

Sturbridge Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
April 03, 2014 ~ Sturbridge Town Hall  
7:00pm

Call to Order:

The chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00pm with the following Finance Committee members present: Joni Light (JL), Prescott (Scott) Arndt (SA), Mike Serio (MS), Kevin Smith, Chairman (KS) Kathy Neal (KN), Alex Athans (AA), Larry Morrison (LM), and Bob Jepson (BJ)

Absent: Arnold Wilson (AW)

Guests: Elisa Krochmalnyckyz, Jacqueline Belisle, Stephen Mullen, Becky Plimpton, and Joyce Sinnott.

Chairman KS announced to the members that tonight's meeting will review the budget line items, warrants, and that the Library Trustees will join the meeting.

Beginning in the Budget line item booklet KS went page by page to review what the committee has acted on thus far.

Capital Planning:

Discussion ensued in respect to the dispatch center renovation, specifically the radio system update. Presently, the banding is narrow and is not up to date. The skylight roof at the library building was also to be replaced along with a request for 1 police car. KS expressed that he was okay with 1 cruiser and the skylight repair as a capital purchase, but felt, in the future, these should be warrant items.

There was no question the DPW needs a dump truck. However, the question was: Should it be taken out of capital planning? LM spoke to this concern explaining that four items are considered for capital planning – depreciated items, worn out items, obsolete items and small construction projects. KS explained that large items such as fire trucks would be done by borrowing.

Discussion ensued on the Police vehicle with KN asking what was being replaced and if an outdated one was being replaced. KS responded that the cruiser would be an upgrade. Additional purchases were then discussed. The BOH is looking at a Ford Escape. They had looked at a pick up truck but felt the Escape SUV would serve more purpose. The committee will have further discussion with the Fire and Police department heads at the next meeting. Items such as the impound fence lot, plastic cribbing, and gear washer will be addressed at that meeting.

Joshua Hyde Library:

The committee welcomed Joshua Hyde Library Board of Trustees Jacqueline Belisle, Elisa Krochmalnyckyz, Stephen Mullen, Joyce Sinnott and Becky Plimpton, Library Director.

KS opened discussion to question the 4.6% increase requested for the salary of the department head. JB explained the employment contract was a separate issue from the COLA. KS asked if the Town had received information regarding the changes to the contract. JB stated that she had sent a copy to the TA in December. KS asked question on the method used by the Trustees and if it was

the "Ten-Town Comparable Method". JB responded that the Trustees did compare salaries using the ten town method, and it revealed the position in discussion fell in the middle. SM added that in comparison the current position was at a step 7 and if the request were accepted at the Town Meeting it would be at a number 5.

KS was concerned with the message being sent. A request of this nature is a detailed process and contracts of this nature are external to the process. JB explained that State law allows for the contract and it is legally binding, adding the proposed amount is not for a new grade but rather a move within the current grade. JB pointed out that the Librarian has done an exceptional job and has always gone above and beyond, as a result of this, the Town saved a considerable amount of money. KS commented that he had no question on the value of the person and the funding was ultimately subject to Town vote. LM thanked the Trustees for attending the meeting and for being accountable to the people who voted for them. LM asked the Trustees what action they were seeking from the committee, he did not feel the capabilities of the Librarian are being challenged.

SM commented that they attended the meeting to address any question and share information. LM shared his view that an approval from the FinCom may open doors to undermine authority of statutory law and that if the Trustees want a view from FinCom perhaps they could ask for an endorsement rather than seek recommendation. KS agreed with LM because the Library Trustees have the authority to create the contract, adding that a question may exist over the vacation time. KS stated that if the Town had the previous "steps in grades" policy in practice any place adjustments may not be necessary. SM spoke to the vacation time, explaining that the Librarian was hired with her current benefit of three weeks' vacation and this increase is within her contract. LM commented that this was not unheard of, moreover, similarly as the hiring of school Superintendents, it is part of a contractual agreement. Four to six weeks' vacation is not extraordinary.

LM added that other than the holes in the structure of the town's system it is not the issue of the trustees and he does not see a problem. JL thanked the Trustees and the Director for attending the finance committee's meeting.

JL moved the motion to accept the Joshua Hyde Library Operations as follows:  
Account 16101-51120 for \$68,129; KN seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.

Motion to adjourn made by BJ; LM seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.  
Meeting adjourned at 9:36 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cynthia Poirier