

**Town of Boxborough**



**Finance Committee**

FinCom Meeting Minutes for: January 14, 2012

Venue: Holiday Inn, Boxborough

**Attendees:**

**FinCom**

1. Susan Bak
2. Joe Niro
3. Karim Raad
4. Amy Burke
5. Neal Hesler
6. Dilip Subramanyam

**BoS**

7. Les Fox
8. Frank Powers
9. Christine Robinson
10. Raid Suleiman
11. Becky Neville
12. Selina Shaw – Town Administrator

Missing from FinCom: Jim Ham, Bill Burke, Gary Kushner

**Public Participation:** Beacon staff (Joshua Nyer)

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 AM. It had been agreed that the meeting would be chaired jointly by Karim and Raid.

First order of business was for everyone to state their objectives for the meeting and what they hoped to get out of it.

Healthcare was taken off the agenda. The selectmen will meet on Jan 23 to take this up.

Discussion about town services and their impact to taxes. There are clearly differences between how the selectmen perceive how much influence they have versus what the FinCom believes can be done. A good example is the 2013 Police budget where there is an increase in the number of uncovered shifts. This was a surprise because of the new hire. There was some good discussion about the overall governing philosophy for future budget deliberations. Maintaining level services will cause cost increases. It was pointed out that this year the FinCom removed the assumption about the automatic levy increase from the budget. Can we hold to this? How can the town attract more commercial business? Clearly fiscal due diligence is key going forward. Some possible action actions for discussion at the next meeting:

- Re-convene Economic Development Committee
- If department asks for more in one area – tell them to find reductions someplace else
- Look at Condo versus Single Resident tax burden
  - 40% of the tax payers (condo owners) account for 12% of the taxes

## Town of Boxborough



### Finance Committee

How is the town's budget apportioned?

- Largest portion of budget goes to schools:
  - A/B Regional Schools – Assessment. No control over this item
  - Blanchard – controlled by the School Committee
- Second largest portion of budget goes to Health Care benefits
- Collective Bargaining Agreements controlled by BoS
  - Police, Fire, DPW
  - Total 17 people
- How many non-CBA employees?

Personnel Plan – is a big part of the budget but we do not spend enough time looking at how rates are set. Can the selectmen provide more oversight? Is it possible to change the base salary when new hires are made instead of constantly looking at averages across other towns? A good action strategy would be to determine how to set merit based increases in salary as opposed to steps. Does Boxborough really need to be competitive with other towns for every position? Possible action items might include:

- Evaluate and study whether or not the Town should move to a merit based system for non CBA employees
- Re-look at position descriptions and SG's for the Library. Did they accurately represent the skills, knowledge and experience required for the positions?

Collective bargaining agreements as warrant articles – represent a greater proportion of budget increases compared to other non-union positions in town. The selectmen are in general agreement with having the cost increases for each contract as an article before town meeting.

Raid suggested that joint FinCom and BoS meetings be held 3-4 times a year prior to town meeting. There was general agreement that the BoS and FinCom should not be at odds on the important issues facing the town.

Town meeting participation – the FinCom is trying to bring new participants to town meeting to increase attendance. Can there be an incentive? Raid suggested an article in the Beacon. Can we do this on a Saturday like Harvard and Lunenburg? Christine indicated that her experience showed that a lot of residents had no idea what town government was all about. Can we come up with an education pamphlet that can be distributed where people congregate? Personal contact on distribution would be helpful. It was agreed that Christine and Amy would work on a draft. Drop dead date to finalize the pamphlet would be mid-March to be distributed at the transfer station five Saturdays prior to town meeting. Can we come up with 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 might be as follows:

- Create a palm document for residents – explaining Town Meeting
- Amy & Christine agreed to work on this document
- Personal contact w/ residents at Transfer Station, Library and Senior Center
  - BoS and FinCom volunteers to do this as teams

**Town of Boxborough**



**Finance Committee**

- Send out document w/ next tax bill
- Survey residents when we hand out document
  - Do you go to Town Meeting – Yes/No
  - If no – why not?
  - What day of the week would work for you?

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10AM moved by Becky and Karim and seconded by Frank and Susan, unanimous.

**Reserve Fund**

Item	Date	Cost	Left in Reserve	Reason
Initial reserve			\$185,000.00	Initial amount from article 5
Building inspector	8/8/2011	2807.07	\$182,193	No funds in salary line
Building inspector	9/26/11	800.00	\$181,393	
Consultant fee	9/26/11	\$2800.00	\$178,593	Study of Department heads salary survey
Assessor Salary	9/26/11	\$5500.00	\$173,093	In lieu of outsourcing
Consulting Fee	10/17/11	\$400.00	\$172,693	Add Library salary survey
Building inspector	11/14/11	\$1200.00	\$171,493	Through period ending 10/12
Building Inspector	11/21/11	\$1200.00	\$170,293	Through period ending 11/9
Building Inspector	12/19/11	\$1801.00	\$168,492	Through period ending 12/19
Veteran's Benefits	1/9/12	\$5617.71	\$162,874.29	

Next FinCom meeting – January 23

Next BLF meeting – January 10, 2012 – 7PM at the Library.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:05 PM. Moved by Sue, seconded by Amy. Approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by:

Dilip Subramanyam

FinCom Secretary

January 14, 2012