

**TOWN OF WEST BOYLSTON
FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Minutes of Meeting held May 7, 2008

Upon notice duly given and quorum present, the Finance Committee convened at 6:30 p.m. on May 7, 2008. Members in attendance: Ray Bricault, Chris Berglund, Ellen Dunlap, Paul Bohannon, Mychelle Phillips, Greg Zakarian and Patricia Altomare. Guests: Leon Gaumond, John Westerling, Chief Pauley, Marcia Cairns, Louise Howland and the members of the School Committee.

The Chair advised the Committee that the primary purpose of tonight's meeting was to meet with the head of the various Town departments to discuss the proposed Warrant for the upcoming Town Meeting.

Our first guest was Leon Gaumond. Mr. Gaumond explained that raises set forth in Article 18 of the Warrant (which addresses the 3% raise for town employees) were derived partly as a result of the health insurance negotiations. Mr. Gaumond indicated that our fee range is 20% lower than the market range and thus he thought it prudent to give these employees a similar increase as the union employees. Mr. Gaumond advised the Finance Committee that he thought the most pressing issue was the fact that the Warrant articles will put the budget out of balance. The requests such as the DPW request for equipment, the elder services program, the request by the Bicentennial Committee etc. are not presently allocated for in the budget. Mr. Gaumond also indicated that the citizen's petition requesting money to pay a teacher's salary does not have to be heeded by the School Committee i.e. even if the money is voted for the School Committee can choose to spend the money on something other than the hiring of the teacher requested in the petition.

Chief Pauley of the Fire Department was our next guest. Chief Pauley advised the Finance Committee that the Town is in line to receive a SAFER grant. Chief Pauley presented a financial spreadsheet detailing the grant's contribution and the Town's responsibilities should we utilize this grant and hire two firefighters. The Chief anticipates that increased revenue will greatly assist in the covering the cost of the additional salaries in the future. More importantly, Chief Pauley highlighted the need for more firefighters within the Town. Chief Pauley has also requested funds to purchase a new pick up truck. The Chief indicated that our present truck has 125+ miles on it and requires costly upkeep and maintenance. This vehicle is used everyday and meets numerous needs.

Our next guest was John Westerling of the DPW. Mr. Westerling addressed Articles 32 through 35 which were requests for painting lines, repair equipment and purchase equipment. Specifically, Mr. Westerling indicated that the center lines on the Town's streets have faded and need to be repainted however, the cost is not covered by Chapter 90 money. He would also like to paint their truck loader noting that the vehicle is over 12 years old and that if we don't do something the integrity of the loader will fail. Mr. Westerling's next request was for funds to purchase a new lawn mower. Mr. Westerling indicated that the present mower is 15 years old and was purchased used from Wachusett Country Club. Regarding Article 35, which was a request for an aerator, Mr. Westerling advised the Committee that he doesn't see that request as critical. Article 20 addresses the cost of repairs for the sewer pumps. Mr. Westerling indicated they've been on-line for 11 years now and that it is not surprising that wear and tear has necessitated repairs.

Our next guest was Marcia Cairns of the Council on Aging. Ms. Cairns addressed her request for \$18,000 to fund the Elderly Community Services Program. Ms. Cairns advised the Committee that the senior citizens were employed all over town at minimum wage and that the community benefits a great deal from this program. Last year this program did not receive funding from the Town.

Our next guest was Louise Howland from the Beaman Library. Ms. Howland indicated that their request is what is needed to maintain their certification but that everything else is at its lowest needs. If the library is not funded then she will have to seek a waiver again which is always a risk.

The School Committee next addressed our meeting. Specifically, the School Committee indicated that the need to replace the Major Edwards' gym windows is a pressing need. It appears the windows may fall out and thus are a real safety concern. Mr. Kane advised the Finance Committee that the Citizen's Petition is from a group of parents organized to advocate for the schools. Mr. Kane further noted that the present budget cuts were going to affect support staff, non-professional staff (such as music) and building maintenance which weakens the schools overall. Mr. Kane indicated that our costs to send students to Assabet have risen dramatically and that it appears that their budget has gone up as a result but in reality the funds have not gone to bolster our schools.

There being no further business to discuss, and upon motion duly made by Chris Berglund and seconded by Ellen Dunlap, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Patricia Altomare, Clerk
Finance Committee