

Upton Fincom Minutes  
April 13, 2011 at Upton Fire Department

Members Present: (6)

Joan Shanahan, Chair

Steve Bern (SB)

John Calianos (JC)

Karen Glowacki (KG) (arrived at 7:40)

Herman Meisner (HM)

John O'Sullivan (JO)

Members Absent: (1)

Jennifer Malin

Present from Selectmen's office:

Blythe Robinson (BR)

Ken Picard (KP)

Chairman, Joan Shanahan opened the meeting at 7:19 PM, and she announced the following additions to the agenda:

1. Chief Goodale, from the Fire Department, will be asking for a transfer of funds from the Fincom Reserve Account to the Fire Department Account for a pump for the brush fire truck. ([Attachment 1](#))
2. Jay Byer, of the School Committee, has provided verbiage, for the article for the green roof project at the school. ([Attachment 2](#))

Chief Goodale explained that the Brush 1, off road brush truck, was built over the last two years using a state surplus chassis and a pump built from available parts. The pump is inadequate, and keeps failing. He is concerned that it will fail again at a critical time during the brush fire season, which can last through the summer, depending on weather conditions. The cost of a new pump would be between \$7000 and \$9000. He has found one online using Craig's List at the Granby Fire Department that is new, in the box and never used. They are willing to sell it to us for \$3000. Members of the department will install it on the truck. Questions from members concerned the issue of unforeseen expenses. There were several answers that it fit the criteria for unforeseen expenses including the failure of the current pump during a critical time. If he is not able to purchase a pump at this time, he will have to take the truck out of service due to safety concerns that the pump could blow up and harm firefighters. The fact that the price for a new pump is a very good deal, and may not be available if we wait until the annual town meeting, could be viewed as unforeseen. There was a question regarding the remaining life of the truck. The Chief indicated that it is indefinite and the life of the pump would be around 20 to 30 years. There are no other resources to draw from at this time. He only has \$2800 left in his New Equipment Account until the end of the fiscal year. Part of that will have to pay for the recent purchase of foam that has not been billed yet.

**There was a motion made by HM, with a second by PF to move \$3000 from the Fincom Reserve Account to the Fire Department New Equipment Account. The motion passed by majority of five to one.**

Following the successful motion a member asked how the Fire Department New Equipment Account would be supplemented if it is necessary for more money by the end of the year. BR indicated that the Town Accountant is looking at our accounts for unexpended funds and that transfers could be done at the town meeting in May and June. The point was made, that we need a discipline to use in the future for this circumstance.

**The minutes for March 23 were approved unanimously, as submitted, upon a motion by JC with a second by HM.**

There was a discussion of how to handle the minutes from April 6, because the meeting was recessed, to attend the April 8 meeting of the Board of Selectmen. The committee had decided to recess because there was not enough time to post a Fincom meeting for April 8. The Chair was advised by the Town Clerk that it is not a good procedure to recess a meeting. The clerk will close the minutes for April 6 and a vote for approval will be done at the next Fincom meeting. The minutes from the Board of Selectmen's office will be used for April 8 since the Fincom did not have a quorum present, and no motions were made or acted on by this committee at that meeting.

Town Manager, Blythe Robinson (BR), and Selectman, Ken Picard (KP), were present to discuss the articles for the upcoming Special and Annual Town Meeting. BR asked if the Fincom members would be available between June 13 and 16 for a meeting planned for an adjourned Annual Town Meeting. The members indicated they could hold those dates to be available.

The Selectmen have discussed that they would like to pass over the line item for the School Budget at the Annual Town Meeting in May and act on it at the adjourned Town Meeting in June. At that time, we will know the outcome of the vote in Mendon regarding an override for the School Budget.

The warrant articles for the Special Town Meeting in May were reviewed and discussed. (Attachment 3) The Fincom advised how they had acted on several of the articles at their April 6 meeting. There was discussion on several articles there were not acted upon at that meeting pending more information.

Article 2 for \$75,000 for construction, drainage and road repair to sections of the Westborough Road was explained by BR. A question was asked as to why the town was contracting the work instead of having it done by employees of the DPW. The town does not allow DPW workers to take vacation during the winter so we are not staffed to full capacity in the summer and other work has to be done while the construction is happening. BR also explained that only half of the road can be opened at a time. Once it is closed, it will have to be repaved and then the other half opened and repaved. It is expensive because of the where the road is, the use it gets and the police detail that is necessary. Now there is danger of sinkholes or collapsed pipes that have rotted and gone. **A motion was made by PF, with a second by JO, to transfer \$75,000 from Free Cash for the construction, drainage and road repair for sections of Westborough Road. The motion passed unanimously.**

Questions were asked about Article 3, which is a request from the Town Clerk to transfer \$1500 from Free Cash to be used to supplement the Town Meeting Election Account. Members wanted to know how this was unexpected and unforeseen. It was explained that the salaries for checkers at town meetings and elections was more than expected.

**A motion was made by JC with a second from PF to transfer \$1500 from Free Cash to the Town Meetings Election Account.**

At the previous meeting, a decision had been made regarding Article 4 and the rationale was explained to BR, KP and members who had not attended that meeting. The decision had been to fund Upton's portion of the schematic design for the green roof at the Miscoc Hill School out of the School Stabilization Fund and replenishing the fund would be addressed by Article 52 on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. It was felt that if the roof was done, within a normal budget cycle that the money would have come from the school's Operating Budget, which is what the Stabilization Account is intended to be used for. The School Stabilization Account is funded by money from an override for the operational budget. This would set a precedent to have money directed from the correct accounts in the future. All came to agreement that this would be the best way to do it and last week's vote will stand. BR advised that if the project did not go forward this would be refunded.

There was a discussion of using Stabilization versus Free Cash. It requires a two-thirds vote to transfer from Stabilization, while it only requires a majority to withdraw from Free Cash. The wording has been changed from Capitol Stabilization to School Stabilization. Is everyone ok with the change in the wording?

**There was a motion by SB, with a second by JC, to reconsider Article 13, which will transfer \$25,000 to the School Stabilization Fund from Free Cash. Motion passed by majority of five to two.**

**A second motion was made by JC, with a second by SB, to transfer \$25,000 of the Town's FY 2011 Free Cash to the School Stabilization Fund. Motion passed by a majority of five to two.**

Article 5 has been amended from \$50,000 to \$30,931.84 because there are funds left over that will be transferred from the Third Water Source Account and from the 2007 Water Account. The amount requested should balance the fund.

There was a discussion about concerns about cumulative debt and our ability to service it. (Attachment 4) The Town Treasurer, Ken Glowacki, is the person who oversees this and according to a conversation with JC, the Treasurer indicated he is not adding new debt. There was a discussion regarding outstanding debts, and when they would be paid. A suggestion was made that if we do not have to fund the full amount requested by the school that we consider paying for some items instead of borrowing for them. BR will

check and see how long we will be borrowing to do Article 7, the Richard Property Well Field.

The Fincom will take no action on Article 8, as this is CPA transfers required by law.

JS has spoken to Barbara Burke of the Historical Commission regarding Article 9 (CPA Funding) and will have more information next week. According to BR, the Historical Commission has said that they would not need to ask for more money for their Revolving Account because they will pursue donations and grants.

BR answered a question about Article 10 and the need to dispose of street sweepings at a cost of \$9000. There are negotiations with the company capping the Upton dump to use the sweepings there, which would save in the transportation costs. A member asked if a liability waiver would be negotiated, relative to transferring hazardous waste to the dump. BR indicated she could get one.

There was a discussion of Article 11 for the Snow/Ice Account. BR indicated that the Town Moderator has agreed that it is possible to do a reasonable increase of the amount, if necessary.

Discussion of Free Cash, which will have \$27,000 left after transfers. Should we use some for Leland Field or put it into Stabilization Fund? The Warrant has closed. Money left in Fincom Reserve becomes part of Free Cash. Should we establish a policy in future to have excess Free Cash put into Stabilization?

Discussion moved to the Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles. (Attachment 4), (Attachment 5)

The Annual Town Meeting Warrant is being posted next Monday. The Fincom makes their recommendations in a printed document. The committee is not prepared tonight to make recommendations on all of the warrant articles.

JC suggested putting in the larger number for Schools to accommodate the maximum possibility. (Attachment 6) We can scale back, if necessary, after we know what Mendon does. Who will make the motion at Town Meeting to hold the line item for the School until the June meeting? Fincom agreed to do that. JC will draft the motion. This will be a two-part article because of funding coming from different sources. One source requires a two-thirds vote and one requires a majority vote. BR talked to the Moderator and he is comfortable with having it done that way. The Board of Selectmen asked the School Committee to adjust their Budget request but the Committee has advised they will not do that. The budget will not be balanced in the worst-case scenario, but adjustments can be made in June to balance it. If Mendon does an override, we will have to use all of the School Stabilization Account. The Mendon Town Meeting is scheduled for May 4 and their School Override vote is on May 17. They have five separate questions on that ballot. Member felt that it was a mistake last year for the School to use the Stimulus money to balance their budget. Money from the state for the School Budget is decreasing with

more expected from the towns. We need a rational discussion on the school budget. How long can we delay the inevitable? We need to increase revenues or decrease expenses. A change in Administration may help address some of the issues.

**A motion was made by JC, with a second by JO, to recommend we give favorable action to the full \$8,645,607 requested by the School Committee using \$418,125 from the School Stabilization Account and that the Fincom will make a motion at the May Annual Town Meeting to hold this line item until the reconvened Annual Town Meeting in June. The motion passed unanimously.**

BR discussed the costs of plan benefits. This has been looked at from an actuarial standpoint to come up with a plan for the future. We might consider pre-funding and setting up a trust fund that earns interest. The plan would be to, eventually, use this trust instead of pay as you go to fund benefits. Because of the anticipated rise in obligations in the future, it would be sound business practice to set up a trust. Valley Tech has done this by putting away \$700,000. A question was asked regarding an employee who moves to a job in another community whether we would be responsible to pay a portion of their benefits? Yes, we may have to pay a portion.

A question was asked as to why we need new voting booths if we have the same number of people voting even if we have two precincts? Can we split what we have or are the booths getting old and in need of replacement?

KP indicated that there have been some changes in the order of the articles on the Warrant. Small items have been chosen for action in May.

The Fincom acted upon the following articles:

Enterprise Accounts: Article 4 and 5.

**Article 4: Motion by PF, second by JC for favorable action. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Article 5: Motion by PF, second by JC for favorable action to raise the requested funds. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Article 6: Motion by PF, second by JC for favorable action. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Article 7: Motion by JC, second by HM for favorable action. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Articles 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12: Motion by PF, second by JC for favorable action. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Article 13: Motion by JC, second by PF for favorable action. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Article 16: Motion by PF, second by JC for favorable action. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Article 26: After explanation by BR, a motion was made by JC with a second by KF for favorable action. Motion passed unanimously.**

Article 27: After discussion, it was decided to wait until the Capital Budget Committee made their recommendation. That committee has concerns regarding the fact that alternative locations were not looked at.

**Article 39: Motion by JC, second by PF to recommend favorable action. Motion passed unanimously.**

Article 40: It was decided after discussion to wait for more information about the need for more voting booths before a recommendation is made.

**Article 41: After discussion, a motion was made by JC, with a second by Jo to recommend favorable action. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Article 49: After discussion regarding the percentage that will be reimbursed, JC made a motion, with a second by KG to recommend favorable action. Motion passed unanimously.**

BR indicated that she will include these recommendations when the warrant is posted. Any items not yet acted upon will indicate to be determined (TBD).

Will Fincom be taking action on Personnel Board articles? That will be discussed at the next meeting.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:18 upon motion by PF.**

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Arnold

Attachment 1: Memo from Chief Goodale requesting funding for new pump

Attachment 2: Verbiage for motion for the Green Roof expenditures for Miscoe Hill School

Attachment 3: Special Town Meeting Warrant for May 5, 2011, version 4.0

Attachment 4: Annual Town Meeting Warrant for May 5, 2011, version 4.0

Attachment 5. Text of Various Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles 25, 30, 31, 32, 34 and 36

Attachment 6: Fincom XLS 2012