

Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, March 19, 2012

Board Members in attendance: Peter Beals, Nikki Newton, Gordon Andrews, Peg Fitzgerald, Dick Wright and Karen Fava.

Others in Attendance: Sandy Nolan, Town Accountant; Charlie Seeling, Town Administrator; Mike Schleiff, Selectmen; Kim Roy, Selectmen; Troy Garron, Selectmen, Robin Bellinger, Beautification Committee.

Meeting called to order at 7:08pm  
Meeting Adjourned at 9:52pm

Mail:

ATFC is holding 3 OPEB meetings. The first one is scheduled for May 3, 2012 at the MMA office in Boston from 11:45am to 1pm. Lunch is served. Registration is available online or through Kim Roy. Peter, Gordon and Peg all responded to Kim that they will be attending.

A letter was received from Chief Manoogian regarding filling shifts on a rotating basis. This may cause a 24,000.00 deficit in the wage account. He is advising us that this would be the worst case scenario. Sandy added that the Fire Chief has also put us on notice for an 111F deficit. Insurance checks have been coming in so that should ease the deficit but may not eliminate it. Sandy will follow up with the Fire Chief. Kendra will add a space to the Reserve Fund Transfer Sheet for possible Future Expenditures so we can keep track of items that have been brought to the Committee's attention as possible future liabilities.

The Board of Assessors submitted a revised budget that was 18,000.00 less than the previous budget as a result of eliminating 18.5 hours. The decrease in hours is as a result of the software conversion being complete. The employees are eligible for unemployment on the difference of the hours cut if the hours are cut by 20% or more. There may be an article in Special Town Meeting to ask for more money for FY12 for unemployment. There was talk about using snow and ice money towards it but no decision has been made at this point. Mike asked about the 500.00 in mileage that was included in the submitted Assessors budget. If we are going to go forward with the car program, this should be a charge that could be eliminated. Sandy said that if the article passed we could adjust the budget at that point. Concern was discussed regarding what would happen if the article passed, all the budgets were adjusted and the program fails at some point. There would be no mileage budget to fall back on. Peg suggested that we take the mileage/gas line items and put them in a separate account that can be drawn on if the program does in fact fail at some point. There was also discussion regarding moving the Car Program Article up to have it put on Special Town Meeting so it is addressed early. Sandy said that would be fine and if it works out, next year it could be a line item. Regardless of when the vote occurs, the money would not be touched until July. Sandy and Dick are looking into the total mileage from each budget involved so we will know

what kind of cost savings we could be looking at. The car that is proposed for this program is the car that was previously the Prosecutors. It is a 2004 Ford Crown Victoria with 117,000 miles on it. The color on the car would not have to change; however, the logos and the equipment will need to be removed. This is not an excess charge as it would have to be done to sell the vehicle anyway.

### Selectmen

This is a follow up to the discussion 3 weeks ago regarding the 3 scenarios for the FY13 budgets. Tax rates already compare unfavorably to other towns in the state and something has to give. Mike asked where the Committee sees the reduction coming from. Assessors have already cut and most other departments are also cut to bare essentials. Peter suggested that the Capital Plan “gives” as the taxpayer can not afford a 4% tax increase as suggested under this proposal. Troy suggested that we let it go to Town Meeting and let the voters decide. Karen pointed out that cutting from the Capital Plan would be a tough sell to the voters as they know the equipment in the town is hurting. Gordon suggested that we possibly increase the local receipts line item and not increase the tax revenue. What would happen if we estimate 1.4 instead of 1.3 in local receipts? Would that enable us to not increase the taxes? Sandy said that may work but she needs to look at the numbers before saying how much of an increase she is comfortable with. Local receipts numbers will be provided next week. One point that the Committee and the Selectmen all agreed on was that we have too many Debt Exclusions and we can not continue on this path. Both Committees agreed that the debt must be reduced. Neither Committee will be supporting any additional debt until it is significantly reduced.

### Beautification Committee

Robin Bellinger from the Committee made a presentation regarding the town’s impression as you drive through it. They would like to be able to purchase perennials and other low maintenance items to increase the curb appeal of the town. The Committee would provide all of the labor. They have asked for 4,000.00 but are really hoping for 2,000.00. She indicated that she has a Plan B if the Finance Committee is unable to fund the 2,000.00. In her Plan B, she would like to assess each taxpayer 1.00 and each business 2.00 as a fee to make up the difference. Karen suggested an optional check box on the tax bill as an option for donations. The legality of that option was discussed. Sandy suggested speaking to the Treasurer first to be sure her office could handle something like that. She also pointed out that only 1.00 was budgeted by the town for the Beautification Committee last year. The 1,000.00 that they did receive last year was from a gift account. The Committee will further discuss this request and vote on it. Nikki will be in touch to advise Robin of the outcome.

### Article 5 Line Items

Line 19 – Gordon Andrews made a motion to approve 73,462.00 for Assessors Clerical. Seconded by Peg Fitzgerald. Motion passed unanimously.

Line 33 – Gordon Andrews made a motion to approve 29,777.00 for Clerk Clerical. Seconded by Karen Fava. Peter Beals abstained. Motion passed.

Line 40 – Still waiting to find out more info on using the Wetlands Account. Sandy will research and we will discuss it next week.

Line 114 – Dick Wright made a motion to approve 21,085.00 for Recycling Center Expense. Seconded by Peg Fitzgerald. Peter Beals Abstained. Motion passed.

Line 116 – Dick Wright made a motion to approve 216,002.00 for Trash Collection/Disposal. Seconded by Karen Fava. Peter Beals Abstained. Motion passed.

#### Wage and Personnel Update

The sick leave policy is being revised. They want to limit how many sick hours someone can use in one year. The initial number given was 40 hours or they may use days instead. Days would be figured by 1/5 of the employee's normal hours. No more than 2,000 hours should be in the sick bank at one time. If a new member wants to join the sick bank they would have to give 5 sick hours back to the town in order to join. The sick bank is still unfunded as are all sick leaves. The Committee will be asked for a recommendation for the warrant so we do not need to have a position on it at this time.

#### Library

Peg said the revolving account for the copy machine has enabled the Library to cut their budget by 500.00. Peg will follow up next week.

#### Recycling

Dick looked into the increase in hauling charges. Hauling consists of transporting the recycling after they bail it out. Someone has to take it away. Increases are contractual.

#### Summary

Next meeting on 3/26 will include: Highway Dept, Fire Chief, Police Chief, Beautification Commission Discussion and Vote, Water Tower Rental Discussion, Local Receipts Numbers.

Nikki Newton made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from Monday, January 30, 2012. Seconded by Karen Fava. Motion passed unanimously.

Dick Wright made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from Monday, March 12, 2012. Seconded by Peg Fitzgerald. Motion passed unanimously.

Gordon Andrews made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Karen Fava. Meeting adjourned at 9:52pm.

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Richard Wright  
Corresponding Clerk