

TOWN OF HARVARD
Finance Committee
Minutes

Meeting Date: Saturday, February 11, 2012

Meeting Place: Town Hall

Members Present: Marie Fagan (chair), Steve Colwell, Heidi Frank, Alan Frazer (assoc.),
George McKenna, Rudy Minar, Bob Thurston, Laura Vilain (assoc.)

Members Not Present: Alice von Loesecke

Others Present: Lorraine Leonard – Finance Director, Peter Warren (Board of Selectmen),
Keith Cheveralls (chair, School Committee), Joe Connelly (Interim Superintendent), and
other members of the School Committee, Debbie Ricci (Community Preservation
Committee), Deb Thomson (Community Preservation Committee)

Meeting Time: 9:00 a.m. Adjournment Time: 11:30 a.m.

Discussion and Actions

- Marie Fagan opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m.
- No public comment
- Minutes for February 8, were reviewed, and approved with changes.
- Discussion with Peter Warren(BoS) regarding Facilities Director--a possible Warrant Article

* The need for a Facilities Director was evidenced by a summary of over 97 safety and repair items identified by Keith Cheveralls from the Galeota Inspection report.

* Currently there is the possibility of grant to cover costs of this position of \$55,630, with approximately \$45K for salary and \$10K for benefits. The status of the grant will be known the first part of March.

* The Facilities Director position is supported by the BoS.

* This is a part-time, 19-hour/wk, no-benefits position, which may be shared with another town (Boxboro?) though this seems less likely at the current time.

* The Facilities Director would oversee several town buildings including: the Fire house #1, the Old Fire House, the Fire House Still River, the DPW Buildings, the new Library, the Police Station, and the Bromfield House. The intention is that this position would work closely with the schools', full-time, Facilities Manager. It is a position expected to be more than a handy-man.

*The current budget for building repairs is \$24K -- the committee asked Peter if he could figure a ballpark figure for estimating the yearly cost of maintenance per building. For example, is it 1% of the total building cost? Peter will check the assessors records and get back to the committee.

* The position's responsibilities are 'to be determined'. Some responsibilities may include inventory, establishing capital and maintenance plans for buildings, hiring sub-contractors, developing bids and specs, light repairs, and supervising work. Also, if he/she has the right skill-set, they will become the energy management coordinator for the town.

- Discussion with School Committee regarding follow-up questions

* Predicting enrollment numbers for future years was explained. There is currently a "bubble" increase in students expected in next year's 4th grade. A fifth section (and teacher) may be added. Currently there are no funds allocated in the FY13 budget for this new position, but if needed, the School Committee does not anticipate requesting additional funding.

* With further discussion about enrollment, the School Committee flagged the graduation of 14 School Choice seniors next year as a potential loss of revenue (\$70,000). They are considering opening grades K, 1, 2, and 6 to School Choice.

* Also addressed regarding enrollment was the potential increase in students from Vicksburg Square housing if the residential project is approved. With the projected decline in enrollments in future years, Harvard schools have the capacity to absorb 78-115 increase in students, with no further costs. FYI, it is expected that HES and Bromfield can absorb the additional 12 students (k-12) from Devens projected to enroll from FY13 through FY21.

* The question about what line items overlap between the capital request and the technology plan was answered that there was no overlap, only on-going maintenance costs of keeping the technology working.

* There was discussion about level-service funding. The Finance Committee had found savings of \$126K in regular education and \$300K in special education from the FY12 budget and wanted to know how these "savings" were used.

The School Committee answered that the only budget items that appeared to be above level-service funding were in the Central Office Cost Area. Most of the costs had to do with a reclassification of a system-wide, professional development stipend for staff of \$16K. This was transferred from non-salary.

There was further discussion about the .6 Wellness/PE Teacher adding to budget costs. The justification was that there is a need to offer a wellness course to the electives now which will eventually become a requirement for graduation.

* The suggestion for starting a Technology Committee to oversee technology needs and maintenance was supported by both committees. This new committee could be modeled after the Energy Committee.

- Discussion with Debbie Ricci regarding CPC articles

* Six applications were reviewed and are being recommended for funding by the Community Preservation Committee. The recommendations will be finalized after the MBC proposal.

Projects included the Conservation Comm.'s invasive species control, the Town Clerk's historic document preservation, restoration of the Congregational Church's entrance columns, support for affordable housing (costs for covering rents until the people move out of the Inn's foreclosure proceedings - this will be resolved at the end of March), tree removal at the Shaker Burial Ground, and the \$1,000,000 bond for the MBC renovation of the Town Hall (a request to partially fund bond issue).

The FinCom's follow-up questions were

1. How did the MBC come up with the \$1M figure?
2. Have last year's projects been completed?

- Discussion with Keith Cheveralls regarding DPW pick-up truck for Schools use

* The DPW owns two trucks for plowing and sanding; a 2000 Chevy pick-up truck, and a 2003 dump-truck. The '00 pick-up is ready to be retired (by DPW standards), rather than be repaired. They have slotted FY14 for a new truck at a cost of \$70K. If the schools, through the School Committee, take over the '00 pick-up, then DPW will move up their new truck purchase to FY13 and take the cost out of capital.

Timing is the issue that has brought this discussion to FinCom. DPW was planning to

order the new truck Sept. 1, and therefore need a reserve fund transfer (RFT). Should all go through, the '00 pick-up would be available to the schools by June. The DPW has agreed to retrofit the pick-up with a sander and new plow and give a one-year warranty on the truck. The '00 pick-up's projected life-span is through to 2015-16.

- No Town Administrator Report or Finance Director Report
- No Liaison reports
- No Other Business
- No Proposed agenda items for next meeting
- Next meeting – Wednesday, February 15, 2012

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Laura Vilain

