

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes

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Time: 7:00 p.m.

Date: March 19, 2018

Present: O'Connell, Noonan, Cofske, Kuphal, Kennedy, Khalife, Kupcinkas

Absent: None

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Jen Netupski, School Committee, was in at 7:00 p.m.

Dave Marciello, Town Manager, Andrew Vanni, Finance Director and Jayne Davolio, Town Clerk, were in at 7:00 p.m.

Dan Gail, School Department-Grafton, was in at 7:00 p.m.

Kaye Peltier, Council on Aging, was in at 7:00 p.m.

Motioned by Cofske, seconded by Kennedy to accept the minutes of March 5, 2018 as written.
Unanimous.

Motioned by Kennedy, seconded by Cofske to approve a \$42.00 bill to be paid to Holden Landmark for the posting of a legal notice for the public hearing from account number 01.131.5780.00000.0000.500.
Unanimous.

Jen O'Connell took a roll call to open the public hearing at 7:02 p.m. Noonan, yes, Cofske, yes, Kuphal, yes, Kennedy, yes, Khalife, yes, O'Connell, yes and Kupcinkas, yes.

Jen O'Connell: Are there any questions concerning the budget for FY2019?

Jen Netupski: I am here as a resident, not as a member of the School Committee. I would like you to postpone this public hearing since the Town Manager was supposed to publish the budget and as of Thursday, it wasn't there. How is the public supposed to come to the hearing without the information needed?

Dave Marciello: It is on the Web Site. It was put there the morning after it was requested.

Jen O'Connell: All questions or comments should come through me, as the Chairperson, since it is a Finance Committee meeting.

Jen Netupski: If the Town Manager is only going to give us a single percentage increase in our budget, then this sets us up for a major economic impact in the coming years. Can you make line item transfers to the School Department?

Jen O'Connell: Outside of the Town Meeting, if the school is over in their budget we are allowed to transfer money from the Reserve Fund.

Jen Netupski: Can we transfer from Free Cash into the School Budget?

Dave Marciello: It wouldn't be considered a transfer. Free Cash can be used for any lawful purpose. Any motion on Town Meeting floor can put the money where it needs to be. We have tried to increase our Stabilization Fund to get it to 5%. We need to get it there for our bond rating. We have used our Enterprise Fund when we calculate our percentages. We are not supposed to use this in our equation, but in the past we have. The amount in the Stabilization Fund should be 5% of our total operating budget. This is so we can keep our good bond rating. I planned on putting another \$200,000 in for next year. Mr. Vanni recommended that we only put \$100,000 in and put the other \$100,000 towards the school budget.

Jen Netupski: Then you are saying that the School's budget is going to Town Meeting with an amount that may not go to the Schools if it is questioned.

Dave Marciello: If it were to happen that someone got up and wanted to take this money for something else, I would get up and defend my budgets.

Chris Kennedy: So, we can use the Free Cash in any way at Town Meeting?

Dave Marciello: Town Meeting controls how the Free Cash is spent.

Jen O'Connell: The best way to make sure that you get this \$100,000 is to have us work with you to make sure that we have an explanation on where the money is going. There shouldn't be a problem if the voters have an adequate explanation. It is hard to believe that the townspeople would go against it.

Dave Cofske: The budget that you were looking for on-line is under the Finance Committee link.

Jen Netupski: Why aren't we considering an override for the roads? I know you are concerned about the bonding for the Shaw School when that comes up in the near future.

Jen O'Connell: We don't have the Warrant yet. I don't know if there is an override in there.

Dave Marciello: We have looked at this for a year. People are adamant that there will be no support for an override. I am borrowing under the levy limit. I cannot go another season without doing something about the roads in Town.

Chris Kennedy: I am pro-education. This is not only about the roads. It is about every budget. The schools cost a lot. The challenge is there for all departments that have had to either cut or level fund their budgets. Infrastructure needs to be fixed. We have an aging population.

Jen O'Connell: Who are the people you referred to that are against the override?

Dave Marciello: John has done a lot of research on this and anyone that he has talked to is not in favor of an override. With the borrowing, I can at least get through the year. If I am having a bad year, I can pay just the interest. I hope that I will not have to do this.

Jen O'Connell: Why aren't we looking at an equity line?

Dave Marciello: In essence that is what we are doing.

Jen Netupski: I would like to know if there is an interest in a sub-committee that could review the budgets quarterly, between the School Committee, Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee.

Jen O'Connell: I, myself, would like to do that. I would rather know, quarterly, if we are having any problems in the budget. Then we wouldn't have to scramble at the end of the year to pay bills. We will be composing a list of questions for the School Committee and Rick at a future meeting. The Out-of-District programs is going up considerably. What happens if they don't all go out of district?

Jen Netupski: They will be going. We don't have what they need to be educated. This is for Transportation and tuition. The new Special Education Teacher for the High School was supposed to help reduce the number of out of district placements.

Jen O'Connell: What happens to the money that may be saved in any of your accounts?

Jen Netupski: We use it elsewhere.

Jen O'Connell: Dave and Andrew have looked for ways to get you extra money, but they don't get any excess funds from you?

Chris Kennedy: If there is a certain amount allocated to Special Education, does the money remain in Special Education?

Jen Netupski: Our budget is not voted as a line item budget. We use the money where it we need it. It is not like the regular Town Budget. Our Special Education takes up 7% of our budget.

Dan Gail: How much does the School turn back to the Town at the end of the year?

Jen Netupski: We turn back about \$5,000. We are allowed to pre-pay some of the Special Education Tuition for the following year. We are gaining students every year. Special Ed is the wild card in the room.

Chris Kennedy: Is there a limit on how much you can pre-pay?

Dan Gail: You can pre-pay about 3 months of the tuition.

Jen Netupski: When I first started, it was about \$400,000, and then it was reduced to \$100,000. I am not sure how much we pre-pay right now.

Jen O'Connell: We can look at what Rick has for figures for last year.

Dave Marciello: I reduced the amount of the Road Program by \$100,000 to cover part of the Snow and Ice Budget.

Jen O'Connell: Couldn't we use the Reserve Fund to cover part of this?

Dave Marciello: I don't know if you want to do that.

Jen O'Connell: We could look at it unless you want it to go back to Free Cash.

Dan Gail asked about the format of the proforma.

Jen O'Connell: We are adding more detail into our book this year. I thought that we could put your sheets in the book so that people would have the information needed to make their decision.

Jen Netupski: I don't know if that would confuse them.

Motioned by O'Connell, seconded by Kupcinskis to close the public hearing at 7:53 p.m. Unanimous.

Jen O'Connell: We will be meeting Saturday morning at 8:30 a.m. We will be in the Large Conference Room. The Fire Chief will be in at 8:30 a.m. and Dr. Fitzpatrick from Blackstone Valley Tech will be in at 9:15 a.m. I do not know if John McElroy from the Asa Waters Mansion will be there. We will be reviewing and voting the budget. The intent is to be done by 12:00 or 1:00 p.m.

Dave Marciello: There is a Resource Fair for the disabled at the Elmwood Street School and a Blood Drive at the Senior Center on Saturday also.

Motioned by Kupcinskis, seconded by Noonan to adjourn at 7:55 p.m. Unanimous.

James Connell

Albert P. Kupcinskis

David Jones

Stephen Noonan

[Signature]

Anthony Khalif

[Signature]