

Finance Committee

Meeting minutes – December 10, 2009

Present: **Committee Members:** Chris DeSimone (Chair), Chris Johnson (Vice Chair), Alan Leao Jr, Holly Seiferth, George Zacharakis

Absent: Michael Landino, Melissa Tzanoudakis

Chris DeSimone called the meeting to order at 7:13 pm.

Business: Chris DeSimone opened the meeting with the letter that was discussed in the December 3rd meeting. Chris DeSimone had typed the letter and distributed it to the other members for them to review. George Zacharakis questioned if the letter would be reviewed by the selectmen before being distributed. Chris DeSimone answered no it would not.

George Zacharakis questioned the minus 5% in the second paragraph and how that would affect departments. Chris DeSimone recommended that the entire letter be read because the fifth paragraph had information pertaining to his question. George Zacharakis stated that maybe a minus 3.5% instead of the minus 5% might be a better number.

Chris Johnson arrived at the meeting at 7:16pm.

There was discussion about the selectmen wanting to get 350K from the North Middlesex School budget. This amount would affect all three towns, not just Pepperell. If 1% of the North Middlesex School budget went to Pepperell, then the same amount would go to the other towns, which would mean a 3% budget cut from North Middlesex School budget. Chris DeSimone pointed out that what is asked for and what is received is two are very different amounts.

George Zacharakis noted on the letter they were reviewing that by coming up with two budgets fully funded, the department heads might have more to cut. Holly Seiferth questioned what were the two budgets – a minus 5% and a 0%? Holly Seiferth pointed out that it would be very difficult for department heads to come up exactly to a minus 5% cut. George Zacharakis agreed that they would not be able to do the 5% cut. Holly Seiferth thought it appropriate that they could have impact statements and wish lists on the table, for the cuts, showing what they would like back in what order. Chris DeSimone noted that the 0% is actually a cut because of salary contracts.

Alan Leao Jr questioned who offered last year to lose their pay increases instead of losing people. Chris DeSimone answered that the only ones last year were the Library.

Chris DeSimone also noted that he would not mind taking out the minus 5% out of the letter and just having the 0% as a starting point. Chris DeSimone noted that many felt the selectmen were going after the schools. After some discussion, the group felt it was good to have two options. The group discussed changing the minus 5% to minus 3.5%, which is not as drastic. On a motion from George Zacharakis, seconded by Alan Leao Jr, the second option of minus 5% to be changed to minus 3.5% in the letter to the department heads was put into motion to be recommended to be discussed and voted on. There was no additional discussion and it was not approved by a vote 2(Aye)-3(No) and 0 abstained.

Holly Seiferth caught a spelling error on the second page.

Chris DeSimone noted that the capital program was only if needed and probably would not need much money, if it was needed. George Zacharakis brought up the ambulance costs as noted by Toby Tyler. Chris DeSimone noted that ambulances can be bonded, so they would not fall into this category.

Holly Seiferth questioned how long it was predicted for the pay freeze and hiring freeze to last. Chris DeSimone noted that it was not up to the Finance Committee how long the hiring freeze lasted. Holly Seiferth noted that it's more of the town reacting then. Chris DeSimone thought that the hiring freeze could be indefinite while the pay freeze depended ethically. Holly Seiferth pointed out that EMS positions were needed. George Zacharakis noted that those were

replacement positions. Chris DeSimone noted that he is opposed to the pay freeze because it only affects non-union positions. Alan Leao Jr questioned what percent of the town employees is non-union. Holly Seiferth said that her concern was that when the freezes were lifted, there would be an avalanche effect – would they be retroactive? Would it be removed this year? Chris DeSimone felt it would not be removed this year.

Michael Landino arrived at the meeting at 7:35pm.

George Zacharakis reminded the group that the EMTs are not union because there are only three of them and there needs to be four in order to be union.

On a motion from Chris Johnson, seconded by George Zacharakis, the letter to be sent to the department heads as written with one typo correction was put into motion to be recommended to be discussed and voted on. There was no additional discussion and it was approved by a vote 6(Aye)-0(No) and 0 abstained.

Other Boards/Commission Meetings: School Committee – Mon, December 14
Townsend/Pepperell FinCom, Townsend Lib – 7pm, Thu, December 17
Selectmen Mtg, Town Hall – 7pm, Mon, December 21

Upcoming Meetings:

Adjournment: On a motion from Chris Johnson, seconded by Holly Seiferth, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm and it was approved by a vote 6(Aye)-0(No) and 0 abstained.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynne Henderson