



Approved: January 30, 2012

**Town of Boxborough
Board of Selectmen
Workshop Minutes
Joint meeting with the Finance Committee
January 14, 2012**

PRESENT: Board of Selectmen members Raid Suleiman, Chair; Christine Robinson, Clerk; Les Fox; Rebecca Neville and Frank Powers; Finance Committee members Karim Raad, Chair; Susan Bak; Joe Niro; Amy Burke; Neal Hesler and Dilip Subramanyam

NOT PRESENT: Finance Committee members Gary Kushner, William Burke and Jim Ham

ALSO PRESENT: Selina Shaw, Town Administrator

The documents discussed herein have been included with the file copy of the agenda packet for the above-referenced date and are hereby incorporated by reference.

Call to Order

Board of Selectman Chair Suleiman (and Finance Committee Chair Raad) called the meeting to order at 8:03 AM in the Director's Meeting Room at the Boxborough Holiday Inn, 242 Adams Place.

FY 2013 health insurance

Following introductory remarks by the chairs of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee, the Board of Selectmen first took up the item of health insurance and plan design. Member Neville commented that a couple of constituents had raised concern related to the proposed early start (6 PM) of Monday evening's (January 23) meeting and requested that the start of the health insurance discussion be delayed until 7:30. After brief discussion, Member Neville moved to continue to table the vote on adopting and engaging in the process to change health insurance benefits under M.G.L. c. 32B, §§ 21 through 23, until the next regularly scheduled Board of Selectmen's meeting, which will be held in the Grange Meeting Room of Town Hall on Monday, January 23, and that such business would not be taken up until 7:30 PM (although the open session of the meeting will commence at 6 PM). Seconded by Member Powers. **Approved 5 – 0.**

Town services and impact to taxes

Selectmen and FinCom members discussed their views on the impact of town services on taxes. There was discussion regarding the overall governing philosophy for future budget deliberations and the need to agree on a joint strategy moving forward. This year, the FinCom has removed the inclusion of the automatic levy increase in the financial model. It was noted that even maintaining level services will result in increased expenses due to inflation.

Discussion regarding how the town's budget is apportioned:

- Largest portion of budget goes to schools:
 - A/B Regional Schools – Assessment. No control over this item.
 - Blanchard – controlled by the School Committee
- Fastest growing portion of budget goes to health care benefits
- Collective Bargaining Agreements controlled by BoS (Police, Fire and Dispatch)

There was also discussion regarding proposed FY 2013 police budget. FinCom expressed concern about increase in the number of uncovered shifts, especially in light of the new hire, which was expected to help control this issue. Selectmen Powers and Robinson will be meeting with Police Chief in the coming week and this issue will be discussed.

Group discussed the need to attract more commercial business to town and for continued fiscal due diligence, and suggested some possible discussion items for the next meeting:

- Re-convene Economic Development Committee
- If department head asks for increase in one area he/she should find an offsetting decrease, and must provide rationale for proposed increase
- Examine Condo versus Single Resident tax burden
 - 40% of the tax payers (condo owners) account for 12% of the taxes
- Re-evaluate market basket of comparable towns (last reviewed 5 – 6 years ago)

Personnel Plan - Compensation of Positions (Schedule B) and impact on Town budget

Finance Committee members asked the selectmen to provide more oversight of salaries under the Personnel Plan. FinCom members felt that insufficient time is spent looking at how rates are set. FinCom members suggested changing the base salary when new employees are hired instead of considering averages across other towns. FinCom members supported establishment of merit based salary increases instead of steps and questioned whether there is a need for Boxborough to be competitive with other towns for each and every position.

Discussed possible action items which could include:

- Evaluation of a merit based system for non-CBA employees, including department heads. Selectmen have had some preliminary discussion on this matter.
- Review of position descriptions and salary grades for the Library staff. FinCom expressed concern that the library salaries may not accurately represent the skills, knowledge and experience required for the positions.

Collective bargaining agreements as warrant articles

FinCom stated that wages attributable to union employees represent a greater proportion of budget increases compared to other non-union positions in town. The selectmen generally agreed to include the cost increases for each contract as an article before town meeting.

All agreed to BoS Chair Suleiman's suggestion to hold joint FinCom and BoS meetings on a quarterly basis. It was also agreed that the School Committee and Library Board of Trustees should be invited to participate twice a year.

Town meeting participation

All agreed on the importance of increased participation and discussed how to reach that goal. Suggestions included offering some sort of incentive or consider moving to a Saturday town meeting like Harvard and Lunenburg. BoS Chair Suleiman suggested an article in the Beacon. Selectman Robinson indicated that her experience showed that a lot of residents had no idea what town government was all about. BoS Chair Suleiman suggested development of a tri-fold informational brochure, which Selectman Neville suggested should be distributed at the Transfer Station. All agreed that personal contact was an excellent means to reach the public. Selectman Powers suggested including the tri-fold with the tax bills. Selectman Robinson and Fincom member Burke agreed to take on the task of drafting the tri-fold, to be completed by mid-March in time for distribution with the tax bills. Selectmen and FinCom members agreed to work as teams to distribute the pamphlet at the Transfer Station starting five weeks prior to ATM. The group also discussed developing a short list of questions for a survey to be conducted while the pamphlet is being distributed – regarding Saturday town meetings, etc. A summary of action items:

- Create a tri-fold for residents – explaining Town Meeting
- Personal contact w/ residents at Transfer Station, Library and Senior Center
 - BoS and FinCom volunteers to do this as teams
- Send out document with next tax bill

- Survey residents when the document is distributed
 - Have you ever attended Town Meeting – Yes/No
 - If no – why not?
 - Do you understand how town meeting works?
 - What day of the week would work for you?

Adjourn

At 10:10 AM, Selectman Neville (and FinCom Chair Raad) moved to adjourn. Seconded by Selectman Powers (and FinCom member Bak) and approved by the respective boards.



**JOINT MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
and
FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**Meeting Agenda
Saturday, January 14, 2012
Boxborough Holiday Inn
Director's Meeting Room
242 Adams Place**

1. Call to Order, 8:00 AM
2. FY 2013 health insurance
Move to continue to table the vote on adopting and engaging in the process to change health insurance benefits under M.G.L. c. 32B, §§ 21 through 23, until the next regularly scheduled Board of Selectmen's meeting, which will be held in the Grange Meeting Room of Town Hall on Monday, January 23 at 6 PM.
3. Town services and impact to taxes
4. Personnel Plan - Compensation of Positions (Schedule B) and impact on Town budget
5. Collective Bargaining Agreements - warrant articles
6. Fiscal due diligence
7. Town Meeting participation
8. Improving relationship between FinCom and BoS
9. Adjourn [no later than 12:00 PM]

VOTE: