

Sturbridge Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
March 20, 2012  
Tantasqua Reg. Jr. High School  
7:00 pm

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm with the following members present: Kevin Smith (KS), Joni Light (JL), Patti Affenito (PA), Mary Redetzke (MR), Larry Morrison (LM), Prescott (Scott) Arndt (SA) and Arnold Wilson (AW). Members absent: Rich Volpe (RV).

The FinCom attended the Tantasqua Reg. School Cmte. budget public hearing. The budget was explained in detail by Deb Boyd (DB), and Daniel Durgin (DD). Each series within the budget was whittled to absolute necessities. There are 22 school choice students per grade in grades seven through twelve. Several positions have been left empty. KS wants the committee to be aware of the Citizen's Petition that will require the FY 13 budget to remain at FY12 levels. The committee is aware of this Petition.

**Line Item Budget:**

8 Brookfield Rd. (pg. 6, Line Item Budget): there are still repairs needed from storm-related flooding. The roof also still needs work. The tenant pays \$1,700 in rent and will renew the lease. JL makes a motion to approve line 67 for \$1,000, seconded by AW. Vote 7-0-0.

Town Accountant (pg. 2, Line Item Budget): JL is ok with the 2% salary increase. MR asks what will be increase in teacher salaries this year, AW answers 1.5%. LM points out that teachers can supplement their income during school breaks. JL makes a motion to approve line 15 for \$63,298, seconded by AW. Vote 6-2-0. A general statement is made about the audit of the Town's records; the school audit is likely just the Sturbridge portion of the total cost. JL make a motion to approver lines 16, 17 and 18 for \$26,425, seconded by AW. Vote 8-0-0.

Board of Selectmen (pg. 1, Line Item Budget): this budget is level-funded at \$3,100. JL makes a motion to approve lines 2, 3 and 4, seconded by AW. Vote 8-0-0.

Center Office Building (pg. 5, Line Item Budget): the line for the elevator may change with the new contract. JL thinks \$2,000 is reasonable, although a bit high for a new building. KS makes the point that this is a heavily used building. JL makes a motion to approve lines 58 and 59 for \$26,850, seconded by AW. Vote 8-0-0.

Central Purchasing (pg. 14, Line Item Budget): JL makes a motion to approve lines 177 – 181, seconded by AW. MR asks if the Nursery School and 8 Brookfield Rd. are included, answer probably not. AW states that parents are expected to provide many services to the Nursery School. Vote 8-0-0.

Finance Director (pg. 3, Line Item Budget): JL makes a motion to approve lines 27, 28 and 29 for \$49,848, seconded by AW. Vote 8-0-0.

Town Administrator (pg. 1, Line Item Budget): JL makes a motion to approve line 5 for \$109,201, seconded by AW. Vote 5-3-0. JL makes a motion to approve line 6 for \$39,244, seconded by AW. Vote 6-2-0.

Building Inspector (pg. 8, Line Item Budget): JL is OK with the 2% but KS wants to see a detail breakdown of the \$18,630. JL will ask about the \$1,500 for team building (staff development).

Town Hall (pg. 5, Line Item Budget): most of these charges repeat from the Center Office Bldg., KS wants to know why internet is charged for both buildings. This budget contains all supplies except for the Town Clerk's copier.

Unclassified (pg. 14, Line Item Budget): this figure is up +7% over last year. Group insurance is on hold for now; there may be a \$5,000 decrease (if leachate hauling is kept in-house). The insurance blanket for Burgess shows the full cost. JL makes a motion to approve lines 168 – 174, and line 176 for \$1,158,201, seconded by AW. Vote 8-0-0.

Town Moderator (pg. 1, Line Item Budget): JL makes a motion to approve line 1 for \$0, seconded by AW. Vote 8-0-0.

### **New Business:**

KS watched the BOS meeting (3/19/12). The meeting was contentious and the TA will not draft a new budget because the BOS have told the TA not to do this. KS believes that the FinCom can direct the TA to complete this task. MS states that the FinCom is not a policy-making body; MR says information is being requested. KS says we could go to a third party for an opinion rather than the Town Counsel so that impartiality is maintained. MR rebuts saying that we already pay for impartiality. KS points out that he works for the Town Counsel. JL asks if any Town Administrators are elected? AW answers that only mayors are elected. PA says he works for the Town and he should be getting this information. KS says the BOS says the TA does not have time to draft another budget. MS agrees that time is a factor; the budget will be changed because there is no way to know what articles will pass. MS goes on to say that the TA may just use Free Cash to stabilize the budget. AW agrees with MS; a letter should be drafted outlining general thoughts on how to save approximately \$1,000,000. KS will draft a letter to the BOS. PA thinks that the BOS mind-set that we are completely out of line is wrong; the Town needs to be prepared because the request comes from citizens not the FinCom. PA goes on to say that it is not in the TA's best interest to deny this request because questions will be asked at the ATM.

KS says the BOS voted 3-2 to support the 2% salary increases.

### **Old Business:**

Inspectors (Electric and Plumbing, pg. 8, Lone Item Budget): MS goes through the budget, saying that charging \$35 per inspection is a better system than the stipend system that was previously used by the Town. MS makes a motion to approve lines 86, 87 and 88 for \$30,300,

seconded by AW. General discussion: MS states the Building Inspector provided correspondence about the permits fees:

“The plumbing and electrical inspectors are paid a flat rate of \$35.00 per inspection. Most of the fees charged for permits are sufficient to pay for the appropriate number of inspections plus something left to cover the associated administrative costs. This form of compensation is used in many towns, as it directly links payments to the inspectors with fees received, whereas a stipend is paid even when there are no inspections. Many towns set up a revolving inspections account so that the fees collected can be used to pay the inspectors but also to buy code books, pay for training, and the like without affecting the general fund. Prior to this change, the electrical inspector received 86% of the collected fee and the plumbing inspector got everything but \$10.00 of the fee. In 2010, there were 221 electrical inspections and we paid the inspector 86% (\$17,576.00) of the \$20,437.00 collected in fees. That works out to \$79.53 per inspection. On average, an inspection can be done in 15-30 minutes. Additionally, the Town wasn't retaining enough of the fee to cover the cost of administration or supplies.”

SA asks whether these funds should go into a revolving fund and if there are any advantages in the future; MS states that currently the fees go into the General Fund. SA thinks a revolving fund would cover any problems. MR says that this is the first year with this process. MS also asked about the thermostats and the idea is not supported because any savings may be offset by incorrect use. Vote for the existing motion is 8-0-0.

Education (pg. 9, Line Item Budget): AW makes a motion to approve line 94 for \$5,383,859, seconded by MR. Vote 6-1-1.

AW makes a motion to approve line 96 for \$0, seconded by MR. Vote 8-0-0.

AW makes a motion to approve line 97 for \$245,457, seconded by MR. Vote 7-1-0.

KS says that the Recreation Director is not a separate line item because the position is an hourly position, not salaried. MS did ask the TA about the Grade of the Recreation Director with respect to the merit pool, because she is not considered a Dept. Head she is not eligible. MR says the position is not a Recreation Director because directors manage ‘Managers’. The Recreation Manager manages people only during the summer months not all year round. MS again says the Rec. Dir. truly feels the scope of the position and the number of people recruited and supervised during the summer programs should be considered.

KS makes a motion to adjourn at 10:04 pm.