

Finance Committee

Meeting minutes – September 29, 2009

Present: **Committee Members:** Chris DeSimone (Chair), Chris Johnson (Vice Chair), Michael Landino, Holly Seiferth, George Zacharakis

Absent: Alan Leao Jr., Melissa Tzanoudakis

Also present: Town Accountant Theresa Walsh

Chris DeSimone called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

Acceptance of Minutes: On a motion from Michael Landino, seconded by Holly Seiferth, the minutes from September 17 meeting, was approved by a vote 4(Aye)-0(No), 1 abstained.

Business: Chris DeSimone brought the discussion to the outsourcing/regionalizing sub-committees that were discussed in last Finance Committee meeting. Holly Seiferth expressed interest in the regionalizing sub-committee. Chris Johnson, Michael Landino, and George Zacharakis expressed interest in the outsourcing sub-committee. Melissa Tzanoudakis had expressed interest in email about the regionalizing sub-committee. Chris DeSimone noted that there would be a meeting on October 8th from 12pm-2pm in Lowell about Regionalizing. Chris DeSimone, Holly Seiferth, and Melissa Tzanoudakis would all attend this meeting.

Michael Landino questioned if the Finance Committee needed to let the Selectmen know what the Finance Committee meeting schedule was going to be. Chris DeSimone said he would let Peggy Mazzola and Joseph Hallisey know that the Finance Committee would be meeting every Thursday for a while now.

Chris DeSimone brought the discussion to review the warrant articles that could be reviewed, noting that there are no numbers assigned to the articles yet. The committee discussed Acceptance of Property (129 Brookline Street). Chris Johnson questioned what the assessed value of the land was. Chris DeSimone believed that the value of the land is more than the taxes owed. George Zacharakis thought that he had heard the assessed value of the land was around \$20,000. Chris DeSimone thought it made sense to not vote on this article tonight, to get the assessed value of the land was around \$20,000. Chris DeSimone thought it made sense to not vote on this article tonight, to get more information about the land such as does it abut wetlands or conservation land and what is the assessed value. Chris Johnson noted it was important to know what the assessed value versus the taxes owed. Theresa Walsh commented she would get the information.

The committee discussed By-Law Adoption – Open Burning. It was noted that fees on open burning had been voted in Town Meeting. On a motion from Chris Johnson, seconded by George Zacharakis, By-Law Adoption – Open Burning of the Special Town Meeting warrant list was put into motion to be recommended to be discussed and voted on as printed in the warrant list. There was no additional discussion on this article and it was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No).

The committee discussed Supplemental Appropriation – Board of Health. Chris DeSimone thought it best to not vote tonight. He had gone to the Board of Health based on the previous Finance Committee meeting in which the Board of Health had talked about a memorandum of understanding. Chris DeSimone found that there is no memorandum of understanding. Chris DeSimone had put together several documents for each member of Finance Committee to review for next meeting – document Board of Health signed with Nashoba, Groton's contract with Nashoba, Board of Health By-Laws, and Nashoba's PowerPoint presentation. George Zacharakis added another document to the list – surrounding towns Board of Health secretarial hours.

The committee moved on to discuss Prior Year Bills – Electric Charges (\$260.02). Theresa Walsh explained that these charges were from Trans Canada for May 2008 – May 2009, and the bill came in August 2009. She also noted that some of the charges are for the Transfer station (\$1.63) and the Sewer and Water (~\$54.00). It was agreed that the amount for

the Sewer and Water would be passed on to the Sewer and Water, while the Transfer station would just come out of the general fund as it was not worth the effort to charge them for a dollar. On a motion from Chris Johnson, seconded by George Zacharakis, Prior Year Bills – Electric Charges (\$260.02) of the Special Town Meeting warrant list was put into motion to be recommended to be discussed and voted on as printed in the warrant list. There was no additional discussion on this article and it was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No).

The committee moved on to discuss Rescind Budget Appropriations Replaced by Override Funds. On a motion from Chris Johnson, seconded by Michael Landino, Rescind Budget Appropriations Replaced by Override Funds of the Special Town Meeting warrant list was put into motion to be recommended to be discussed and voted on as printed in the warrant list. There was no additional discussion on this article and it was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No).

The committee moved on to discuss Transfer of Funds – Police Department. It was noted that this is a transfer for educational purposes. Theresa Walsh commented she will get more details.

The committee moved on to discuss Supplemental Appropriation – Elections. It was noted that there was going to be two elections. These elections are for the upcoming Senatorial election and were not budgeted. A grant from the State will cover some costs for one election. On a motion from Chris Johnson, seconded by Holly Seiferth, Supplemental Appropriation – Elections (\$6,700.00) of the Special Town Meeting warrant list was put into motion to be recommended to be discussed and voted on as printed in the warrant list. There was no additional discussion on this article and it was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No).

The committee discussed the Supplemental Appropriations for both Town Administrator and Town Accountant. Theresa Walsh explained that these were due to the contractual agreements with the town and the town administrator/town accountant and their vacation time, sick time, etc. that would be due to each of them.

New Business: Chris DeSimone turned the meeting to the 5-year budget, with a plan of getting through general government this first night. Chris DeSimone questioned Selectmen – Other, Memberships budget of \$1250 and Actual \$1301. Theresa Walsh explained that between Selectmen – Other, Memberships Budget of \$1250 and Selectmen – Other, Dues Budget of \$60, they were actually under budget still.

Chris DeSimone questioned why some salaries were not 25%, since we are now 25% though the year. Theresa Walsh explained it depends on actual dates. The Town Accountant position, it turned out, was a particular one that was 26% because of how it was voted at town meeting, and the Town Administrator is actually at 23.15%. She explained it all depends on calculations, weeks, etc.

Chris DeSimone noted that Town Administrator – Dues Budget \$200 and Actual \$137, could we reclaim \$63 at Special Town Meeting. Holly Seiferth wondered if enough money could be found, would it be plausible to go for an override to decrement the override. Chris DeSimone doubted that the Finance Committee would be able to find that much money. Theresa Walsh commented she would find out if Bob Hanson had completed his Dues line item.

Chris DeSimone brought up the Reserve Fund that is normally kept at about \$75,000. He proposed keeping it at \$50,000 instead. This would save \$25,000. The Finance Committee felt that if departments were aware of the limited reserve fund then they may be more careful about requests for transfers at year end. Theresa Walsh looked up the Reserve Funds for the past year, and found that the majority of them were small. There was one for \$26,000. There was a group that totaled about \$47,000. The majority of them were typically a couple hundred to a few thousand.

As Chris DeSimone was looking at Assessors – Supplies budget, Theresa Walsh brought up that the Assessors – Personnel – Wages, Hourly has extra money due to reduced hours. She recommended that Chris DeSimone talk directly to Susan Smith.

Chris DeSimone asked why the Treasurer/Collector – Premium Bond Budget was \$1100 but the Actual was only \$349. Theresa Walsh explained that there are 3 bonds, and they all come out at different times of the year.

Michael Landino brought up Information Systems. He questioned if this was an area that could be outsourced. Theresa Walsh noted that there was already a group that met about Information System and outsourcing. They had four companies they looked at, but you still need a contact person. Michael Landino thought this was a prime candidate for outsourcing, and felt many Information System companies handle everything for you. He was interested in following up on this in the Outsourcing sub-committee.

Holly Seiferth questioned the R&M Communications Equipment budget for the Central Telephone account. She asked if the rates were going up, was the usage going up. Theresa Walsh noted that the rates were supposedly going down. This was a new contract. The reason there was no Actual yet is because it is a quarterly bill. Michael Landino asked if all phones were on this plan. Theresa Walsh answered that it was all general government phones, no enterprise phones. George Zacharakis asked if there was a way to check usage. Theresa Walsh said to check with Frank Quattrochi.

Chris DeSimone questioned why the Town Clerk has not spent anything for purchasing or supplies yet. Theresa Walsh commented that she could ask the Town Clerk, but added that typically over the summer things are slower. Chris DeSimone noted that Town Clerk – Premium Bonds Budget is \$205 and Actual is \$100 and wondered if it was two bonds. Theresa Walsh answered affirmative.

Chris DeSimone questioned what the Town Hall R&M-Office Equipment budget of \$2188 is for. Chris Johnson pointed out that there was no actual spent in 2009. Theresa Walsh will ask Peggy Mazzola what it is for.

Chris DeSimone questioned why the Town Hall – Subscriptions Budget was \$2000 and only \$134 spent so far. Theresa Walsh explained that Peggy Mazzola just got her subscriptions in, so the bill would be coming in now. George Zacharakis questioned why Town Hall Supplies – Photocopy Budget was \$2200 and the Actual was zero so far. Theresa Walsh explained that most of this was for paper. She explained that they used W.D. Mason because they had the best prices, and they did not mess up their bills.

Chris DeSimone suggested that the Committee discuss and vote to recommend whether to go with bi-weekly pay checks and direct deposit. If they decided to recommend it, Chris would put together a letter that the Finance Committee recommended it. There was no additional discussion and it was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No).

Chris DeSimone brought the meeting to discuss Health Insurance and GIC. He noted that Mike would sit with Alan Leao Jr. anytime to discuss what Alan had researched. Chris had found that the towns current insurance did offer a plan very similar to GIC and no one had taken it, probably because it did offer less coverage. At this point, Chris felt it may not be worth it if it just annoys or upsets too many good employees. Alan Leao Jr. is going to keep researching because it does not hurt to complete the research.

Holly Seiferth commented that there had been a meeting in Ashby about regionalizing that someone in Pepperell had attended. She wondered if it was someone from the Department of Public Works. Theresa Walsh said she would try to find out who it was.

Other Boards/Commission Meetings: October 8th from 12pm-2pm in Lowell about Regionalizing

Upcoming Meetings: Thursday, October 8th, 7:00pm
Thursday, October 15th, 7:00pm
Thursday, October 22nd, 7:00pm

Adjournment: On a motion from Michael Landino, seconded by Chris Johnson, the meeting was adjourned at 9:07 pm and it was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No).

Respectfully submitted,
Lynne Henderson