

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heath Finance Committee
March 15, 2016

Time: 7:02 pm

Place: Assessors' Office, Sawyer Hall

Present: Gloria Fisher, Ned Wolf, Don Freeman (chair), Jan Carr; at 7:30 Kara Leistyna, Sheila Litchfield, Brian DeVriese, Bill Lattrell, and Betty Nichols

Absent: Jeff Simmons

Copies of the following documents were available:

-Agenda (Don)

-Minutes of the March 8th meeting (Ned)

-Draft of Special Town Meeting (STM) Warrant (Kara)

-Financial Advisor Clark Rowell's e-mail to Sheila and Kris of March 15 on borrowing limit concerns (Don)

-Proposed public health nursing program support to Heath via Franklin Regional Council of Governments (Kara)

Members read the minutes of the March 8th meeting. Gloria made a motion seconded by Jan to approve the minutes with emendations. The motion passed unanimously.

Members discussed the Articles of the draft of the STM Warrant. Don pointed out that Article 7 to transfer \$46,000 from Free Cash to the Tropical Storm Irene Expense account would reduce the Town's debt. He said that another approach towards increasing borrowing capacity is explained in Clark Rowell's e-mail of March 15th. There Clark suggests going to the Massachusetts Financial Oversight Board (MFOB) to request that Heath's statutory debt limit be increased above the current 5%. He thinks that could be done prior to the Annual Town Meeting May 7th. After some discussion of these two approaches there emerged a consensus in favor of the latter. Article 1 is to transfer \$2,638.51 from Salary Winter Highway Wages to the Winter Equipment Maintenance & Repair account. Article 3 is to finance the repair of truck number 3 by transferring \$37,000 from the Winter Salt/Sand & Other account to the Machinery Maintenance & Supplies account. After some discussion Gloria made a motion seconded by Jan to recommend Articles 1 and 3. The motion passed unanimously. Turning to Article 2 which would transfer \$4,585 from the Vehicle Gas & Oil account to the Highway Department Materials account, members questioned the need to transfer funds to an account now having about \$9,000. There were also questions about Articles 4 and 5 which in their draft form are incomplete.

At 7:28 Gloria made a motion seconded by Jan to join the Selectboard meeting for the budget hearings of the Board of Health and the Tax Collector as well as for continued discussion of the STM Warrant after which the Finance Committee would adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

Gloria said that the Board of Health requests level funding except for the line for Health Agent Services through the Franklin Regional Council of Governments(FRCOG). The request there is for a \$500 increase from \$6,000 to \$6,500. Gloria spoke of the value to the Town of the extra services that the increase

would make available as described in the explanatory sheet from the FRCOG entitled 'Proposed Public Health Nursing Program Support to Heath'.

Members discussed the draft of the STM Warrant and a strategy for increasing the Town's borrowing capacity. There was a consensus that we should send someone to the MFOB to request that the Town's statutory debt ceiling be increased above the current five percent. Once that action is taken there will no longer be pressure to transfer funds out of Free Cash.

In answer to the Finance Committee's question about the need in Article 2 to transfer \$4,585.00 from the Vehicle Gas & Oil account to the Highway Department Materials account, Sheila explained that Mike had taken funds a few months ago from the Materials account to do guardrail work with the assurance from the Selectboard that the Materials account would be replenished.

There are two Articles that involve the transfer of funds from Free Cash to the Legal Fees account. 'Legal Fees' refer to the work of Kopelman and Paige. There was agreement that the two Articles should be combined into one.

There was agreement that the Articles involving transfers into the Tropical Storm Irene Expense account of \$4,000 from the Veterans' Benefit account and \$46,000 from Free Cash be combined into one Article. Passage of this Article and the others on the Warrant would bring Free Cash down to \$87,000. The passage of an Article at the Annual Town Meeting to use \$50,000 of Free Cash to lower the tax rate would leave \$37,000 in Free Cash.

Don made a motion seconded by Gloria that the Finance Committee recommends the following changes in the draft of the STM Warrant: the combining of Articles 6 and 7 into a new Article 5 that consists of transfers of \$4,000 and \$46,000 from the Veterans' Benefit account and Free Cash respectively into the Tropical Storm Irene Expense account and the combining of Articles 4 and 5 into a new Article 4 that would transfer \$11,425 from Free Cash to the Legal Fees account. The motion passed unanimously.

Members turned to the topic of WiredWest. Jan reported from attending a meeting on broadband issues involving committees in Colrain that Wired West is abandoning its goal of becoming an LLC. Steve Nelson, who aimed for that, is going his own way. Members agreed that WiredWest should organize something for Stan Rosenberg's conference at GCC on April 9.

Sheila said that Clark Rowell is scheduled to come to the Selectboard meeting on March 29th.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Ned Wolf, Secretary