

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heath Finance Committee
April 19, 2016

Time: 6:32 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 Robyn Provost-Carlson

Absent: Jeff Simmons

Don made copies of the following documents available:

-Agenda (Don)

-Minutes of the April 5th meeting (Ned)

-Tax Levy Worksheet, Fiscal Year 2017 as of 4/19/16 (Don)

Members read the minutes of April 5th. Gloria made a motion seconded by Jan to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Members reviewed the Warrants. In Article 4 members noted that Heath's assessment for the Mohawk Trail Regional School District is \$795,523 which is 3.03% more than last year. After some discussion members voted unanimously to recommend Article 4 as well as Article 5 for the \$7,027 Capital Assessment.

Article 6 would amend the Mohawk Trail Regional School District Regional Agreement so that with the exception of closing a school a two-thirds vote by the member towns would suffice to pass an amendment to the Regional Agreement. The Finance Committee voted in its March 29th meeting not to recommend this Article.

Article 7 is to accept the Town of Rowe as a 7 – 12 member of the District. The Finance Committee is not taking a position on this Article.

The Finance Committee took no position on Article 8.

Article 9 covers the Town's Operating Assessment for the Franklin County Technical School. Members noted that the \$108,142 is greater than last year's \$73,037 because the town is sending more students to the school. After some discussion Gloria made a motion seconded by Ned to recommend Article 9. The motion passed unanimously.

Article 10 is to transfer \$733.51 from the Revolving Fund for Animal Control Officer for the use of the Heath Free Public Library. Jan made a motion seconded by Gloria to recommend Article 10. The motion passed unanimously.

Article 11 is to see if the Town will vote to authorize all Town departments, boards, and committees to apply for any new state or federal grants with prior permission from the Board of Selectmen, and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to accept such grant awards providing no matching funds or other costs are required by the Town, or take any action related thereto. The committee voted unanimously to recommend this routine Article.

Article 12 is to accept Chapter 90 money. The Finance Committee voted unanimously to recommend Article 12.

Members discussed Article 13 which relates to the transfer of an amount to be determined from Free Cash to reduce taxes in fiscal year 2017. After some discussion there was a consensus that the amount to be transferred should be \$50,000. Having voted to approve the new version of Article 13, members voted on a motion made by Gloria and seconded by Jan to recommend the new version of Article 13. The motion passed unanimously.

Article 14 is to authorize revolving funds for Hearings, Animal Control, Board of Health, Council on Aging Meals, BOH Vaccine, Recycling Program, and Senior Center with FY17 Spending Limits of \$1,000; \$2,000; \$5,000; \$3,000; \$3,500; \$10,000; and \$1,000 respectively. After some discussion Gloria made a motion seconded by Ned to recommend Article 14. The motion passed unanimously.

The next Articles would be to transfer from Free Cash specified sums into the following stabilization accounts: Audit, Parks & Recreation, School and Town Buildings Capital Improvement and Large Equipment/Vehicle Replacement. The Finance Committee noted that if as the committee has recommended \$50,000 of Free Cash is used to reduce taxes, that will leave just \$37,000. From conversations with Mike Shattuck we can expect a request for FY18 to purchase at least one new truck. There was a consensus that whatever we recommend for stabilization accounts should go to Large Equipment/Vehicle Replacement. Moreover, members said that \$32,000 would be a prudent amount to leave in Free Cash. Gloria made a motion seconded by Ned to recommend an Article to transfer \$5,000 from Free Cash to the Large Equipment/Vehicle Replacement Stabilization account. The motion passed unanimously. Gloria made a motion seconded by Ned that the Finance Committee does not recommend transferring \$4,000 from Free Cash into the Audit stabilization fund. The motion passed unanimously.

Members turned to the Article that is a resolution regarding the critical need for immediate action on wired broadband service. After some discussion Ned made a motion seconded by Don to recommend this Article. The motion passed unanimously.

Next members considered the Article that was submitted by petition. The Article would rescind the action taken on Article 36 of the Annual Town Meeting held on May 9, 2015 which authorized the Town "to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, or borrow the sum of Four Million Dollars (\$4,000,000) for the construction of a Public Safety Facility". During the discussion some concern was expressed about how the passage of Article 36 at last year's Annual Town Meeting has made it more

difficult for the Town to borrow if the need were to arise. Members said that the plan to use the services of Financial Advisor Clark Rowell as discussed at the joint Selectboard/Finance Committee meeting on March 29, 2016 is intended to make borrowing easier. Gloria made a motion seconded by Ned to recommend the Article. The motion passed with 3 ayes and 1 nay.

At 7:28 Gloria made a motion seconded by Jan to join the Selectboard meeting in progress and adjourn after discussing the Warrant and Article 3. The motion passed unanimously.

Don reported to Sheila the votes taken by the Finance Committee on the Warrant Articles. There was discussion about how much should be left in Free Cash and whether or not \$4,000 should be transferred from Free Cash to the Audit Stabilization account. The Selectboard recommended such a transfer.

The next Article would raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, or borrow the sum of \$30,000 for the first of two phases to implement and update the Assessor Property Tax Mapping system. Don asked about the need for this project. Robyn said that the project is one of the recommendations of the Department of Revenue. She said that the new software would bring clarity to the amount a taxpayer owes the Town. Kara said that if Heath receives the grant for which it has applied, this \$60,000 project can be done in one year. Gloria made a motion seconded by Ned to recommend the Article. The motion passed unanimously.

The discussion shifted to salaries. Sheila called attention to the tab F17 Grades that is part of the Excel spreadsheet for Article 3. She explained how the low point of Grade 3 was moved up to \$12 and then a 0.05% COLA was added to get \$12.06. Corresponding changes were made for the higher Grades of the table. The resulting increases in salaries total \$6889.

Sheila said that the Selectboard has not recommended any increases in stipends except for that of the Fire Chief. The increase would be from \$4,266 to \$5,240. In 3 years Ken will have to resign at age 70. There is a consensus that gradually increasing that stipend will make it more attractive to future candidates for the position.

The Selectboard and the Finance Committee began a line by line review of Article 3. The \$1200 in line 20 for Assessors Mapping is a fee that has increased by \$100 since FY16.

The amount \$6,280 in line 26 for Tax Collector expense has increased by 51.14% from \$4,155 in FY16. The increase is for the Community Software Consortium and CAMA software support from Mike Quinlivan. Sheila said that the Selectboard thinks that next year we will have to buy new software for the Tax Collector at a cost between \$17,000 and \$30,000.

The \$12,000 in line 28 for Legal Fees is \$5,000 more than the \$7,000 in FY16 because of the sharp increase in legal expenses this past year due to various issues including dogs and the purchase of land near Bray Road and Colrain Stage Road. Doubts were expressed that legal expenses in the coming year would be as great. There was a consensus to return Legal Fees to the FY16 amount of \$5,000.

The \$2,555.40 in line 51 for Town Buildings-Copier is a jump of \$355.40 from FY16. It includes a new copier to replace the present copier bought in 2011.

Line 61 for Fire Dept. Maint./Utilities is new. The \$7,685 is the sum of \$3,985 and \$3,700 where \$3,985 results from adding estimates for electricity, LPG, and minor maintenance, and \$3,700 is the cost of a washer/dryer for turnout gear.

Line 67 for Emergency Management Director Alternate Stipend is to be deleted.

The \$325 in line 73 for Animal Inspector's Expenses is to be reduced to \$100.

The increases in Health Insurance and Life Insurance in lines 153 and 154 are due to there being a new employee.

Sheila reported that line 159 for Pre School Support should be \$15,000 instead of \$10,000.

The \$10,000 for Special Projects is for insulation for the Community Hall and Sawyer Hall.

The \$5,000 in line 160 is for Landfill Expenses, an amount that was \$0.00 last year but used to occur each year.

The meeting adjourned at 9:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ned Wolf, Secretary