

Minutes of the Meeting of the
Heath Finance Committee
March 13, 2012

Time: 7:00 pm

Place: Sawyer Hall

Present: Don Freeman, Jan Carr, Dave Gott, Jeff Simmons, Ned Wolf, and at 7:30 Kara Leistyna, Sheila Litchfield, Tom Lively, Brian DeVriese, and Mike Smith, followed by Cal Carr, Bob Viarengo, Dino Schnelle, Jo Travis, and Jim Barry

The minutes of the February 21st meeting were read and approved with emendations.

Don said he would check with Kara about rules for revolving accounts. Dave reported on questions raised by a prospective FinCom member. He has found in the Finance Committee Handbook that if there appears to be a conflict of interest in a Town employee running for a seat on the Finance Committee, the Town Clerk may be asked to make a judgment. It is also possible for a Town employee who has been elected to a Town office to abstain from voting on issues that might involve a conflict of interest. Dave said that the prospective FinCom member with whom he talked wanted to know why a FinCom member does not receive a stipend.

Turning to the Fire Department Budget Request, Jeff noted that the incentive pay isn't changing. He suggested that the line for Emergency Medical Services be merged with the preceding line. Members discussed Mike's proposal to hire a new employee who would be responsible for maintenance and roadside mowing. This employee might drive a plow truck during a snowstorm. The overall increase in the proposed Highway Budget is about \$30,000.

At 7:30 pm members adjourned to join the BOS meeting in progress.

Don said that the FinCom finds the Fire Department's plan to purchase 2 new sets of firefighter outfits per year to be reasonable. The amount requested for FY2013 for these 2 outfits is \$8000.

Jeff asked Mike whether the \$700 for Emergency Medical Services in the Fire Department Budget might be merged with the preceding line. Both Mike and Tom said they preferred to keep it separate for greater clarity. Jeff said he understood their rationale.

The discussion shifted to Mike's proposal to hire a new employee responsible for maintenance, roadside mowing, and providing backup in a snowstorm. Mike said that in a standard snowstorm this new person would not work overtime. Tom asked Mike about hiring an outside maintenance service. Mike said that the nearest available would be a person from the town of Erving whose rate would be \$100 per hour plus \$2.50 per mile. Both FinCom and BOS members expressed reservations about the expenses associated with hiring a new employee. The total of salary at \$11.50 per/hr and benefits in this case would be about \$32,000. Dave asked Mike about current maintenance procedures in the Highway Department and how they might be affected if the proposed employee were hired. Mike spoke of

instances where progress on road work has been adversely affected by maintenance issues that would be less of a problem if the department had such an employee. Mike said he was reluctant to speak negatively about the current maintenance procedures. Tom asked Mike to prepare 2 distinct budget worksheets, one with the proposed new employee and one without any new employee.

Regarding the possibility of requesting a new truck, Mike said that the 2003 truck would be due this year. This truck recently incurred damage to parts under the hood due to an explosion. The chassis of this truck is better than the 1999's but the body is worse. Mike suggested 2 options. One would be to have the 2003's body rebuilt for \$35,000. The other would be to purchase a new truck for \$138,000 and expect a somewhat higher trade-in than the \$6,000 which the Town got for the 1999.

Jeff asked Mike whether the proposed \$40,000 for Vehicle Gas and Oil will be sufficient. Mike expressed reservations and spoke of the importance of the bidding process which is done through the GOG.

Tracey has requested that the Highway Miscellaneous account, which is currently at \$100, be increased. To get an idea of how much should be allocated to this account, Jeff suggested taking the average amount spent over the past 5 years.

Mike explained that the \$9,184 increase for FY2013 in Machinery Maintenance/Supplies is necessary because new trucks have more costly parts.

Members listened to Jim Barry a representative of the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources explain the 5 steps a town must take to be designated a Green Community and become eligible for grants. Members spoke with interest of accepting an offer of free software for finding how much energy is being used in town buildings. Members had questions about the effects of stretch zoning, an expansion of energy conservation standards, on new construction. Jim offered to return to Heath to answer questions and provide further explanation of what it means to become a Green Community. Members thanked him for coming.

At 9:35 the FinCom returned to the Assessors' Office. Don mentioned that the Assessors will return to meet with the BOS and FinCom about their budget request. Alice has replaced Val as Clerk and would like to work less hours for the same money. Following Jeff's advice, she has sought a return visit to discuss the Assessors' budget for FY2013.

Ned will post a FinCom meeting for Tuesday, March 20 at 7:00 pm in Sawyer Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Ned Wolf, Secretary

