

FINANCE COMMITTEE  
Minutes

Date: March 5, 2011

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Present: O'Connor, Gauthier, Hebert, Bartosiewicz, Kupcinkas

Absent: Girard

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

**Bob Spain, Town Manager and Brian Turbitt, Finance Director, were in at 8:00 a.m.**

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

Michael O'Connor: We are here to go over the municipal side of the budget. We are up against the levy limit. There is a deficit that needs to be rectified. Brian supplied me with a spreadsheet analysis of what has been going on. There is a \$345,000 deficit. There is a proposed split of 60/40 between the school department and the municipal side. What the Town Manager submitted includes some changes to cover the deficit. There are some changes that were made to the Police Department budget.

Richard Handfield: There is not much of a difference between what I submitted this year and what I submitted last year. The salaries remain the same. There are no raises in for anyone. The new officers are not entitled to the Quinn Bill. We are down to three crossing guards and that number may go down again. Most of the officers take comp time rather than overtime. There are laptops in for the cruisers. I am not sure if it will come out of the IT account or my account, but they are in this budget. I haven't had to have any maintenance on them. The uniforms for the recruiters was taken out. I am asking for 2 cruisers this year. This should bring the fleet back to where it is supposed to be. The amount should be the same this year. I am purchasing two Crown Victoria's this year. Next year I will be changing to a more economical vehicle.

Michael O'Connor: what is the head count for this budget?

Bob Spain: It is actually reduced. Last year we cut ½ a position and this year we cut the other ½.

Richard Handfield: The first position to go was the School resource Officer, if we need to cut.

Donald Gauthier: How is the overtime account?

Richard Handfield: We are managing. Sometimes it is cheaper to use the overtime than it is to hire a new officer.

Albert Kupcinkas: How are the calls at the Mall?

Richard Handfield: It is about the same. It is busiest on Friday and Saturday.

Bob Spain: We are not where we thought we would be when I first became Town Manager. I had hoped to increase the officers, not decrease them. We would still like a lieutenant in there. The Board of Selectmen are not in favor of this. With the decrease in staff, we are working backwards. I would like to be able to add an officer per shift.

Donald Gauthier: What reason did the Board of Selectmen give for not supporting a lieutenant at this time?

Bob Spain: It is mostly because of money.

Richard Handfield: I have no place to put a lieutenant at this time. There is no space downstairs.

Michael O'Connor: do you have one person responsible for the detective's position?

Richard Handfield: Yes, I do. I will probably need to look at adding a second detective in the future.

Michael O'Connor: I don't understand why the School Department doesn't fund the Resource Officer.

Richard Handfield: The problem that it would cause is who would be in charge of the officer if the school department pays for them.

Michael O'Connor: I would think that you would still be in charge of them.

Bob Spain: I would love to charge them, but then we would have to charge for everything.

Richard Handfield: Grants are not as easily given out anymore. It used to be that if you applied for them, you got them. It is not the same anymore.

Michael O'Connor: What do we do with the \$1million in taxes that we get from the Mall each year?

Bob Spain: We had a decrease in State Aid over the past few years.

### **Much discussion was held concerning level services, town wide**

**Richard Handfield left at 9:10 a.m.**

**Matt Belsito, Fire Chief, was in at 9:15 a.m.**

Matt Belsito: There are no changes in the Fire Department budget. I level funded it. We have the same amount of personnel.

Bob Spain: The Board of Fire Engineers voted to change the way fire fighters and chiefs are paid. Everyone gets paid under the same rules. The stipend didn't change.

Matt Belsito: The Hydrant Expense is questionable. We don't know what Aquarion is going to do.

Michael O'Connor: You have a few capital items.

Matt Belsito: the cutters on the jaws of life don't have the force needed to sheer a steering column anymore. That is why we are asking for a replacement.

Bob Spain: This is a safety issue. This needs to be purchased.

Michael O'Connor: You need to replace a truck?

Matt Belsito: The forestry pump truck is completely gone. We are replacing the pump.

Michael O'Connor: What about the expectation of a warrant article for the aerial scope?

Bob Spain: We have one for that and for a debt exclusion. This will be on the ballot in April. We didn't lose by much last year. Only lost by about 100 votes. I think it will pass this year.

Brian Turbitt: We also have two debts coming off.

Donald Gauthier: How many street acceptances are on the warrant this year?

Bob Spain: There will be at least three. Once we accept the road, we maintain it and take on the hydrants and street lights. I am not too worried about the hydrant account, if they are accepted, because we won't be charged until January.

**Matt Belsito left at 9:35 a.m.**

### **Finance Budgets**

Brian Turbitt: The only change in my budget is for computer operations. We are finishing the last phase next week. We can now back up on site rather than off site. The servers were fixed just prior to them crashing. The Police Chief has chosen to keep his files separate. We do have the capability of handling his files too. We could bring both of his servers up and introduce them to our system. They would still be separate from our system, but we could back them up here.

Bob Spain: Once we test the new computer, it will reduce the cost of computer replacements.

Michael O'Connor: You originally asked for \$49,000. Will the \$39,000 be enough?

Brian Turbitt: Yes, some may be for replacement of computers.

**Brad Lange, Sewer Superintendent, was in at 10:00 a.m.**

Bob Spain: We are below the Abraham's estimate with the Upper Blackstone since the project came in less than expected. The salaries are basically level funded except for longevity. There is a slight increase in electricity. There are new pump stations, since the project has been completed.

Brad Lange: This is the first full year of electricity on the new pump stations.

Bob Spain: We still don't know what the net increase will be for the electricity. Sewer billing is a new line item. We plan to outsource the bills and have them done quarterly.

Brian Turbitt: It is a conversation we are having now and hope to have them on the same cycle as the water bills. This will increase cash flow by billing quarterly rather than semi-annually.

Donald Gauthier: Will this save money?

Brian Turbitt: It will eliminate getting a large bill and I hope it will keep the collections down. The cost is well worth it. There are a lot of bills that have to go out.

Bob Spain: We haven't officially decided to do this in the next fiscal year. If we don't do it, the \$24,500 will come out. The biggest increase is the cost to the Upper Blackstone.

Brad Lange: We are in court with the EPA. We had seven complaints that we weren't agreeing with on our permit. The State will be getting involved with the I/I. We will continue to fight with the EPA so that we don't have to put the cost on to our customers. The debt owed is 53% of the cost in this line item. We are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the I/I. There are 70 more sump pumps in the center of Town than we anticipated.

Michael O'Connor: I thought it was against the law to have a sump pump hooked into the sewer system.

Brad Lange: It is, but it hasn't been enforced. We didn't realize they were even there.

**Brad Lange left at 10:35 a.m.**

Bob Spain: There is still a salary in the budget for the Superintendent. It is in there until we fill the department head position. I am reasonably confident that this figure will decrease before the Town Meeting.

### **Town Clerk Budget**

Bob Spain: There is a decrease in the salaries of about \$4,000 because the Town Clerk and the Assistant Town Clerk retired and the new people were hired at less money. The requested budget included a full time clerk to restore the position.

### **Building Inspector Budget**

Bob Spain: We had eliminated the head clerk position.

### **Electrical Inspector Budget**

Michael O'Connor: Is this due to a new person coming on?

Bob Spain: Yes, it is.

### **Public Works Maintenance and Operations**

Bob Spain: The Operations Manager is included in this budget. This is a dual funded budget position. Part of it belongs to the Sewer Department. This would be included in the In-Direct Costs in their budget. There is a vacant heavy equipment operator position that hasn't been filled.

Albert Kupcinkas: Do we have an Operations Manager right now?

Bob Spain: We don't have one at this time.

### **Highway Department**

Michael O'Connor: You added \$24,000 to capital outlay.

Bob Spain: I looked at the list of capital items and what I added as what we were supposed to have done next year.

### **Snow and Ice Removal**

Steve Hebert: What are we at this year?

Bob Spain: We have a deficit of \$140,000. The price of salt has been about 25% cheaper than last year. In our projections, we figured on a \$200,000 deficit.

Michael O'Connor: General Expenses has been budgeted at \$105,000 since 2009. You originally raised it to \$116,000 then put it back to \$105,000. Some may say you bumped it up just to put it back.

Bob Spain: That is the figure that the previous director requested.

### **Street Lights**

Bob Spain: If the electricity contract hadn't already been signed, this would have gone up considerably.

**Cemeteries**

Michael O'Connor: Under Capital Outlay, you removed a tractor from the budget and added it to a special warrant article?

Bob Spain: Yes, I did.

Michael O'Connor: What is the difference between laying out the cemetery and surveying it?

Bob Spain: One is labor, and one isn't.

**Board of Health**

Bob Spain: We eliminated the Human Services budget and added it to this budget. Our Health Agent is also the Health Agent in Worcester. We have to pay Worcester's cost to use him as our Health Agent.

**Council on Aging**

Michael O'Connor: There is an increase in the Jr. Clerk's hours?

Bob Spain: It was the first position to be cut. I committed myself to them that I would re-instate the position when I could. Because it is a part time position, we don't have to offer insurance.

**Benefits**

Michael O'Connor: Under the Health Insurance Benefit for the Town, there is an increase of 14% and the School is at 3%.

Bob Spain: Many people changed from the single plan to the family plan or from no plan to a new plan. This usually happens more on the School side not the municipal side, but this year the municipal side increased.

Michael O'Connor: We have gone from 6% of the municipal budget to 9% in 5 years for the Retirement Assessment.

Brian Turbitt: Some of that is from the 2002 Early Retirement. What we thought would save money has actually cost us a lot of money.

Michael O'Connor: Our next meeting is scheduled for March 14. Our public hearing is scheduled at 7:00 p.m.

Motioned by Gauthier, seconded by Hebert to accept the minutes of January 25, 2011 as written.  
Unanimous.

**Finance Committee Preliminary Budget**

Motioned by Gauthier, seconded by Hebert to recommend Salaries, \$1,100, General Expenses, \$400 for a total of \$1,500. Unanimous.

Motioned by Gauthier, seconded by Hebert to adjourn at 11:45 a.m. Unanimous.