

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes

Date: March 7, 2015

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Present: O'Connor, Kupcinkas, Hebert, Girard, O'Connell

Absent: Bartosiewicz

Meeting called to order at 8:00 a.m.

Motioned by Kupcinkas, seconded by Girard to accept the minutes of February 23, 2015 as written. Unanimous.

Met with David Rudge, Fire Chief and the Fire Engineers to discuss their budgets at 8:10 a.m.

Fire Department Budget

David Rudge: I put in for a 3% increase across the board and the Town Manager changed it to 1%. If he changes this percentage within the Town budget, I hope that he would include us in the additional increase. Our Purchases and Services account has a \$3,000 reduction in heating. This is a tough line item. The winter has been cold. We are now heating the ambulance area too. We try to keep the heat maintained at 60 degrees due to the meds stored in the ambulances.

Bob Spain: I have been tracking expenses to date. If there is a problem, I will address it. The boiler will be pushed out another year.

David Rudge: The Supplies account was reduced by \$10,000 by the Town Manager. We have been trying to work with the Town Mechanic. If we need work done before he can get to it, we have to outsource it. We try to keep as much in-house as we can.

Bob Spain: I think it should be okay. If we run into problems, I will deal with it.

Michael O'Connor: I don't see anything in this budget concerning a Public Safety Building. Where are we with this?

David Rudge: I am the Vice-Chairman of this committee. There will be an article on the Warrant for money to design a plan for a Public Safety Complex.

Bob Spain: We need to own the site before we can design it. We need to have a site dollar amount, too. We would have to ask for a debt exclusion for both the site and the design. (\$17.5 Million for the building, \$1.1 Million for the design and \$1 Million for the property)

Michael O'Connor: What is the dollar amount on the debt exclusion for this year?

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Bob Spain: If we are going to ask for a couple of million, we might as well ask for it all at once. There will be two separate articles. One will be for the design and one for the building. They have not been written yet. I have a place holder for them in the Warrant. We need to make sure the site is clear. We will be taking the property by eminent domain, so we don't have to have an RFP.

David Rudge: The Committee's thought was to ask for the design money first, then wait a year to ask for the rest. We would like to keep the people informed about what is going on.

Hydrant Service

Bob Spain: We received a 3.32% rate decrease for 12 months. We received 6 months in the present fiscal year and will receive the other 6 months in the next fiscal year.

The Fire Engineers and Fire Chief left at 8:40 a.m.

The Finance Committee and the Town Manager went over some of the Town Manager's budgets.

Town Moderator

Bob Spain: The Moderator budget has no change in it. We are still waiting to see who runs for this position. No one has taken papers out for this.

Michael O'Connor: What happens if no one runs for this position?

Bob Spain: If no one runs, anyone could get the position just by a write in vote.

Board of Selectmen

Bob Spain: There are no changes in this budget.

Town Manager

Bob Spain: There are no major changes, just contractual obligations.

Town Counsel

Bob Spain: I left this budget alone. We never know what we are going to need in this budget. I have been keeping tabs on it.

Town Clerk

Bob Spain: Nothing is really changing in this budget.

Police Chief Howell and Lt. Desourcy were in to discuss their budget at 9:05 a.m.

Chief Howell: We cut a cruiser in this budget. I would like to get back to getting 2 new ones each year. We are getting new guns and vests this year. The company says that they are good for 5 years, but we can usually get 7-8 years on them.

Michael O'Connor: Is it a requirement or bargaining item that the officers wear the vests?

Chief Howell: It is not a requirement. I have been having some legal issues with the department. Each time I try to change something, someone puts in a grievance. When we got the tazers, I was asked what they were going to get for carrying them.

Chief Howell: I absorbed Lt. Desourcy's Sergeant's position when I hired him as a lieutenant. Our other lieutenant has since been terminated and I would like that position filled. There is better management with 2 lieutenants. There is much more supervision and less overtime. I have to consider all who apply for this position. It could be internal or outside of the department. The current Sergeants are going to command school through the FBI, which is free.

Michael O'Connor: It was great that you were able to work out the School Resource Officer with the School Department.

Jennifer O'Connell: Are you using existing officers for this?

Chief Howell: Yes, I am.

Michael O'Connor: What does EMD stand for?

Chief Howell: That would be emergency medical dispatch. I have some ideas for the future. I would like to have a summer youth camp. I would also like to have citizen police training. Our ride-along program has been working well.

Chief Howell and Lt. Desourcy left at 9:45 a.m.

Rob McNeil, DPW Director, was in to discuss his budgets at 9:45 a.m.

Tree Warden

Rob McNeil: This is fairly similar to last year. We are now funding the police details when out on tree cutting calls. In previous years we have tried to add money into the budget for tree planting. We still have not gotten that.

Highway Department

Michael O'Connor: What is going on with the building next to the Highway Garage?

Rob McNeil: It will be taken down. I am surprised that with the winter that we have had, that it hasn't fallen down.

Michael O'Connor: Is this an area that is being looked at for a Public Safety Building?

Bob Spain: It is not on the list. If it were up to me, we could have used it since the Town owns it.

Rob McNeil: I feel that if we were going to talk about a Public Safety Building, then why not increase it to a Public Safety/DPW, but that is not what is being looked at. We put in to replace two garage doors at the DPW, the purchase of a propane hotbox for paving potholes in the winter and money for a FHWA Mandated inventory and assessment. The Town Manager did not approve these.

Snow and Ice

Bob Spain: I increased it by \$10,000. We needed to start raising it. It has been put off long enough.

Rob McNeil: We have been more efficient with the Snow and Ice Account. This winter has been a fantastic year to get the department gelled. We have a fairly new crew. They know when they need to rest during the storms. We have many outside contractors too.

Street Lights

Rob McNeil: This account has been reduced by \$3,000.

Transfer Station

Rob McNeil: This is up \$2,500. There is still a lot more that can be done with recyclables. Our contract is up next year. There are a lot of things that we are looking at. The price of the stickers has not gone up since I have been here. I would like to see the stickers go up to \$50.00.

Sewer Enterprise Fund

Rob McNeil: There was a 6.9% increase in the Upper Blackstone payment.

Michael O'Connor: Why the cost of \$40,000 to fix the billing system? We allowed for \$20,000 last year and you put in for \$20,000 again this year.

Rob McNeil: We haven't done anything with the system yet. We haven't had the staff to change it.

Michael O'Connor: So, the \$20,000 each year will go back into the Retained Earnings? This is similar to the pump station that was funded year after year and was never replaced or repaired. All this does is increase the Retained Earnings and increase the cost to the user.

Rob McNeil: There is still a lot to do with this. What I would like to inquire about is what the Town is going to do about the storm water. We need to update and maintain our system. There are so many areas that are collapsing. I could list where the worst areas are. Could we look at an Enterprise Fund for the Storm water Account?

Michael O'Connor: You would have to look into whether it could be considered for an Enterprise Fund.

Parks Operations and Maintenance

Rob McNeil: I really need the ZTRAC Mower for the Parks Department.

Gasoline/Diesel

Rob McNeil: We are in need of changing our fuel station. Some residents have asked if we could just use the stations in Town.

Bob Spain: We only have one station in Town that is open 24 hours. If we were to contract with them, they could easily tell us that they would charge us \$5.00 per gallon. We would have no recourse. Even if we can save \$.05 per gallon, just by having the convenience of the 24 hour availability of our own storage, it is worth it.

Michael O'Connor: Due to the hour, would the Finance Director be available on the 16th at 7:00 pm to meet with us to discuss her budgets?

Katie Lavallee: I can be here.

Motioned by Kupcinkas, seconded by Girard to adjourn at 12:15 p.m.

Mark J. U...
Albert P. Kupcinkas
David J. Girard
James J. O'Connell