

Finance Committee Meeting

September 28, 2011 7:30 PM
Veterans Memorial Building, Room 229
900 Main Street
Millis, MA 02054

In Attendance:

Chris Smith, Chairman
Craig Schultze, Vice Chairman
Peter Jurmain
Rick Manburg
Rich Molloy
Jim Smith
Susan Vecchi
Charles Aspinwall, Town Administrator
Charles Vecchi, Board of Selectmen
Lisa Hardin, Town Clerk
John Reardon

Chris Smith called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

Article Review - Petitioned Online Budgets:

Mr. Reardon:

This article is requesting all proposed budgets, both municipal and school, are posted on the town's website thirty days prior to the budget vote at Town Meeting. The purpose of this request is to make the town's budgetary information more readily available to the citizens of Millis. Currently if a citizen wants to review a budget they have two options: (1) go to the town hall and look at the budget books or (2) go to the library and review the budgets books. Hours of operation at both locations have been reduced limiting when the data is available. In order to receive a copy of the budgets the cost is \$112.40 for each copy. He would like to note that a school use fee of \$3,403.40 was waived so a private, for profit, medical practice could use the schools for office visits at the very same school committee meeting that he requested the fee of \$112.40 for a copy of their budget be waived. During those 168 hours the medical practice would be billing insurance companies \$16,800.00 in fees but all of the overhead for those visits would be paid for by the Millis Public Schools. He then requested the budget information in digital format and was told "no digital records can be disseminated". It became clear the only way the citizens of Millis would get to see the line item budget information was if the town had no choice and had to put the information online for review. He drafted the article and collected more than enough resident signatures to get the issue on the Town Warrant for the fall Town Meeting. He hopes for the Finance Committee's support on the quest to make the budget information more readily available to Millis' residents without prohibitive fees attached.

The committee agreed the town's proposed budgets should be posted online for resident review. Town Council will review the petitioned article before a vote on the article would be made.

Article Review – Early Liquor Sales on Sunday:

Charles Aspinwall:

Local restaurants, Victory Lane and Primavera, are requesting earlier liquor sales on Sundays to expand their brunch menu to include liquor. The Town has already accepted G.L.c138, 33B allowing for 11:00 AM liquor service. The Board of Selectmen would grant the license to serve liquor at 10:00 AM or 11:00 AM.

Craig Schultze made a motion to recommend the Early Liquor Sales on Sunday article; Peter Jurmain seconded. Vote: 7/0, motion carries.

Article Review – COA Respite Revolving Fund:

Charles Aspinwall:

The COA provides respite care for Alzheimer and Dementia residents, also known as adult daycare. The COA has programs and activities for these residents and charge a fee for this service. The fees pay for the entire service. The program initially started as a grant but the grant has since run out and the fee for service program was started. There are currently five participants in the program. Two positions from the personnel plan manage the program. It is a self supporting program. The request is for a program cap of \$10,000.00.

Craig Schultze made a motion to recommend the COA Respite Revolving Fund article with expenses not to exceed \$10,000.00; Peter Jurmain seconded. Vote: 7/0, motion carries.

Article Review – Personnel Plan Amendments:

Charles Aspinwall:

The plan consists of four schedules:

- Schedule A: Grades/Positions/Classifications
- Schedule B: Salary Ranges
- Schedule C: Employee Benefits
- Schedule D: Policies and Procedures

The amendment to Schedule C relates to the sick time buyback. Currently upon retirement employees are eligible to 25% of their accumulated sick time with a cap of \$1,250.00. The amendment would change the cap to \$1,800.00 matching the DPW contract. The cap for both the Police and Fire Departments is \$2,500.00.

Other amendments to the plan include:

- Title change for the Building Inspector to Building Commissioner
- Add a COA Respite Coordinator and Activities Coordinator

- Add a snow and ice stipend. The Assistant Director of the DPW responded 37 times to snow storms last year.
- Reclassification of the following positions:
 - Public Health Director
 - COA Director
 - Recreation Director
 - Senior Building Maintenance Worker
 - Deputy Fire Chief
 - Animal Control Officer

The reclassification is based on the salary survey that was conducted. The above positions were at least 10% below what other communities are paying.

- As a result of the salary survey both the consultant and the Town Administrator are recommending increasing employees salaries by 4%, placing Millis employees at a midpoint of comparable communities. The cost of both the reclassification and salary increases is approximately \$70,000.00. Funding these changes could come from available certified Free Cash, certified Water and Sewer Surplus to fund water and sewer salaries as well as certified Overlay Surplus of approximately \$60,000.00. This change will affect the town's salary base and available Free Cash in subsequent years. Free Cash typically ranges from \$600,000.00 to \$700,000.00; the cost of these amendments would be less than 10% of available Free Cash each year. There are other units in the town that have received much larger increases. The Board of Selectmen will vote on these amendments at Monday's, October 3, 2011 meeting.

A big concern the committee has with the changes is the timing due to the cuts the town made in FY12.

Article Review – Debt Reserve: Reduction of Tax Rate:

Charles Aspinwall:

The amount budgeted for the school renovation was set at \$632,876.00 in FY11, due to the refinancing of debt done in August 2010; the actual cost was \$434,786.28. As a result \$198,090.00 less was paid in excluded debt. The DOR instructed the town to reserve the \$198,090.00 and redistribute the money back to the taxpayers as a form of offset. The town needs to ensure these funds go back to the taxpayers and the credit is properly recorded in FY12. The deduction will be reflected in 3rd and 4th quarter bills.

Rick Manburg made a motion to recommend the Debt Reserve: Reduction of Tax Rate article in the amount of \$198,090.00; Rich Molloy seconded. Vote: 7/0, motion carries.

Article Review – MassWorks Infrastructure Grant Program:

Charles Aspinwall:

The Board of Selectmen approved the submittal of a grant for the program. The final decision by the state will be made in December. The proposed borrowing of funds would have to be voted. If the grant is not received the borrowing can be rescinded at the May 2012 Town Meeting. The proposed project involves Main Street and Exchange Street. The proposed infrastructure improvements will directly support existing businesses and encourage new economic development along Exchange Street further promoting mixed use development. The proposed improvements along Exchange Street will enhance

the viability of the existing commercial properties and foster development of numerous under-utilized properties, building on the success achieved with the adjacent Centennial Place development. The goal is to improve access to businesses and making access safer.

The scope of work is as follows:

- Remove the trees obscuring the view of the businesses
- Expand sidewalks and eliminate angle parking
- Provide parallel parking on both sides of the road
- Alleyways to businesses will be improved from the schools to the library and from the schools to the businesses.
- A pedestrian walkway will be installed

The Proposed Costs are as follows:

• Milling:	\$ 19,500.00
• 1 ½" Bituminous :	\$ 60,500.00
• Pedestrian Crossing/Curb Extensions:	\$ 12,000.00
• Concrete Sidewalks:	\$ 91,000.00
• Concrete Sidewalk Ramps:	\$ 12,000.00
• Bituminous Sidewalks (Walkway):	\$ 19,250.00
• Granite Curb:	\$160,000.00
• Pavement Markings:	\$ 2,000.00
• Electrical Tie In For Lighting:	\$ 30,000.00
• Enhance Pedestrian Lighting:	\$144,000.00
• Landscape/Plantings:	\$ 25,000.00
• Traffic Signal – Pedestrian Crossing:	\$100,000.00
• Signage/Way Finding:	<u>\$ 10,000.00</u>
Subtotal:	<u>\$685,250.00</u>
• Mobilization (2% of Subtotal):	\$ 13,705.00
• General Condition (5% of Subtotal):	<u>\$ 34,262.50</u>
Construction Cost Subtotal:	<u>\$733,217.50</u>
• Survey & Engineer Design (15% of Construction Cost Subtotal):	\$109,982.63
• Contingency (20% of Construction Cost Subtotal):	<u>\$146,643.50</u>
Total Project Budget:	<u>\$989,843.63</u>

The grant will cover everything but 5% of the engineering costs. The town would cover the 5%; approximately \$10,000.00. The town will borrow the funds upfront, expend the funds and then be reimbursed by the state. The program must be complete within a year. The project will generate 20 temporary construction jobs and with advances in the area and new development could result in 70 permanent jobs in the area. Once the town signs the grant agreement with the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth must reserve the funds and reimburse the town when the project is complete. The lighting line item does not include lighting along the walkway from the schools to Main Street. The lighting line item will extend ornamental lighting along Exchange Street.

Peter Jurmain made a motion to recommend the MassWorks Infrastructure Grant Program article as written; Susan Vecchi seconded. Vote: 7/0, motion carries.

Old Business/New Business:

Chris Smith: Jennifer Soule was appointed to the School Committee and has resigned from the Finance Committee as of Monday, September 26, 2011.

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 5, 2011 7:30 PM
Veterans Memorial Building, Room 229

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:

Craig Schultze made a motion to accept the September 21, 2011 meeting minutes as written, Susan Vecchi seconded. Vote: 5/0 motion carries.

Adjourn:

Susan Vecchi made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 PM; Peter Jurmain seconded, Vote 7/0.

Respectfully submitted,
Deirdre Gilmore