

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Public Hearing
April 12, 2005
Town Hall
Approved July 26, 2005

The Finance Committee held a public hearing to get public input about the FY2006 proposed budget and Town Meeting warrant. The hearing was brought to order at 7:03 p.m. In attendance: Brian Burke, Steve Dungan, Pam Glauner, Henry Hagopian, Patti Heron, Charlie Kern, Jason Robart, Tom Ryan, and David Walrath. There were approximately 20 attendees, in addition to the Finance Committee members. Many attendees represented other town committees and boards.

Chairman Jason Robart opened by presenting the draft version of the Town Meeting Warrant, a Warrant addendum, and a Finance Committee budget summary handout (see attached). He stated that the Finance Committee had not yet voted any FY06 articles, although some of last years' recommendations were printed in the draft warrant. He stated that the purpose of the hearing was not to debate articles, but to let the Finance Committee hear the public's opinion on the articles.

Article 2, Reports of Selectmen & Other Committees: *(Note that all article numbers reference the numbers as printed in the Draft warrant dated 4/8/05 and addendum dated 4/12/05.)* Moderator Ed Newman stated that 2 years of reports would be accepted at this Town Meeting because it was omitted last year.

Article 4, Wage & Salary Schedules: Jim Sauta (Council on Aging) asked if this article reflected any changes from the ongoing wage & salary review committee. FinCom response: No, the committee results will likely be presented at a fall 2005 Town Meeting.

Chris Way (NRSD School Committee) asked what the total % increase of salary for town employees is for FY06 (rate, step, longevity, etc). FinCom response: 4.56%, which includes the 1.5 new FTE's proposed in the budget.

Ellen Sturgis (NRSD School Committee) asked where the headcount increases are. FinCom response: They are all partial positions, including Town Clerk's office, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Cemetery and Library.

Article 5, General Budget for FY06: Ed Newman asked what items were different between the Requested and Selectmen's Recommended column. FinCom response: Primary differences include \$20K for Snow & Ice and \$5K for Fuel. There are also other small differences.

Article xx, Solid Waste Disposal Container: Ed Newman questioned if this is the same container that was approved on a trial basis last year. Pat Perry (Conservation Commission) stated that it is for the same container, and that the container is regularly

used.

Article 26, Police Medical Pmts: Ellen Sturgis questioned the purpose and small dollar amount of this article. Ed Newman replied that it was to cover ongoing small medical expenses related to an on-the-job eye injury that happened many years ago.

Articles 24 & 25, FY05/FY06 Legal Services: Linda Stokes questioned if the FY06 legal budget of \$30K was enough, in light of the need for more FY05 legal funds. FinCom response: Jason Robart stated that he had asked Bill Wrigley the same question, and that Bill feels the \$30K (\$5K more than orig. FY05 budget) will be adequate for FY06.

Article 30, Capital Requests: A capital spending schedule from the Capital Planning committee was reviewed. Pete Masters (Randall Library Trustees) stated that the Library has withdrawn its \$14K request for roof repairs. Police Chief Mark Trefry explained an added request for \$16K for traffic light upgrades, along with his belief that the price may end up lower than \$16K. Several late requests from the NRSD (for Pompo, Center and Hale) totaling \$150K were reviewed. Jean Lynch (Capital Planning) noted that the requests had been submitted on 4/5/05. The Finance Committee had been unaware of these requests, and was uncertain if the requests would be in the final warrant.

Linda Stokes questioned the method of financing capital spending. FinCom response: All except the Fire Truck (\$350K) are coming from Free Cash. Funding for NRSD requests is unknown at this point.

Article 31, NRSD Agreement Amendment: Nancy Fleming (NRSD School Committee Chair) reviewed the purpose of this article, to define and standardize the definition of capital and maintenance expenses. Capital expenses must meet tests relating to cost and life expectancy.

Article 32, SBC Transfer: SBC Member Brian Burke explained that these funds are needed to complete work in preparation for a Fall 2005 Town Meeting, and that these are previously allocated funds, not new spending.

George Dargaty requested a complete accounting of the monies spent by the SBC. Steve Dungan promised a detailed summary will be given at May Town Meeting.

Several voters questioned the wording of the article and requested the committee clarify the section mentioning Future Electronics.

Article 33, CPC Open Space: Nancy Fleming asked for total CPA balances. Bob Wilbur (CPC Chairman) stated that there is approximately \$1.3 million in total, much of which is appropriated towards specific projects. Additional state match is due in October.

There was no further discussion on specific warrant articles. The discussion turned to the overall state of town finances.

Jim Sauta questioned if the Finance Committee had met with Bolton and Lancaster to get their feeling on the NRSD budget request. Tom Ryan and Steve Dungan, who attended the last Tri-Town meeting, stated that Bolton's advisory committee has voted to recommend the NRSD budget, and Lancaster has not yet made a recommendation. Bolton will not need an override, and Lancaster is looking at a \$150,000 override.

Pete Rhoads (Concerned Citizens of Stow) is concerned about "perpetual" overrides, and stated "the municipal budget is down to swapping tires and pickup trucks", a large contrast to the way the NRSD budget is "forced on us."

Linda Stokes stated that education has represented approximately the same % of the town budget for the past 20 or more years. She noted that the NRSD has used ZBB, and questioned if the town is doing the same.

The hearing was closed at 8:12pm.

**Minutes respectfully submitted by Pamela Glauner.
April 16, 2005**