



BOARD OF SELECTMEN AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
June 30, 2015

APPROVED: Selectmen - 8/17/15
Finance Comm. 9/21/15

PRESENT: **Selectmen:** Vincent Amoroso, Chair; Susan Bak, Clerk; Les Fox, Member; Jim Gorman, Member and Robert Stemple, Member
 Finance Committee: Dilip Subramanyam, Chair; John Rosamond, Clerk; Steve Ballard, Member; Neal Hesler, Member; Jim Ham, Member; and Eve Li, Member

ALSO PRESENT: Selina Shaw, Town Administrator and Cheryl Mahoney, Department Assistant

With the assent of FinCom Chair Subramanyam, BoS Chair Amoroso called the meeting to order at 7:42 P.M. in the Grange Meeting Room of Town Hall. The aim of tonight's joint meeting is to bring the Selectmen and Finance Committee together to address immediate issues and to develop a forward looking perspective, investigating areas of concern for the Town before they become a problem. If discussions prove productive similar meetings will be scheduled.

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.

Discussion was opened on the Public Safety Communications System Upgrade. A summary of the discussions that took place at last night's Selectmen's meeting was provided. A Study Committee has now been formed, members were appointed and their charge has been approved. John Rosamond advised that he has been appointed to this Comm. Public Safety is their priority; but they shall be cognizant of the financial aspects. Time is of the essence so they have also been asked to proceed expeditiously. There was a review of the issue with current system; components of project; the measures that could be taken to address deficits; and portions of the project already completed (i.e. updates to Dispatch Center). The placement of a 3rd communication pole is essential and must be placed somewhere in Town. The Chiefs have been trying for years to obtain grant funding for these communication upgrades with no success. The group's recommendations could be a factor in determining whether the project stays within the 2014 article or if other options are implemented leading to another Town Meeting article to finance the balance.

There was a discussion regarding the conditions at the DPW facilities. During visits to the DPW facility FinCom members have observed that there is insufficient garage space to house expensive equipment that is just sitting out in the yard at the mercy of the elements. These concerns were precipitated by the SNAG discussions. There was discussion as to some of the renovations that could improve the site; issues regarding the surrounding wetlands; and the acquisition of additional land to allow for expansion. TA Shaw will put together information on possible land acquisition(s).

There was a review of the Town's long-term paving plans. The Flagg Hill Rd., Pine Hill Rd., and Stonehenge Place paving is nearly complete. Dir. Garmon's initial paving project list had Hill Road as the next project; however engineering issues with the guardrails have arisen and need to be addressed before they can pave. Picnic Street; then portions of Burroughs Road are now next on the list; possibly followed by Swanson Road. DPW will be putting this project out to bid soon. DPW is investigating locking into a multi-year contract, so we would not need to issue formal bids for every project. This needs to be carefully reviewed to insure that this form of contracting does not conflict with Ch. 90 procedures. There was discussion as to past projects; cost projections and Ch. 90 available funds. It was determined that there may be further discussion on seeking another paving funding article for the next Annual Town Meeting.

Discussion was opened on the potential of the regionalization of fire and police services. FinCom started to contemplate regionalization when the SNAG discussions began, but this is first time it is being actively discussed with the Board of Selectmen. Is this an option that the Town should consider actively pursuing? This has been discussed with the Fire Chief. Other areas of the country have regionalized services and this could potentially save money, however experience tells us that it is difficult to do in Massachusetts. Years ago we had shared dispatch services however this was discontinued due to administrative issues and poor response. Subsequently the Town did participate in studies to regionalize Dispatch services but these went nowhere for a number of political and financial reasons. These analyses seemed to concentrate on the possible impediments, and did not identify the means to overcome them. Regionalization would be a long-range project, a minimum of five years out. Launching a regionalization discussion right now could detract from the public safety communication review currently underway. It was determined that first step would be for the respective liaisons to discuss this with the Chiefs, asking them to explore the

various issues through listserv communications with contemporaries and other less formal means of data gathering. They could then provide their findings before the end of the year.

There was discussion on the potential impact of an updated Master Plan on town finances. A member of the FinCom had raised this as a possible concern. As these updates are finalized we need to stay aware of potential financial impact on capital or operational expenses. There are several developments in process that could potentially add 300 + dwelling units. While these new units will generate revenue they will have a real impact on our infrastructure. For example we can anticipate an uptick in our student population. Also, both Chiefs have brought up the potential impact on public safety resources. There was a review of the input that residents have provided to the Master Plan Update Comm. and some of the high points that the MPUC has discussed. The Planning Board anticipates having the MPUC's findings ready for a presentation in the fall.

There was a review of the Town's debt schedule and future capacity. The Town has spent a lot of money in the past few years. However, due to our superior Bond rating and careful management of our debt (i.e. periodic re-financing) our overall obligations have actually decreased over the years which allowed the town to borrow last year with minor impact to our financial health. Treasurer McIntyre will be asked to meet with a FinCom member (i.e. Hesler) to develop a "future projection cheat sheet" component for the Capital Plan. They will need to develop ground rules/assumptions in order to be able to run various scenarios. There should be an analysis; not just of the investments but also of proposed projects. Going forward BoS/FinCom should consider whether the Town is making the best use of our debt capacity; what would be the lowest/highest debt obligation that we should carry; and whether they should explore using this remaining capacity to restore the components of the Town's infrastructure.

There was discussion on the current status of the Reserve Fund and the management of Reserve Fund Transfers (RFT) requests. There is approximately a \$17,000 balance remaining in the FY 15 Reserve Fund taking into account tonight's pending RFTs. This "spend down" illuminates an issue that needs to be addressed. RFT should be used only for unanticipated/unforeseeable expenses. There were several occasions when an expense was incurred and an RFT was sought for an expense that could have been anticipated and made part of a department's budget or identified in the capital plan. This and other issues such as an RFT being sought after an item is already contracted for/acquired; anticipated overages not properly projected or departments not apprising the FinCom/BoS of a potential overage when a significant amount was being incurred which would bring them over budget are of significant concern. There is at least one department that historically seeks RFTs at the end of the fiscal year to cover overtime. During FY 15, even though assurances were made that increases in overtime could be handled within the department's budget; expense projections were underestimated; and RFTs were ultimately sought. The final overage for FY 15 was significant. This could have been better managed if timely, and accurate information was received throughout FY 15. Dept. heads and Committees need to provide the rationale and back-up documentation to support their RFT requests. It was noted that these concerns have previously been brought up with those involved, but maybe there should be further discussion. When you have a budget you have to work within it and not overspend.

There was an update on the Minuteman School District and the investigation into our vocational education obligations/options. Selectman Bak provided a summary of intent behind forming a vocational education study comm.; possible committee members and the proposed charge. BoS Chair Amoroso provided an update on recent developments within the Minuteman School District. There are many moving parts and several factions. It is difficult for District stakeholders to come to a consensus. Due to these factors the building project is in danger of failing and could ultimately lead to dissolution of the District.

Participants felt that this was a productive meeting. The intention is to substitute these meetings periodically for a BLF meeting, holding two or possibly three of these joint meetings a year. With the assistance of the Town Accountant and Town Administrator, a timeline will be developed so it is in-line with the existing budget schedule/timeframe. It was further noted that the feedback regarding this year's town meeting processes/procedures has been positive. The members of Board of the Selectmen left the meeting.

The Finance Committee members remained to take action on several Reserve Fund Transfers (RFT) and Inter-departmental transfers pursuant to MGL ch 44 §33B. TA Shaw provided background and reviewed the process that allows for Interdepartmental transfers.

Several RFTs were required due to the Tax Collector's recent notice of retirement and the related unanticipated expenses. The Town needed to conduct a statutorily required audit; necessary whenever a financial officer leaves a position. Hesler moved to approve the request to transfer \$1,400 from the Reserve Fund to account #001-135-5301-0000 (Accountant Audit). Seconded by Rosamond. **Approved unanimously.**

The Tax Collector's retirement is effective today and she has accumulated vacation time. This causes an unanticipated shortfall in the Tax Collector's Salary line. Hesler moved to approve the request to transfer \$1,596.15 from the Reserve Fund to account #001-146-5110-0000 (Collector Salary). Seconded by Rosamond. **Approved unanimously.**

Hesler moved to approve the request to transfer \$111 from the Reserve Fund to account #001-145-5711-0000 (Treasurer Travel). Seconded by Rosamond. **Approved unanimously.**

There was an uptick in Legal Services that can likely be attributed to services provided for Town Meeting, CPA and collective bargaining negotiations. Hesler moved to approve the request to transfer \$8,000 from the Reserve Fund to account #001-151-5311-0000 (Legal Services). Seconded by Rosamond. **Approved unanimously.**

TA Shaw provided background on the RFT for Technology expenses. This department was created in FY 15 so this was a “learning” year. The need for this RFT can be attributed several factors. Periodic billings were not issued on larger, long term projects so these expenses were not tracked during the term of the project. Billing processes have been changed. There were also communication gaps. There currently is no centralized oversight/single relay point for the contracting of these services. Again, charges could not be tracked until after the work has been invoiced. Hesler moved to approve the request to transfer \$14,752.07 from the Reserve Fund to account #001-156-5306-0000 (Technology Consulting). Seconded by Rosamond. **Approved unanimously.**

Pursuant to MGL Ch. 44 §33B, Hesler moved to transfer \$1,000 from 001-192-5115-000, Town Hall Clerical Salary to 001-192-5241-0000, Town Hall Building/Grounds Maintenance Service. Seconded by Rosamond. **Approved unanimously.**

Pursuant to MGL Ch. 44 §33B, Hesler moved to transfer \$325 from 001-241-5112-0000, Building Inspector Salary to 001-241-5599-0000, Building Inspector Office Supplies. Seconded by Rosamond. **Approved unanimously**

Pursuant to MGL Ch. 44 §33B, Hesler moved to transfer \$11,949 from 001-220-5116-0000, Fire Salary - Per Diem FF to 001-215-5134-0000, Dispatch Overtime Full-time. Seconded by Rosamond. **Approved unanimously.**

Pursuant to MGL Ch. 44 §33B, Hesler moved to transfer \$12,055 from 001-422-5114-0000, DPW Salary to 001-423-5442-0000, Snow and Ice Vehicle Maintenance Supply. Seconded by Rosamond. **Approved unanimously.**

Pursuant to MGL Ch. 44 §33B, Hesler moved to transfer \$1,075 from 001-630-5126-0000, Rec Comm Part-time Salary to 001-630-5241-0000, Rec Comm Contracted Services. Seconded by Rosamond. **Approved unanimously.**

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 10:13 PM.



BOARD OF SELECTMEN AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting Agenda

June 30, 2015, 7:30 PM

Boxborough Town Hall

Grange Meeting Room

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED

- a. Public Safety Communications System Upgrade
- b. DPW facilities
- c. Long-term paving plans
- d. Potential regionalization of fire and police services
- e. Potential impact of updated Master Plan on town finances
- f. Debt schedule and future capacity
- g. Reserve Fund Transfers

3. ADJOURN