

FINANCE COMMITTEE  
Minutes

Date: March 20, 2006

Time: 7:00p.m.

Present: O'Connor, Hachey, Turbitt, Hebert, Raymond, Tripaldi

Absent: Floser

Meeting called to order at 7:05p.m.

Motioned by O'Connor, seconded by Hebert to accept the minutes of March 13, 2006 as written. Unanimous.

**The Library Trustees were in to discuss their budget at 7:10p.m.**

Raymond: We will start with the Town Manager's budget. His recommendation is to cut your budget by the amount of the new assistant. I will open it up to questions once we get a chance to review your budget. We just received it tonight. It wasn't in our book.

Hachey: The difference between your budget request and the Town Manager's recommendation is the salary. What impact will it cause without this position?

Leah Devine: We have been without one since Mitch left. There is a definite need so that the Director can do what she needs to do. We haven't been able to apply for as many grants because there isn't time available. It is extremely difficult to continue without the extra professional for support to the Director. We would even consider a part-time person with no benefits. We will take whatever we can for additional help.

Elizabeth Valero: I have continued with the Story Time and all the duties of both people. We do get volunteers that come in to help.

Raymond: How many employees do you have?

Elizabeth Valero: We have 3 full-time people and 7 part-time people.

Raymond: What are pages?

Elizabeth Valero: They put the books back on the shelves.

Raymond: They get 13 holidays?

Elizabeth Valero: They have to get added to the budget. It is not automatically put in their checks.

Raymond: Are there any volunteers at the Library?

Elizabeth Valero: There are two right now.

Raymond: Has the library looked at conserving energy?

Elizabeth Valero: The heat is at a certain level at night and on weekends. It goes back to temperature on Tuesdays. We are closed on Monday. We checked into the lighting. The emergency lighting is on during the weekends and at night. We have tried to decrease the amount of lights, but they are all connected in some way.

Hachey: Do the Police say that you have to have them on?

Elizabeth Valero: The Chief says we could shut them off, but Mike Moore said that they are good for the night checks by the Police Department.

Raymond: The repairs and maintenance went up considerably.

Leah Devine: A lot of things weren't attended to. They now need to be maintained.

Raymond: What is the HVAC Company going to do for \$4500?

Elizabeth Valero: They come in 2 times a year to change the filters and check the system.

Raymond: What about Simplex?

Elizabeth Valero: That's the fire alarm system. The burglar alarm hasn't been checked and the sprinkler system has not been checked in a long time.

Raymond: The elevator maintenance is up.

Elizabeth Valero: That is \$100 per month. We also have to pay for an annual inspection of the elevator. I am just finding out that a lot of things haven't been done.

Raymond: Why do we rent a lift to change the filters in the HVAC system, if we are paying someone to do this?

Elizabeth Valero: I don't know. I was told that it was an agreement done by my predecessor. I was told that this was always done.

Raymond: I recommend you look into this contract and you may find out that you have to go to bid. The contract for CWMARS is up. Last year we only paid \$2000.

Elizabeth Valero: We had a grant last year. This is for the total amount.

Raymond: Do you have any information on what benefit we receive by belonging to this?

Elizabeth Valero: When it is totally operational, we will have the statistics. You would be able to reserve a book from home. There will be more data bases to help the students and everyone using them. We should be completely up by the end of May.

Leah Devine: We will be able to keep better track of overdue books also.

Hachey: How are you doing on volume for participation at the library?

Elizabeth Valero: We had 2819 participants in 282 programs last year and we have had 1517 participants in 199 programs so far this year.

Hachey: Do you know how many cardholders you have?

Elizabeth Valero: I don't have it with me.

Hachey: I am looking at whether or not there is growth.

Elizabeth Valero: There is growth.

Hachey: You have a beautiful building and we want to make sure that it is being utilized. We were fortunate to have a couple of meetings in the library. We just don't want it to be empty.

Elizabeth Valero: We have several programs coming in. We are trying to have programs for adults as well as children.

Hachey: You have the "Friends of the Library". You have the ability to raise outside of Town funding.

Elizabeth Valero: Yes, we do.

Ann Thurlow: They cannot offset the Town funds. They paid for the dye-cutting machine. They only pay for things that are not included in the regular budget. They cannot pay for budget items.

Raymond: Can we find out what is in that account?

Leah Devine: You could ask them. They are a non-profit organization.

Elizabeth Valero: They pay for a lot of my programs.

Raymond: The supplies went up.

Elizabeth Valero: That is for books.

Raymond: Trash collection doubled.

Elizabeth Valero: We went from Millbury Rubbish to Letourneau.

Turbitt: Paul had everyone included in the amount that went out to bid.

O'Connor: I would have thought that the DPW would take care of your grounds. Why are you paying someone else to do it?

Elizabeth Valero: I asked about this. I was told to send a letter to Mr. Guida asking why we had to hire out.

O'Connor: You are paying Home Depot for supplies. The DPW could probably get a better price. We will ask Mr. Chase next week.

Hachey: If you look at your general expenses, they went up 15% over last year. We cannot sustain this. The Town cannot go more than 3% each year. Unless the people in this community are willing to go to the ballot and support a proposition 2-1/2 override, we cannot sustain departments going over the boundaries.

Raymond: We received additional relief this year because it is an election year. We hope that the department can find a way to save money and reduce costs.

Leah Devine: Has the Mall helped us with taxes?

Hachey: It has helped us to spend more money.

Raymond: The latest sewer project, while not against the tax rate, will cost close to a million a year, these projects easily absorb any increases in tax revenue quickly. How often do you meet with the Town Manager?

Elizabeth Valero: We have a department head meeting once a month.

### **The Library Trustees left at 8:00p.m.**

### **Richard Handfield, Police Chief, was in at 8:00p.m.**

Richard Handfield: Before we start, which budget are you looking at?

O'Connor: We are looking at the Town Manager's budget.

Richard Handfield: I submitted a budget of \$1,873,128.

O'Connor: Paul has been talking about a level service budget.

Richard Handfield: I was told to submit 2 budgets. One was level funded. I didn't realize that it was part of the budget process. Level services means not adding any new personnel.

O'Connor: The budget that shows impact is not what we should be looking at?

Richard Handfield: Yes, it is. I am surprised that he put the level funded budget in the packet. When you level fund a budget, you need to look at eliminating positions.

O'Connor: If the level funded budget was an exercise, then it should not have been included.

Hachey: Do your salaries include the Quinn Bill?

Richard Handfield: Yes, they do.

Hachey: What level are you at?

Richard Handfield: I am at 25%. You can do this on-line now. Fifty percent of whatever the Town pays us gets reimbursed the following year. I am not sure where it shows up.

Raymond: Did some of the items in your budget get moved around?

Richard Handfield: I budget the salaries on the high side for the details. Whatever hasn't been spent goes back to the Town. Many of my people use comp time rather than get the overtime. I don't account for this in my budget. My Other Expenses are down to the penny. I requested \$67,500 for capital outlay for cruisers and office equipment. It looks

like I'll only get \$57,500. The cruiser maintenance is up due to the one year that I went without. I should be caught up next year.

Raymond: Next year we will have the GASB system.

Turbitt: This is only for retirement related items.

O'Connor: We had a discussion on comp time. We did get a list updating comp time. Are people with a lot of comp time due for retirement? It should show up somewhere.

Richard Handfield: I have been able to budget for retirements if I know ahead of time.

O'Connor: As the Town grows, you may have to add personnel. What factors would cause you to not be able to use the space you have?

Richard Handfield: We have more specialties than we had before. We have men and women on the front line. We could have a K-9 in the future. They need their own space to work in. We have no conference room. We have no interview room for victims.

O'Connor: What is the \$30,000 for?

Richard Handfield: This is for architectural work. You will not see improvements with this money.

O'Connor: When do you think the Town Manager will come back to the Town to ask for the money?

Richard Handfield: I thought it would be ready for the Town Meeting. Not only do we have a space problem, but we have a (personnel) traffic problem.

O'Connor: What will next year's \$30,000 bring you?

Richard Handfield: This will give us the final design.

Hachey: What is an adequate compliment for your department?

Richard Handfield: I would say another 3-4 people.

Raymond: Could you actually show a decrease in overtime?

Richard Handfield: I can show you on paper.

Raymond: Are you adding square footage?

Richard Handfield: Yes, we are. We are doing this without changing the structure. We are moving what we have and using what is there.

Hachey: Are you replacing all of the computers?

Richard Handfield: Yes, I am. The last time I replaced the computers, I only replaced the towers. The rest are wearing out. I will be looking at replacing the ones in the cruisers next year.

Hachey: There is a difference between your salary figure and Paul's salary figure.

Richard Handfield: I figure my salaries the same every year. I don't know where he cut from. He cut it and I have to figure out where to cut from. The officers don't usually use the court time. They use comp time. I can usually reduce my budget by some of that.

Raymond: Are the grants the same as before, or did they decrease?

Richard Handfield: I still apply for grants, but not all are available anymore.

Raymond: What happens to the Resource Officer once the grant money ends?

Richard Handfield: One of the conditions of the grant is that you keep this person on. I have increased slowly each year to allow for this. We need more State Aid.

Raymond: We talked before about detail work in reference to revenue for the Town. Have you looked into this?

Richard Handfield: There is an administrative fee of 10%. You cannot charge the sewers or the Town. I will look at it but it has been the standard not to charge.

Raymond: We should be getting some additional administrative revenue out of the details at the Mall and for the sewers other commercial requests.

O'Connor: Concerning the sewer project, they budgeted for 7-1/2 man years of detail work. Can you handle this?

Richard Handfield: Yes, I can.

O'Connor: I don't want it to strain your department.

Richard Handfield: We have overflows (specials) to cover when needed.

Raymond: Do you remember what the unexpended balance was that you turned back last year?

Richard Handfield: I don't know the figures right now. I know we were asked not to spend. I would just like to know what you hope to get from these meetings.

Raymond: We are trying to get a handle on what is going on. When is the next contract?

Richard Handfield: The current contract expires on June 30, 2007. This is a 3-year contract.

O'Connor: The problem we are facing as a Town is that the seeds were sown 1-1/2-2 years ago. New growth for the last 2 years was \$900,000. Everyone used what breathing room we had. It is not a "this year" problem. It started years ago.

Hachey: I will reiterate what I said to the Library Trustees. The Town cannot go up more than 3% per year. Unless the people in this community are willing to go to the ballot and support a proposition 2-1/2 override, we cannot sustain departments going over the boundaries.

Richard Handfield: If you need to cut budgets, you need to ask the people to let you know what can be cut. You cannot just go across the board on cuts.

### **Richard Handfield left at 9:05p.m.**

Raymond: The Fire Chief could not make it this week. He will be coming in next week.

O'Connor: I don't feel comfortable going into a meeting with the Selectmen in April to discuss the warrant when we don't know enough about what is in it. We have not had a chance to sit and discuss it at our meetings.

Raymond: I don't know if we are really getting anywhere with these meetings.

O'Connor: Maybe we should meet next week without the department heads to get ready for the meeting on April 4<sup>th</sup>. This is forcing us to have a balanced budget ready for the 4<sup>th</sup>.

Hachey: That is Paul's responsibility.

Raymond: I don't like his budget. We don't know what is being cut by him. I don't know what the reasoning is for the cuts.

Turbitt: One thing that would get us ready for the 4<sup>th</sup> is to have the School get a list of cuts that they can live with.

O'Connor: They gave us a list of cuts. The School Committee only voted on \$69,000 in cuts.

Turbitt: We need to see a base budget with Paul's recommendations. The Town Manager stated that he had a list of what will be lost with a \$500,000 reduction.

O'Connor: We all need to be on the same page by April 4<sup>th</sup>.

Raymond: We need to look at Article 31 on the Warrant. This is stating that Paul can take any unexpended balance at the end of the fiscal year and use it, taking it away from Free Cash.

O'Connor: Free Cash has historically been high. People rely on this. If he can control the unexpended balances, we can take the cuts out of the School Department and let him pay these bills out of this year. If we use the balances up, Free Cash will be lower every year. It may fix the problem now, but it will create others later on.

Raymond: Every year, if you look at the expenditure reports in May and June, expenses increase ten fold.

Turbitt: I still say that the School Department needs to show me what they can offer in education at 10% versus 18% above the foundation budget from the State.

O'Connor: They put a list of cuts on the table.

Turbitt: Most of their cuts are additions to the budget, which do not affect the original budget.

Raymond: What are we going to do about Blackstone Valley?

Turbitt: We have to use the number that Blackstone Valley gave us.

Raymond: We are 1 of 12 Towns with this budget.

Hachey: You can vote it down; just make sure that the original figure is used to calculate for the levy limit. If 9 towns okay the budget, we have to accept their figure.

Turbitt: I just want the School Department to justify what will happen at what level of increase they get.

O'Connor: I'd like you to look at the Warrant Article concerning a building moratorium. They want to limit the building permits to 15 per year.

Turbitt: That is a citizen's petition. The Planning Board did not put this article in.

Hachey: The article is not legal. You cannot limit the amount of permits.

Raymond: It is legal, if you can prove a hardship.

Motioned by Hachey, seconded by Tripaldi to adjourn at 10:10p.m. Unanimous.