

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heath Finance Committee
February 17, 2015

Time: 7 pm

Place: Assessors' Office, Sawyer Hall

Present: Ned Wolf, Don Freeman (chair), Gloria Fisher, Jan Carr, and Jeff Simmons, and at 7:30
Kara Leistyna, Sheila Litchfield, Brian DeVriese, Bill Lattrell, and Mike Smith

Members received copies of the following documents:

- Minutes of the January 20th meeting (Ned)
- Agenda (Don)
- Special Town Meeting Explanation of Warrant Articles (Kara)
- Memorandum to Selectboard from Donald C. Freeman on 'Levy Limit and Debt Exclusion for FY 2016; Tax Effects of MSC and Wired West proposals' (Don)

Members read the minutes of the January 20th meeting. Gloria made a motion seconded by Jan that the minutes be approved with corrections. The motion passed with 4 ayes. Jeff, who was absent, abstained.

Don reported on his conversation with Mike Smith in which they agreed on the value of pro-active budget planning to avert the shortfalls particularly in Maintenance that have occurred in recent years.

Members read Don's memo about the levy limit and debt exclusion. The Municipal Safety Complex (MSC) will add \$84,131.43 to the FY 15 tax levy of \$1,772,751.44, for a total levy of \$1,856,882.87. The Town's Levy Limit, according to the DOR, is \$2,092,374. This project would still leave an Excess Levy Capacity for the Town of \$235,491.13. Years from now the Town might see the need to consider a debt exclusion. If the Town did not vote for that, there might be a need for huge cuts. Members recalled Brian's having said that he would prefer not having a debt exclusion vote at the same meeting as the one where a vote is taken on a large loan because that would confuse voters. After some discussion, Jeff made a motion seconded by Gloria that we not seek a debt exclusion regarding the MSC. The motion passed unanimously. Don asked what financial information associated with the MSC we need but might lack.

Ned suggested more details on the annual maintenance costs of such a building.

Members adjourned at 7:30 to join the Selectboard meeting in progress.

Don asked Mike about the status of the winter accounts. Mike said that although the Winter Maintenance Account is over, the Salt and Sand Account is not over yet. There was a consensus that an increase should be considered for the Winter Maintenance Account. There was a discussion of the value of keeping up-to-date records of maintenance done on each piece of equipment. Gloria pointed to such records as a help in deciding whether a given truck needs a new dump body or needs replacing. Kara reminded Mike of his having expressed a need for an administrative assistant such as one finds in a

number of western Massachusetts towns. Sheila said there needs to be research on the position of administrative assistant for the Highway Department.

Members went over the lines of the Highway Department budget. Mike was asked about last year's amount of \$6100 for Hired Equipment/Services saying that a significant amount was for the services of grant writing consultant Terry Walker. The previous year the amount was \$3700 and was mainly used for sweeping roads of sand and for catch basin cleaning. Sheila said she would plug in \$5000 for FY2016. Regarding the \$500 increase in Roadside Mowing, Mike explained that although Steve Thane completed the mowing last year, he did need help from another Highway Department employee. Mike explained the \$1,250 increase in the Winter Hired Services Account by saying that the funds are needed whenever a truck breaks down and a private truck is brought in. The lines for Transfer Station Tipping and Transportation, which have been separate, will be combined as recommended by Jan Ameen. The Town is paying one company to do both jobs. As for the \$1700 for Tree Removal, Jeff suggested more thought be given to the overall need for removing trees near roads. The FY2015 amount for Town Garages – Maint./Utilities is \$15,600. Members spoke of plumbing expenses and the rise in electric rates. A tentative amount for FY2016 is \$21,000.

Mike asked for guidance on looking for a used or new truck. There was a consensus that in a year that a MSC is proposed there cannot also be a proposal to replace a truck. Selectboard members spoke of a need to keep informed of mechanical breakdowns and to call a Special Town Meeting when necessary.

Sheila said that Margo wants to add Fair coverage to the Salary line for the Police Department. She also said that the Assessors' budget is unresolved. Brian and Bill will meet with the Assessors Monday.

The Finance Committee adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Ned Wolf, Secretary