

# Finance Committee

Meeting minutes – April 8, 2010

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

**Absent:** Alan Leao Jr., Melissa Tzanoudakis

**Guests:** John Moak (Town Administrator), Toby Tyler (Chief of Fire Department)

**Also present:** Thomas Wilson (Town Accountant)

Chris DeSimone called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

**Business:** Chris DeSimone started the meeting with discussing Article 11 New Fire Truck of the Annual Town Meeting. Toby Tyler explained that this was a replacement vehicle for engine 5 at Park Street Firehouse which is a 26-year-old pumper. The old pumper is in fair shape and is open in the back. The new pumpers have to be closed in the back, and have riding seats in the back with seat belts now. Chris DeSimone asked if this purchase would have all new equipment or if they would transfer their existing equipment. Toby Tyler replied that they would transfer their existing equipment.

George Zacharakis asked if there were pumper vehicles at other Firehouses. Toby Tyler replied that engine 6 was also a pumper, which was a 1996 model so it was fairly new. John Moak spoke about the resale value of engine 5. Holly Seiferth asked what the price differential would be if the town waited a year. John Moak replied that it would about the same. Holly Seiferth questioned what the repair costs to engine 5 would be if they decided to keep the pumper instead of replacing it. Toby Tyler replied that it would be very costly to repair the pumper.

Chris Johnson questioned if the new vehicle would have a 3-year warranty. Toby Tyler replied that it would vary; some parts would have a 3-year warranty, some parts would have a 5-year warranty, and some parts would have a 10-year warranty.

George Zacharakis asked where the \$350,000.00 would come from. Toby Tyler answered that it would be a bond. George Zacharakis then asked how soon from ordering the new vehicle would the town then receive it. Toby Tyler answered that it would take up to a year.

George Zacharakis asked what would happen during that year – do they just hope that the existing pumper keeps coming out of the Firehouse when a call comes in? Toby Tyler answered that was pretty much it, but they would certainly keep making any necessary repairs on the existing pumper.

Michael Landino asked when the next equipment for capital would be needed. Toby Tyler replied that the ambulances were replaced every 5 years and fire trucks were replaced every 4 years. There is an ambulance that is 11-years-old that the replacement was deferred last year. It is a 2000 Ford that will need some repairs this year. It is not out of service yet, but is coming up on 11/12 years of age. Chris DeSimone asked what the cost to replace the ambulance would be. Toby Tyler answered that cost would be about \$175,000.00. Chris DeSimone asked if they would be able to transfer their equipment from the existing ambulance over to a replacement ambulance. Toby Tyler replied that they would be able to transfer their equipment from the existing ambulance over to a replacement ambulance. George Zacharakis questioned if the existing ambulance was a clunker or was it just getting old. Toby Tyler replied that it had over 70,000 miles on it. It was getting tired – it worked very hard for its 10 years.

Chris DeSimone brought up Article 6 Police Cruisers of the Annual Town Meeting for discussion. John Moak explained that there was \$12,000.00 left from 2 previous articles. The police cruisers were each \$26,000.00 for a total of \$52,000.00. This article 6 for \$40,000.00 plus the \$12,000.00 left from 2 previous articles totals the needed \$52,000.00.

Chris DeSimone brought up Article 8 Special Legislation – Liquor Licenses of the Annual Town Meeting for discussion. Chris DeSimone explained that this article was needed so that if it gets approved here, it will go on the November 2010 ballot. This article is for a full alcohol license in restaurants. George Zacharakis questioned what the cost difference would be. John Moak replied that the full alcohol license would be \$1,750.00/year while the beer/wine alcohol license is \$1,100.00/year. Chris DeSimone noted that there were lots of opinions on Pepperell being a dry town. John Moak noted that Pepperell already voted in the beer/wine license in 2004. Michael Landino questioned what the finance impact was. Chris DeSimone commented that it could bring in business with the full alcohol license. Michael Landino asked what the down side was – the town had less police to deal with possible situations or an old ambulance. Chris DeSimone commented that the license was not intended for bars, it was intended for restaurants. John Moak added that there was a lot of regulations and it was very strict due to liabilities.

On a motion from George Zacharakis, seconded by Holly Seiferth, Article 8 Special Legislation – Liquor Licenses of the Warrant list on the Annual Town Meeting was put into motion as it is written in the article to be recommended to be discussed and voted on. It was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No) and 0 abstained.

Chris DeSimone brought up Article 10 Conservation Fund of the Annual Town Meeting for discussion. Chris DeSimone explained that the funds came from receipts from applications from wetland related studies. This was a request to put the funds back into the conservation fund instead of free cash. George Zacharakis asked what other departments have applications fees and of those which asked for the fees back. John Moak answered that in general the fees go to the general fund. The Conservation Fund gets it as part of their application for NOI, which is used for hiring for services. George Zacharakis noted that this was part of their operation. Holly Seiferth commented that the police department had fees for tickets, which she had looked into and found that Pepperell is very low compared to some surrounding towns (40% lower than Groton). Chris DeSimone pointed out that in some years the Conservation Department has withdrawn this article and questioned why that might have occurred. John Moak replied that due to the state of the economy and the budgets, the Conservation Department has withdrawn this article in some years to help with the budget.

On a motion from Chris Johnson, seconded by Holly Seiferth, Article 10 Conservation Fund of the Warrant list on the Annual Town Meeting was put into motion as it is written in the article to be recommended to be discussed and voted on. It was not approved by a vote 1(Aye)-4(No) and 0 abstained.

Chris DeSimone brought up Article 14 New Hardware of the Annual Town Meeting for discussion. There was a discussion about one new server and accounting software. On a motion from Michael Landino, seconded by Chris Johnson, Article 14 New Hardware of the Warrant list on the Annual Town Meeting was put into motion as it is written in the article to be recommended to be discussed and voted on. It was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No) and 0 abstained.

Chris DeSimone brought up Article 17 SCBA and Training Grant Matching Funds of the Annual Town Meeting for discussion. Chris DeSimone explained that this was for self-contained breathing apparatus and training grants for the fire department. On a motion from Holly Seiferth, seconded by George Zacharakis, Article 17 SCBA and Training Grant Matching Funds of the Warrant list on the Annual Town Meeting was put into motion as it is written in the article to be recommended to be discussed and voted on. It was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No) and 0 abstained.

Chris DeSimone brought up Article 33 Floodplain Management Regulations of the Annual Town Meeting for discussion. Holly Seiferth questioned if this map was closed before the recent flood. John Moak replied that he did not know. Chris DeSimone questioned how it affected people buying flood insurance. John Moak replied that it depended on their zone, adding that he did not know too much about this map since he was not here when it was done. Michael Landino asked if there was a notification process for those affected. John Moak answered that there was a notification process.

Chris DeSimone moved the meeting to the library budget. John Moak asked for the reasoning behind the Finance Committee reductions in the library budget. Chris Johnson answered that the Finance Committee was reducing all departments as much as possible with the departments still being able to operate. Michael Landino added that the committee was faced with a \$400,000.00 deficit to make up and the committee was going line item by line item trying to

find money where they could find it. George Zacharakis commented that much of the debate with Debra Spratt was her fear of losing certification, which has been talked about for several years now. George Zacharakis noted that the Finance Committee stepped back from that. George Zacharakis noted that the first night of discussion there was no discussion of numbers; it was just hashing out ideas. George Zacharakis added that the 7% reduction went down on the table, then 5% was down on the table, and then everything was put off for a week and Debra Spratt said for them to look at the Library Information web sites.

Michael Landino commented that each department reductions were different and that you could not compare one department reductions to another department's reduction. George Zacharakis noted that everyone needs to remember that the fire department took a 8% hit in the past two years, the police department has had a 8% hit in the past 2 years while the library was fully funded last year. George Zacharakis also noted that the Council of Aging was able to come back this year and creatively reduce their budget. Chris Johnson asked if the question was a 5% reduction or a reduction. John Moak replied the question was why the reduction that was now keeping the library from accreditation. Chris Johnson pointed out that the Finance Committee felt it was easier to get the waiver with a 5% reduction than with anything higher. George Zacharakis added that if the reduction is proportionate to other department reductions, than the waiver will be granted.

Chris DeSimone brought up Article 1 Prior Year Bills of the Special Town Meeting for discussion. Thomas Wilson explained that this was a bill that was misplaced and never paid. The bill was for conference registration and mileage for the gas inspector and building inspector. On a motion from George Zacharakis, seconded by Holly Seiferth, Article 1 Prior Year Bills of the Warrant list on the Special Town Meeting was put into motion as it is written in the article to be recommended to be discussed and voted on. It was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No) and 0 abstained.

Chris DeSimone moved the meeting to discuss the Emergency Management department budget. On a motion from Michael Landino, seconded by Chris Johnson, to accept the Emergency Management budget (100-29100) as is was put into motion to be recommended to be discussed and voted on. It was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No) and 0 abstained.

Chris DeSimone moved the meeting to discuss the Board of Health budget. Chris DeSimone explained that he had spoken with the department head and found out that the secretary had not worked the 15 hours/week yet so the department did not know if the 15 hours/week would work out or not. Chris DeSimone also noted that the Board of Health department had gotten more money reduced from their Consulting Services from Nashoba; another \$2,000.00 reduction. On a motion from George Zacharakis, seconded by Michael Landino, to accept the Board of Health updated budget (100-51100) as is was put into motion to be recommended to be discussed and voted on. It was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No) and 0 abstained.

Chris DeSimone brought up Article 3 Budgets of the Annual Town Meeting for discussion. On a motion from Chris Johnson, seconded by Holly Seiferth, Article 3 Budgets of the Warrant list on the Annual Town Meeting was put into motion as it is written in the article to be recommended to be discussed and voted on. It was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No) and 0 abstained.

Chris DeSimone moved the meeting to discuss bonds. There was a discussion about bonds, the different types and how they affect the taxpayers, prior bonds, and inflation. The committee voted to get some ideas of how they felt about bonds. As to the question of whether they liked the idea of bonds in the future outside of the tax rate where applicable, it was approved by a vote 4(Aye)-0(No) and 1 abstained. As to the question on the fire truck specifically using either a 1-year or a bond, it was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No) and 0 abstained. As to the question about whether to bring old bonds and bring them outside, it was approved by a vote 3(Aye)-1(No) and 1 abstained. Michael Landino brought up the ambulance and possibly using a bond for replacing that. Chris DeSimone thought that it was the taxpayers concerns. Michael Landino thought it could be a 5-year bond. Toby Tyler thought that the people have had enough right now, which everyone agreed with.

**Acceptance of Minutes:** On a motion from Chris Johnson, seconded by Holly Seiferth, the minutes from the March 4, 2010 meeting were approved, by a vote 4(Aye) - 0(No), 1 abstained.

**Upcoming Meetings:** Tuesday, April 15, 7:00pm  
Thursday, April 22, 7:00pm

**Adjournment:** On a motion from Chris Johnson, seconded by George Zacharakis, the meeting was adjourned at 9:27 pm and it was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No) and 0 abstained.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynne Henderson