

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heath Finance Committee
January 28, 2014

Time: 7:02 pm

Place: Community Hall, Senior Center

Present: Ned Wolf (Chair), Jeff Simmons, Gloria Fisher, and Kathy Inman, and at 7:30 pm Kara Leistyna, Sheila Litchfield, Brian DeVriese, Bill Lattrell, Jan Ameen of the Franklin County Waste Management District, and Margo Newton

Members read the minutes of the January 21st meeting. Jeff made a motion seconded by Gloria to accept the minutes with corrections. The motion passed unanimously.

Members discussed the possibility of the Town's purchasing a new police car. The demands on Free Cash are not yet clear but could include paying off the bill for damage from Irene. A new police car costing about \$35,000 might be financed over 5 years. It was suggested that there be an attempt to find a quality used cruiser on the GSA website.

Jeff reported having talked with Mike for about 2 hours on maintenance issues. Jeff said that the electronic record of maintenance for each vehicle includes an oil change every 200 hours and the other details needed for satisfactory maintenance. According to Mike the Maintenance Account is adequate. There has been no decision yet on when to replace the 2003 International truck. Mike told Jeff that using the wing plows has resulted in a reduction in plow time by one third. Another advantage of the wing plows has been that the trucks stay closer to the center of the road and away from ditches. Jeff reported that appropriate maintenance of fire vehicles is being done. He said that it might be time to set up a separate maintenance account for fire trucks.

The committee with Jeff's help looked over spreadsheet data that suggests underspending by the following: Selectboard, Town Clerk, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board, Agriculture Commission, and Sawyer Hall Technical Support. Spending cuts may be possible in some of those places.

At 7:30 pm the committee adjourned to go upstairs and join the Selectboard meeting in progress. Jan Ameen spoke of the Town's being able to save \$3000 a year in tipping fees. Colrain and Heath are now the only towns in the district whose trash is being hauled to an incinerator. Colrain's trash is to be hauled to a landfill in Chicopee. The present hauler will take Heath's trash to the landfill in Chicopee. Jeff asked where the trash would go when the Chicopee landfill is full. Jan said that a landfill in Southbridge would be the next closest.

Jan said that she has talked with Mike about improvements needed at the Transfer Station. The cost of just the materials for such things as a concrete pad, a compactor, and a shed would be about \$21,000. The overall cost might be as high as \$40,000.

In the discussion of the Assessors' Budget Requests members noted the \$800 increase for the Salary of the Assessors' Administrative Assistant. Sheila said that it is a Stipend position and not an hourly wage. Members will ask whether the \$800 increase is entirely for the revaluation. Margo spoke of the time it is taking to undo the joining of parcels done by a previous assessor. No additional money is being requested for this project.

The discussion with Margo shifted to the \$34,595 quote for a new Ford Interceptor SUV police vehicle. Margo said that at that price it would come fully loaded with the extras she needs. If the decision is to recommend the purchase of such a vehicle, Margo said her request for maintenance would drop from \$4000 to \$2000. Jeff suggested \$2500 so that snow tires could be purchased for the new cruiser. Sheila said that an option to financing would be using Free Cash.

Jeff reported to the Selectboard on his meeting with Mike. Selectboard members expressed appreciation.

Members turned their attention to a sheet prepared by Sheila on which various nearby towns are grouped according to particular data. The choice of data affects the grouping. She requested that the Finance Committee look over what she has begun and make comments.

Finally, members considered setting up as many as 3 new stabilization funds for such things as school building maintenance, a fire truck, and a highway truck.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Ned Wolf, Secretary