

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
June 30th, 2015
Town Hall
Sturbridge, MA

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM with the following committee members present; Chair Kevin Smith (KS), Vice Chair Michael Serio (MS), Laurance Morrison (LM), Joni Light (JL), Kathleen Neal (KN), Robert Jepson (RJ), and Leah Boutelle (as recording clerk). Requesting parties Chief Thomas Ford (TF) of the Sturbridge police department and Chief David Zinther (DZ) of the Sturbridge Fire department were also present.

The existing balance in The Reserve Fund was \$38,336.66 prior to approval of RFT's presented 6-30-2015.

Reserve Fund Transfer Request by Chief Zinther FD, submitted June 11, 2015

The request is to transfer the amount of \$4,900.00 from The Reserve Fund FY15 to the Public Safety POS, account # 11972-52000. The present balance in this account is \$3,716.11.

DZ explained how a radio tower that controls receiving and transmitting signals to all public safety officers failed. The department made an attempt at a manual reset which also failed. It became necessary for the department to hire a team to go and repair the tower. He speculated as to if there was an issue with the microwave, but the actual diagnosis remains unclear even after the problem has been fixed and the tower is now operating correctly. The majority of the unanticipated costs are due to labor (approximately \$3,000). He then goes on to explain that the remaining unanticipated costs are due to running humidifiers in the Public Safety Complex, and that electricity needed for the operation of the humidifiers exceeded \$1600.

KS Affirms with Chief Zinther that all repairs have been made and speculates as to what the issue may have been; a wire carrying the signal or the microwave being broken. He then concludes that, as all public safety communication is reliant on this tower, it is a necessary expense and not a financial liability as all RFT's scheduled for review 6-30-2015 can be fulfilled without exhausting The Reserve Fund as we are closing out FY15 with ample funds in the reserve to satisfy the requests being made.

LM Motion to approve transfer as requested, Second by MS, so moved 6-0-0.

Reserve Fund Transfer Request by Chief Zinther FD, submitted June 11, 2015

The request is to transfer the amount of \$600.00 from The Reserve Fund FY15 to the Public Safety Supplies, account # 11972-54000. The balance in this account before transfer is \$9.33.

KS Asked the question to clarify the products needing to be paid for; copy paper and cleaning products?

DZ Asserts that if they hadn't ordered these supplies they would have run out.

KS States that the town is indeed responsible for these charges.

LM Motion to approve transfer as requested, Second by MS, so moved 6-0-0.

Chief David Zinther exits the meeting.

Reserve Fund Transfer Request by Chief Thomas Ford PD, submitted June 23, 2015

The request is to transfer the amount of \$700.00 from The Reserve Fund FY15 to the Other (Police) account # 12101-57000. The balance in this account before transfer is \$104.59.

KS seeks to clarify with TF what exactly NASRO is and why the costs associated with the fund transfer were unanticipated

TF NASRO is the National Association of School Resource Officers. He states there was a past due bill from the Greater Boston Police Council bidding for vehicles which must be attended and was under the impression this was paid in September of FY15, but was not. He goes on to explain that the trainings that he was sending officers to themselves were free of charge, so he felt urgency in seizing the opportunity. The unanticipated costs lie with reimbursing fuel, toll, and meal expenses for 15 or more participants. Each member is entitled to a \$15 meal reimbursement. There was approximately \$400 in unanticipated fuel costs, approximately \$200 in tolls among other amounts given for unanticipated costs associated with trainings. There were also expenses associated with training materials for Radkids, which is a safety and dealing with violence education program for youths. Acknowledges that there were budgeting issues on his part.

KS inquires as to if these costs are expected to be or should be budgeted for in the future.

TF suggests that the budget should be increased somewhat to accommodate these costs, but that he also should be more diligent about considering all costs involved when officers come to him about classes such as these based on what the budget can accommodate. He goes on to make the committee aware of the state wide policy change of being unable to re-certify for breathalyzer administration in-house, and that sending 16 officers to re-certify and having to reimburse meal costs of \$15 for each adds up although these costs may seem small and unforeseen.

RJ would prefer to see TF come at the end of the FY, and acknowledges that state wide policy changes can result in unforeseen changes in budgeting capability.

TF explains that these trainings can cost from \$5,000 to \$7,000, and that if the department can complete the training on the cost of meals, they should. He doesn't wish to overestimate his budgeting needs.

RJ expresses his sentiment that it is financially worthwhile for the officers to get necessary training.

KS suggests that in the future, if department cars are unable to be utilized to transport officers to such trainings, that TF look into using the town pool to avoid toll and fuel costs from officers using their personal vehicles.

TF receives KS suggestion as a good idea to reduce mileage and will consider and research this option in the future.

JL poses the question; if TF came back next year asking for the same RFT, would it be considered unforeseen? She uses an example concerning battery replacement that has happened in the past in comparison.

KS points out that the budget has already been voted on for FY16.

TF needs to find out what the average training costs the department so the proper budget will be requested in the future.

JL doesn't want to refuse trainings, but believes that they should be considered thoroughly before utilization.

TF asserts that this training comes up every three years as a free class thus he had an urge to use this opportunity, and that he needs to manage the account better.

KS poses the question; does early awareness constitute something being unforeseen?

MS asserts there is indeed a difference between unforeseen, and unforeseeable.

LM Motion to approve transfer as requested, Second by MS, so moved 6-0-0.

Chief Ford exits the meeting.

Reserve Fund Transfer Request by Barbara Barry, Finance Director, submitted June 23, 2015

The request is to transfer the amount of \$4,500.00 from The Reserve Fund to the Town Hall POS account # 11932-52000. The balance in this account before transfer is \$987.00.

JL suggests that in relation to this past winter, it seems common to be suffering more expenses related to heating and oil costs. Inquires as to if we are in a contract.

KS asserts that for a time we were floating and not in a contract.

RJ suggests that January and February were colder this year, but that it was possible to save by buying electricity.

JL suggests that if heating is limited to 65 degrees it is possible to keep heating costs close to constant in an oil heat setting.

MS asserts that the oil price dropped in mid-October and inquires as to if we locked in a price.

KS asserts that electricity went up significantly.

JL and MS, respectively, suggest that conditions such using up bulk and starting the heating season with an empty tank affect heating costs.

JL asserts that there have been issues with town buildings and the doors and insulation affecting costs in the past.

KS adds that the Library and other public buildings had heat related issues, and that The Reserve Fund is specifically for the unseen; heating costs being considered appropriate to this.

KN agrees that it would be sound to pay it, but inquires as to why it wasn't requested sooner.

LM offers that there is a difference between unforeseen and unforeseeable.

LM Motion to approve transfer as requested, Second by MS, so moved 6-0-0.

Approval of FINCOM Meeting Minutes, May 28th, 2015

JL KS LM Discussed the correction of the vocabulary, replacing revenue with reimbursement, the Director >of the Council< on Aging, and casual with attire. Also, the use of the vocabulary absorbed was resolved as appropriate between KS and JL.

Motion to approve meeting minutes as amended MS, Second by KN, so moved 5-0-1. RJ abstaining as absentee.

New Business

KS states there is a meeting scheduled for July 14, 2015, and that today is the last day to perform anything in FY15. He goes on to remind the committee that there will four members absent and so urges able members to attend. The memo submitted to the Board of Selectmen will be considered, and he wishes to solicit the board members opinions.

JL inquires as to the response in the past from the Board of Selectman.

KS states he has not ever received a personal response, although has noticed small change suggestions being implemented. He goes on to explain that the memo being considered at the meeting on July 14th will be forwarded to the Town Administrator, the Finance Director, as well as the Board of Selectmen. Discussed and welcomed the appointment of the Finance Committee's new clerk.

JL discusses some positive observations about the new Town Administrator Leon Gaumond, in relation to her experience with the Sturbridge Tourist Association and his supportive reaction to spending on the Rt. 20 Information Center. She goes on to explain how the STA is losing a valued member, and that there are three openings in the STA quorum. She also discussed the encumbrance of a significant amount of funds (\$28,000) for a highway project concerning Rt. 148. This encumbrance was stated to be from FY14.

MS inquires as to if this is in relation to gateway or welcome signs.

KS suggests that perhaps there is some reason as to why the project has not commenced.

LS suggests some possibilities concerning the encumbrance due to permits and planning expenses.

KS offers that the Town Betterment funds have similar encumbrances.

RJ MS and KS discuss the appearance of river walks in other tourist locations and that our own town does not have as welcoming of a walk that can be built due to contamination on the Riverlands.

No Old Business to Address

Motion to adjourn meeting at 7:45 pm (RJ), Second by (KN), so moved 6-0-0.