

Members Present: Jo Lown, Vice-Chair, Judy Lucas, Cliff Watts, Ronn Moody, Denzil Drewry, John Arnold, Brigitte Casemyr, Carolyn Spring (arrived 7:12 p.m.). Absent: Ian Johnson.

At 7:05 p.m. Ms. Lown, presiding as Vice-Chair of the Committee, called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Approval of minutes –Meeting No. 8, January 7, 2008, FY2008.

Mr. Watts moved approval of the minutes of Meeting No. 8, January 7, 2008, FY2008. The vote to approve the minutes was 7 in favor, with 7 members being present.

Snow & Ice Budget Deficit Spending Request

Committee reviewed a request from John Walden, Manager, DPW, to allow deficit spending on the Snow Budget, Wages of up to \$20,000 and on the Snow Budget, Expenses of up to \$60,000. The Board of Selectmen approved this request at its meeting of January 29, 2008.

Mr. Drewry moved acceptance of this request. The vote to approve the deficit spending request was 7 in favor, with 7 members being present.

Discussion on Resident Outreach

Ms. Casemyr presented suggestions for a February Newsletter:

- Recap the FY08 budget, including the total amount, Capital Expenditures (all approved at town meeting), resultant tax rate, and a discussion of where the FY08 budget put Westborough vs. the Prop 2½ ceiling
- Outline the process for developing the FY09 budget, including Town Manager's guidelines, Department Heads responsibilities, Independent Boards' responsibilities, and Advisory Finance Committee role in the budget development process
- Include the schedule of next steps leading to a warrant on the May Town Meeting
- Invite residents to submit their questions, concerns and suggestions to fincom@town.westborough.ma.us
- Suggest that residents sign up to receive the newsletter at the town website at <http://www.town.westborough.ma.us/subscriber> or directly to the email address above.

Suggestions for the March Newsletter:

- FY09 Budget Status, including which deadlines are coming due this month, Capital Expenditures requested as of 2/29/08, Factors outside the town's control (state aid, projected revenues, uncollectible taxes, Verizon's end of appeals, population fluctuation, tbd), discuss where the FY09 budget NEEDS TO BE in order to come in below the Prop 2 ½ ceiling.
- Announce – if ready – all the material that is available on the website's Advisory Finance Committee page.
- Invite residents to submit their questions, concerns and suggestions to fincom@town.westborough.ma.us
- Suggest that residents sign up to receive the newsletter at the town website at <http://www.town.westborough.ma.us/subscriber> or directly to the email address above.

Mr. Arnold reiterated the need to separate fact from opinion in this newsletter. He suggested pointing to existing documents whenever possible rather than restating information.

Mr. Drewry emphasized the need for this publication to be educational only.

Ms. Lown noted it is extremely ambitious to do this in February as the Joint Meeting with the Board of Selectmen is not until 2/12/08. Some things, such as the Prop 2 ½ cap would be difficult to estimate even for a March newsletter. Ms. Lown also pointed out that the Town Coordinator should give the Department Head Responsibilities, and that a description of the Advisory Finance Committee's role does exist.

Mr. Arnold pointed out that comments and questions can only be acted on at Committee Meetings, and that individuals may not speak for the committee as a whole.

Ms. Spring gave a list of topics for a primer or FAQ:

- What is Prop 2½?
- How is the tax rate figured?
- What is levy capacity?
- What is debt exclusion?
- Why is my tax higher when my property value is lower?
- What is an enterprise fund?
- What is free cash?

Ms. Casemyr printed a glossary of terms from the Mass DOR website, so that definitions from this list can be used. Terms could be added as the discussion makes them relevant.

Planning for FY09 Budget Review Season

Mr. Johnson has made up a calendar with tentative dates of upcoming meetings. The AFC will begin meeting twice each week, with the first meeting on February 25. The Joint Meeting of the Board of Selectmen, Capital Expenditures Committee, and Advisory Finance Committee will be held on 2/12/08 at 7:15 p.m. Town Meeting is scheduled for 5/17/08.

Liaison Updates

- Ms. Lucas and Mr. Watts will visit Assabet Valley Regional Technical School District.
- Mr. Moody and Ms. Lown met with the DPW. Concerns are with fuel and electricity cost increases. Fuel has impacted FY08 budget, and electricity will impact FY09 budget.
- Ms. Lown reported that the Capital Expenditures Committee has met with the DPW, Library, and Fire Department. Two more committee are scheduled to appear.
- Mr. Drewry has reviewed budgets from the Council on Aging and the Fire Department, and has met with the Council on Aging.
- Mr. Arnold reported that the Government Study Committee has drafted its final report and recommended Town Charter changes. They will present the report to the Board of Selectmen on 2/12/08. Once the report is approved it will be a public document.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Mr. Watts asked if the town email addresses can be set up to forward messages to another email address. Ms. Casemyr and Mr. Arnold thought they could be.

Ms. Lown noted several items in the folders, including updated Snow & Ice Budgets, Appropriations list for FY08, and a brochure from the Library.

Adjournment

At 7:43 p.m. Mr. Watts moved to adjourn the meeting. The vote to adjourn was unanimous (8 members present and in favor).