kevin O'Donnell replied that he can pull up this information.

Jim Stark stated to the Principal Assessor that he wants to make sure that all taxable properties are taxed. (i.e. Simons Rock)
Kevin O'Donnell replied that they are researching whether they do qualify for tax exemption.
Jim Stark said that AIER – 250 Division St. – is assessed at \$15 per square feet, which seems inaccurate.
Chris Lamarre responded that he will look into it.

Kevin O'Donnell stated that Parks is level funded and that they are projecting costs in CIP.

4. Appointment of a Finance Committee member

Hal Sussman and John Breasted made a statement.

MOTION: Bud Atwood - To appoint Hal Sussman to the Finance Committee

SECOND: John Lefenfeld

VOTE: 3-6 Motion Failed

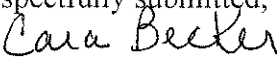
MOTION: Jim Stark - To appoint John Breasted to the finance committee

SECOND: Deb Phillips

VOTE: 5-4 Motion passes

Sean Stanton welcomed John to the committee. He told Hal that other opportunities will come up and thanked him for his interest.

5. Adjournment: On a motion by Deb Phillips, seconded by Stephen Bannon, the Board adjourned its meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cara Becker
Recording Secretary