

**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**October 5, 2004**  
**Town Office Building (COA)**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:05 PM. In attendance were Chair Jason Robart, Members Patti Heron, Steve Dungan, Tom Ryan, David Walrath, and Associate Members Henry Hagopian, and Brian Burke

Agenda Item 2: **Correspondence:**

- A notice of a Training Workshop to be held by the MMA on November 13, 2004 in Worcester was brought up and provided to Brian Burke for his consideration.
- In connection with a letter from the NRSD School Committee, Chair Robart reported on a conversation he had with Nancy Fleming, Chair of the NRSD School Committee, regarding her contention that FinCom had given the School Committee and Administration insufficient time to plan for the originally rescheduled Tri-Town Committee Meeting date of September 22, 2004. The Chair also registered Ms. Fleming's statement that the NRSD was not trying to act to slow the Tri-Town meeting process. According to Chair Robart, the upshot of this conversation was that both he and Chair Fleming agreed that they would work together to handle scheduling these kinds of matters better in the future.
- A thank you note from Mitch Sampson for his gift from the Committee was registered.

Agenda Item 3: **Reserve Fund Transfer Requests:**

Susan Hosier, the new Administrative Assistant for the Board of Selectmen (BOS), was introduced to the members and she submitted a bill or \$1040.50 for newspaper advertising on behalf of the BOS to fill the Administrative Assistant's position she now holds. Originally, the BOS had budgeted only \$309 for total advertising and that is why the Board was now seeking to recover the shortfall from the Reserve Fund. Steve Dungan moved to approve a Reserve Fund transfer in the amount of \$ 1040.05 which was seconded by David Walrath.

There ensued a brief inquiry into where the advertising was placed, and it was noted that the advertising rates at the Community News was especially expensive. Chair Robart questioned whether this expenditure was taken out of the BOS budget or the Town Clerk's. Ms. Hosier was asked to research this question, and when she returned later in the meeting it was determined that advertising expenses for her position came out of the BOS budget. At that point the previous motion was put to a vote and passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 4: **Liaison Reports:**

Patti Heron as Committee Liaison to the Planning Board reported from her own observations that Bose had people working on site in the Town and she indicated that she would follow up with the Committee once she confirmed the extent and scope of this work.

David Walrath as Committee Liaison to CPC reported that drafting of the Deed restrictions for Pilot Grove was in the final phase and moving forward. Also, Mr. Walrath noted that John Bolton from the Assessors' Board had devised a new formula for the Deed Restriction plan that took into account mortgage interest rates; previously, the formula only accurately reflected the income level for affordable housing access.

The CPC has decided to submit the formula and the deed language to the Massachusetts Housing Authority before submitting it to the Town in finalized form. Mr. Walrath had taken the view that the CPC should submit the language to the Town before seeking state approval. Mr. Walrath will submit the proposals to FinCom at some point in the near future.

Mr. Dungan asked whether a numerical model showing how the Deed Restriction plan would affect cash flow to those participating in the plan was being prepared as previously was requested by the FinCom. Mr. Walrath reported that he had brought up this specific point at the CPC meeting where this issue was discussed and that he expected that such a model would forthcoming. Mr. Ryan suggested that CPC also develop a model showing appreciation of property values in the area, based on some agreed upon historic period, so that participants in the program could fully realize what they would be giving up when they eventually decided to sell the property.

Brian Burke as Committee Liaison to SBC reported that seventy Stow Residents attended the Parents Public Forum the night before at Hale School. Mr. Dungan had made a presentation to those in attendance which was in line with those he had given at previous outreach forums and of which the Committee members were all familiar. Superintendent Wood also expressed to those in attendance at the Forum his general ideas of the purpose and structure of any new elementary school improvements in Stow. The parents who attended had complained about the length of time that new elementary school construction, if approved, would take; lack of fire sprinklers at the Pompo Elementary School, and the overall costs of the construction being contemplated.

Mr. Burke also related Superintendent Wood's evaluation of the Town's current debt schedule along with times to retire the various bond instruments. At the SBC meeting the night before, Superintendent Wood predicted that roughly 11.9 million dollars will be retired within the next 5 years; therefore, he feels that there would be a comparable sum available for capital improvements without increasing debt service or municipal tax burdens. Mr. Ryan expressed his reservations concerning this analysis and suggested that the Superintendent Wood's projections did not completely take into account the exclusionary aspects of municipal indebtedness. Mr. Burke expressly stated he was relating the Superintendent's analysis and not subscribing to it.

Pam Glauner as liaison to the NRSD reported via previous written report to the Chair on the contracting of two new busses for the amount of \$62,000 and paid out of a special revolving account that the District had apparently maintained since at least 2003 containing funds received from out of district pre-school students. The reason for the acquisition was that Bolton needed two additional busses to complete the routes in that Town on schedule and reduce the number of students per bus. Moreover, spending approximately \$12,000 on a new software dialing/messaging program is under consideration. Further, the High School's Athletic Director has recommended maintenance expenditures to the School's Track costing approximately \$100,000 and field improvements of \$650,000. Finally, Ms. Glauner reported that Joanne Foster, Chair of the Lancaster Board of Selectmen, was assigned as the Tri-Town Representative to the Negotiations Committee for the new NRSD teachers' contract. It was stated by another member that the Negotiations Committee is chaired by School Committee Member Don Adams.

Agenda Item 5: **Tri-Town Discussion:**

At that point, the matter of the following night's Tri-Town Meeting Agenda was taken up. The Committee discussed its previously stated intention to request the return of approximately \$180,000 in incremental transportation state aid in the form of an immediate reduction of previous assessments to the member Towns. The arguments to be advanced the following night in support of this position were articulated and reviewed. A request for excess SPED circuit breaker funds which had recently been made available to the District was postponed for further study.

Agenda Item 6: **Special Projects:**

Steve Dungan's long term financial projections for the Town's future were next reviewed. It was noted by Mr. Dungan that his projections depended on fairly level annual NRSD assessment increases. It was determined that if Free Cash and Stabilization accounts were zeroed-out the Town would be running at a slight surplus. Mr. Hagopian noted that as things currently stand, the Town cannot establish a savings levels necessary for continued financial health.

Mr. Ryan pointed out that debt exclusions will decrease as debt comes of the municipality's books, and that virtually all the debt currently listed in Mr. Dungan's projections were excludable. Mr. Ryan's reported on observations he had made based on tinkering that he had done to a FinCom position piece that was drafted in the previous fiscal year.

**Action Item**

Members Dungan and Ryan will meet to come up with more “final” numbers for the long term projections, including current municipal debt loads, for use in the Committee’s and the Town’s operations.

Agenda Item 1: **Approval of the Minutes from the September 21, 2004 Meeting**

The Minutes from the previous FinCom meeting were approved upon motion by Mr. Walrath and seconded by Mr. Ryan with slight word choice edits (“approximate” in front of the number \$20,000 in Mr. Burke’s Liaison Report) and grammatical and typographical corrections provided to the Chair.

The Meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at approximately 8:40 PM.