

Upton Finance Committee (Fincom) Minutes, revised
March 2 at Upton Fire Department

Chairman, Joan Shanahan, called the meeting to order at 7:16 with a quorum.

Members present: Seven

Members absent: One

Steve Bern (SB) present until 8:00 PM

Jennifer Malin (JM)

Jonathan Calianos (JC) present after 7:20

Paul Flaherty (PF)

Karen Glowacki (KG)

Herman Meisner (HM)

John O'Sullivan (JO)

Joan Shanahan (Chair) (JS)

Chairman Shanahan noted additions to the agenda.

1. She will ask the committee to submit an article for the annual Town Meeting warrant to fund the Finance Committee Reserve Account.

2. The Treasurer Collector is also going to update the Fincom on the Capital Budget Committee tonight.

Karen Glowacki indicated that when the Treasurer Collector makes his presentation to the Fincom that she would recuse herself.

Motion by HM, second by PF to approve the minutes of February 9, February 16 and February 23 as corrected. Unanimous approval.

A member mentioned receiving an update provided to HM from the Town Manager relative to longevity bonuses. (**Attachment 1**). The committee was also interested in getting information regarding merit bonuses.

Mr. Flaherty made a motion that the Fincom submit the following article for the annual town meeting warrant. "To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, appropriate from unappropriated funds in the Town Treasury, or transfer, or borrow, the sum of Twenty Thousand dollars (\$20,000) or any other sum, to the Finance Committee Reserve Account, said amount to be expended in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 40, s6, or to take any other action relative thereto. Seconded by Mr. Calianos. The motion was approved unanimously.

JC reported on the meeting of the School Committee on Monday, February 28. The school budget proposal is for 29 million dollars, which is an increase of 1.1 million dollars for Upton. This budget would eliminate 26.15 positions, which would translate to 25 to 30 children per class. The figures are driven by salary, insurance, energy costs and loss of stimulus money. This proposal will depend upon union negotiations. There is the possibility that if negotiations were successful, money would be available to restore some of the 26 positions being cut.

Discussion that room at the schools are not large enough to accommodate more than 30 students. There were many people present in support of restoring money for athletics. Now, athletics are self-funded.

Discussion of terms “reserve”, “override” and the need to remove verbiage about prior year override. It was explained to the School Committee that the towns decide if they will ask for an override.

At the present time, the school does not have a business manager and one is needed.

Questions were asked about the school roof repairs necessitated by damage done during snow removal. The School Committee is investigating the possibility of insurance money.

Ken Glowacki, Treasurer Collector, gave a presentation on the budget needs of his office. (**Attachment 2**) The only difference is the overtime line, which should have started in 2009-2010. This is for Monday holidays and doing payroll before going on vacation. The department now do some work previously done by banks, which is saving on bank expenses. The wages are calculated as they were suggested by the Personnel Board.

There were questions and discussion about maturing debt. Some bonds were combined into a large general obligation bond for 18 years for 1.2 million. Combining at a 2.5% interest rate over twenty years is a savings of \$380,000 in interest.

Mr. Glowacki also presented information about the Capital Budget Committee (CBC). (**Attachment 3**) The committee asked all departments for a wish list and that information is provided in a nonjudgmental way on Attachment 3. These requests were discussed and summarized. The Town Hall Renovation Committee (THRC) is requesting \$150,000 from Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to do a schematics and engineering design for the proposed Town Hall renovation. This figure was provided by Gorman Associates but has not been put out to bid. Question from a Fincom member as to why CPA money on Attachment 3. The answer is that the CBC does not discriminate as to where the funding is coming from but looks at capitol expenditures of the town over \$100,000. Mr. Glowacki has provided potential numbers on Attachment 3 to demonstrate to the Fincom the impact on various years. It was stated that the Capital Budget Committee is a subcommittee and reports to the Fincom.

The CBC does not feel that the Town Hall Renovation funding request should be presented without including a plan for parking. The CBC also asked the THRC if there are other alternatives. That committee met with selectmen and advised that they do not feel they should look at other alternatives while the CBC feels that a study for around \$30,000 should be done to look at this. That study should include parking, cost to relocate offices temporarily while work is done to renovate Town Hall. The CBC will be discussing whether or not to submit an article for the annual Town Meeting Warrant for money for the study of alternatives.

SB left at this point (8:00 PM). The discussion about the CBC was adjourned while the Fincom received a presentation from the Board of Assessors represented by Charles Marsden, Glenn Fowler and Teresa Ambrosino. (**Attachment 4**)

Recommended salaries are based on Personnel Board recommendations. Discussion of proficiency level, which requires a minimum of three years experience for an increase in salary.

A company has been hired and is in the second year of a three-year process to do a complete reassessment of properties. This is a basement to attic on site walk thru including measurements and asking questions of the property owners. There will be a warrant article for \$18,000 to fund the triennial evaluation one year at a time.

The Assessors are trying to get a GIS mapping system. The state has a new program to help with funding for towns to invest in this technology. Upton is scheduled for 2012 to receive this assistance. An article may be submitted asking for \$10,000 to do the mapping contingent on the state providing funding. They have been talking to the Town Manager about sharing this information with the Conservation Commission, which may already have done some of this.

The Patriot software system has been installed so there is a line for the licensing fee. This was necessary because the old system is going away. The new system allows for a tie in to Code Enforcement, Treasurer Collector and Town Accountant. Updates on building permits for additions, upgrades, new houses, etc: will be received in a timely manner. Now, these reports are only received once a month.

There were around 100 abatements during the triennial evaluation. Not that Assessors records are on line, more people are reporting discrepancies to their office.

Upon completion of the Assessor's presentation, Mr. Glowacki resumed his report from the CBC. Their next move is to establish ranking criteria to evaluate the requests they received.

Certain items on Attachment 3 were indicated as necessities by the Town Manager. This included \$600,000 for design work of the Hartford Av Pumping Station, (the Enterprise Fund will not have enough money to do this) \$281,000 for engineering of the third water source, and money for a new ambulance. Also included is funding for a new salt shed due to the possibility of being fined. Funding for roads could be adjusted to fit the overall plan. The DPW wants \$725,000 for a new office to replace the trailer being used. Concern was expressed by Fincom members about the amount of this figure. Other items on Attachment 3 were replacement of DPW equipment. A line for new athletic fields and a purchase of land was included but left blank since the Board of Selectmen are in talks within Executive Session about this. Some of the items mentioned might be articles on the annual Town Meeting Warrant.

The CBC reviews all expenditure requests of \$100,000 and over. If a study is under \$100,000 for a project over \$100,000 the CBC would review it.

Discussion about a deadline for this report or if it would be an ongoing document adjusted as new information comes in. This needs to be a fluid document. After ranking is completed on the various requests, a new document will be provided to Fincom to help them determine their recommendations. If Fincom and CBC have different opinions, they need to be able to explain why to the voters. There will be a narrative report by the CBC for the annual Town Meeting and the moderator will ask for their opinion.

Following Mr. Glowacki's presentation the Chairman advised she will arrange for a larger meeting room for next week since the School will be presenting.

At 8:43, Mr. Flaherty made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Ms. Glowacki. Unanimous approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Arnold

Attachments:

1. Email correspondence between HM and Town Manager regarding longevity bonuses.
2. Budget proposal for the office of the Treasurer Collector.
3. Capital Budget Committee Five-Year Plan
4. Budget proposal for the office of the Board of Assessors.