

Finance Committee Meeting

October 5, 2011 7:30 PM
Veterans Memorial Building, Room 229
900 Main Street
Millis, MA 02054

In Attendance:

Chris Smith, Chairman
Peter Jurmain
Rick Manburg
Richard Molloy
Jim Smith
Susan Vecchi
Charles Aspinwall, Town Administrator
Charles Vecchi, Board of Selectmen
Nancy Gustafson, School Superintendent
David Baker, School Committee
David Byrne, Operations Director
Steve Catalano, School Committee
Marc Conroy, School Committee

Chris Smith called the meeting to order at 7:31 PM.

Article #13 Review – Special Ed Vehicles \$48,000.00:

This article is requesting funds to purchase two vans. The average age of the vehicles in the Special Ed fleet is fifteen years with 150,000 miles. Half of the fleet has between 140,000 – 280,000.00 miles making the fleet unreliable and costly to maintain. This situation has caused problems with picking up students and getting them to school on time. In FY11 the School Department spent \$71,018.00 on maintaining the vehicles that transport special needs students to out of district placements and our integrated pre-school program. The maintenance budget for Special Ed Vehicles is \$29,000.00. The approximate cost for a seven passenger van is \$24,000.00 and for a ten passenger van it is \$26,000.00. The School Committee feels this is an investment worth making for the school district and its children. The vehicles requested have a three year warranty. A fee is charged for picking up students in other towns, Medway pays approximately \$10,000.00 a year to Millis for this service. The School Committee has not considered leasing for the following reasons:

- Vans are customized for special needs
- These vehicles are not in a 'lease atmosphere'
- If bought new the vehicles would last longer than three years
- Maintenance costs would eventually diminish
- They are looking for a similar rotation program the Police Department has with cruiser replacement

The two vans due for replacement have failed inspection at one time. They are replacing the Dodge caravans with a larger sturdier econoline vehicles which seat more students. While not all seats in the SPED vehicles are occupied by students it is a complex operation and streamlining the routes to use fewer vans is not an option. At times the School Department does use some of the SPED vehicles for other activities. SPED transportation changes constantly and flexibility is necessary. There are twenty seven out of district SPED students, six Medway students picked up and six or eight preschool students that use the SPED fleet of twenty two.

The committee requested a list of Special Ed Vehicles including age, mileage and the anticipated timeframe of replacement as well as the number of passengers in each vehicle of the fleet. While vehicle replacement needs consideration, the committee felt with the failed override, requests should be made on a needs basis. The School Department has budgeted \$36,000.00 in FY12 for SPED vehicle purchases: \$26,000.00 to replace the preschool van and \$10,000.00 to purchase a used van.

Article #14 Review – Technology Revolving Account \$90,000.00:

One of the long term goals of the School Department is moving the district to a “One to One” learning environment, each student having a device, similar to the IPAD program last year in the 8th grade. Those IPADS will stay in the middle school for other 8th grade classes. The program would provide personalized learning. The program would be either self-funded or family funded. The account would be set up to receive donations and/or corporate sponsorships of various technology and computer initiatives at all three schools. The purpose of this article is to create the accounting mechanism required by state law to collect and disperse funds for the purpose of acquiring, implementing and supporting the expansion of the use of technology. This warrant has no budget impact. The figure of \$90,000.00 was determined as one year of one grade’s technology expansion. The IPAD program cost \$85,000.00. Quite a few districts are moving toward a “One to One” model. Millis was the first in the state to implement the 8th grade IPAD program. The entire state of Maine uses the “One to One” program. Burlington is using this program in lieu of textbooks. A decision has not been made how to go forward with this account. At Tuesday’s School Committee Meeting a presentation will be made how to proceed. A decision will be made between now and January 2012.

The committee was concerned with the ambiguity for the use of the revolving account. Its exact purpose has not been spelled out. They would be more comfortable making a recommendation with more information and a plan.

Article #15 Review – Solar Energy Project:

This article seeks approval to lease the Middle/High School roof to a Solar Energy Developer, Broadway Electric, for a period of twenty years. The Town’s approval is needed due to the length of the contract. The benefits of the program include:

- Broadway Electric will replace a large section of the Middle/High School rubber roof prior to the installation of their solar array as part of the contract, savings of approximately \$30,000.00.
- The electrical power generated by the solar array will be purchased by the School Department under the Solar Power Purchase Agreement at a fixed and predictable rate.
- Broadway Electric will provide educational materials and the ability to monitor the output of the solar array system on site so the teaching staff can use the system to teach students about going “green”.

- In the last years of the contract, Millis has the option to buy out the contract and own the solar array equipment out-right. At year twenty the solar panels will belong to Millis. The solar equipment will continue to produce electricity beyond the term of the contract.

Broadway Electric will receive Federal Energy Credits for the program. There is no liability to the town until the town owns the panels. Broadway Electric is bonded and has liability insurance.

The committee has concerns with the commitment of twenty years with the growing rate of technology. Solar Energy technology is changing every three to four years. More efficient units will most likely be available in the next five years. The committee requested an estimate of costs if the town paid for the purchase and installation of the solar array system and what the savings of eliminating energy costs would be. The Town has negotiated new rates for the next four years which may be more beneficial than the rates with Broadway Electric. If the solar program goes through it will have an impact on the bid with Constellation New Energy with less KWHs used than contracted.

Article #3 & #4 Review – Zoning By Laws:

Charles Aspinwall:

Article #3 changes the verbiage in the Zoning By Law for the overlay districts adding “per 10,000 square feet”. Three floor projects will require 33.4% residential use, 33.4% non-residential commercial/retail and the other 33.2% either residential or non-residential upon approval of the Planning Board. Two floor properties require ½ residential and ½ non-residential commercial/retail.

Article #4 deletes “where facing the Main Street” in the Zoning By Law within the Millis Center Economic Opportunity District.

Peter Jurmain made a motion to recommend approval of Article #3; Richard Molloy 2nd. Vote: 6/0, motion carries.

Susan Vecchi made a motion to recommend approval of Article #4; Richard Molloy 2nd. Vote: 6/0, motion carries.

Article #6 Review – Sewer System Improvements:

Charles Aspinwall:

The Sewer System I/I Investigation Phase III is the completion of the investigation of sub basin 1-C and the repair or replacement of defective sewer services by open excavation found during previous investigations. The cost for Phase III work is expected to be \$115,925.00. This article will be funded through the Sewer Surplus Account. The Sewer Surplus Account is estimated to be \$232,156.00. The Sewer Surplus would be used for salary increases and ½ of the cost of a DPW vehicle.

Richard Molloy made a motion to recommend approval of Article #6 Sewer System Improvements; Susan Vecchi seconded. Vote: 6/0, motion carries.

Article #7 Review – Water System Improvements:

Charles Aspinwall:

This article will result in permanent installation of a chlorinating system at some of the wells. The Drinking Water Committee has recommended these improvements. The goal is for a .5 or .6 chlorine residual which is high enough to kill any bacteria. The Drinking Water Committee has not made a recommendation on the eight options. The Water Surplus Account is estimated to be \$261,012.00 plus \$60,000.00 which is already on hand for a total of approximately \$321,000.00. More information will be provided after meeting with the Drinking Water Committee.

The committee will make its recommendation at Town Meeting pending the Drinking Water Committee's recommendation.

Article #25 Review – Salary Amendments Resulting from Survey:

Charles Aspinwall:

The Board of Selectmen has recommended approval of \$68,042.85 which includes a 4% raise for non-union employees as well as several reclassification. The increases total \$63,623.89 and the reclassification total \$4,418.96.

Susan Vecchi made a motion to recommend approval of Article #25, salary increases of 4% for all non-union employees; Peter Jurmain seconded. Vote: 6/0, motion carries.

FY12 Budget Update - Postponed

New Business:

SPED Circuit Breaker Funding:

Charles Aspinwall:

This is a grant account used for SPED tuition and services. As of June 30th the balance was \$237,873.41, FY11 Payments/Carryover was \$186,214.00, \$51,659.41 was recommended by DOR to turn back to Free Cash

The School Department will ask the Board of Selectmen to add a warrant article to appropriate funding. If all funds are not expended they are carried over to the next year.

Old Business:

Chris Smith made a motion to authorize payment to the Postmaster in the amount of \$688.94 for postage for the Fall Town Warrant; Susan Vecchi seconded. Vote: 6/0, motion carries.

Important Dates:

Final Recommendations: October 19, 2011
Warrant to Printer: October 24, 2011
Warrant Delivered to Residents: October 31, 2011
Pre-Town Meeting/Public Hearing: November 2, 2011
Town Meeting: November 7, 2011

Upcoming Meeting Schedule:

October 12, 2011 7:30 PM
Veterans Memorial Building, Room 229

October 19, 2011 7:30 PM
Veterans Memorial Building, Room 229

October 26, 2011 7:30 PM
Veterans Memorial Building, Room 229

November 2, 2011 7:30 PM – Pre-Town Meeting
Veterans Memorial Building, Room 229

November 7, 2011 7:30 PM – Town Meeting
Veterans Memorial Building, Room 229

Minutes Approval:

Rick Manburg made a motion to accept the September 28, 2011 meeting minutes as written, Susan Vecchi seconded. Vote: 6/0 motion carries.

Adjourn:

Susan Vecchi made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 PM; Richard Molloy seconded, Vote 6/0.

Respectfully submitted,
Deirdre Gilmore