

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heath Finance Committee  
January 8, 2013

Time: 7:04 pm

Place: Senior Center, Community Hall

Present: Ned Wolf, Gloria Fisher, Jeff Sessions, Cal Carr of the Planning Board and Bill Gran of both the Planning Board and the Renewable Energy Advisory Committee, Peter Row and Steve Ryack of the Renewable Energy Advisory Committee, and at 7:30 Kathy Inman

Absent: Don Freeman

Ned welcomed members of the Planning Board and the Renewable Energy Advisory Committee. Cal said that they had come to tell us of their plan to propose a bylaw at the February 26<sup>th</sup> Special Town Meeting banning industrial wind turbines in Heath. He said that their primary reason for wanting a ban is financial. Steve and Peter explained the numbers appearing on a spreadsheet 'Cost/Benefit Analysis of Industrial Wind Facilities: A Model' copies of which were distributed. Steve supposed the construction of a single industrial wind turbine at the top of Bray Road, a likely location due to its altitude as well as proximity to 2 high tension lines. Approximately half of the Town's area would be included within a 2 mile radius of such a tower. Data from other communities where industrial wind turbines have been placed suggest a drop in property values within the 2 mile radius of 25%. Steve and Peter calculate that the resulting loss to the Town in tax revenues would be \$221,805. Industrial wind turbines are now exempt from property taxes. As partial compensation the State will give the Town \$13,500 for each one million dollar installation. Matching the projected loss of tax revenue would require at least 16 industrial wind mills.

Members of the Finance Committee thanked those on the Planning Board and the Renewable Energy Advisory Committee for their presentation. At 7:45 pm the members of the Planning Board and the Renewable Energy Advisory Committee departed. Finance Committee members discussed Tracey's Memo of December 19, 2012 to the Selectboard on the Verizon Abatement Issue. Copies of this Memo were sent by Kara to members via e-mail. Members discussed possible funds to use in paying for the abatement.

A motion to approve the minutes of the December 18<sup>th</sup> meeting was passed.

At 7:55 pm members approved a motion to adjourn and go upstairs to join the Selectboard in their meeting in progress. At 8:10 pm Sheila spoke of electrical generators in the context of capital improvements. She said that the objective of having the Community Hall serve as an emergency shelter removed some of the pressure for getting a generator for the school. Still, a propane school generator could be useful. Brian said that the cost of one that could power the whole school would be about \$50,000.

Turning to budget requests, Kara said that all are in except for the Community Hall. Jeff asked whether the Recycling Committee should have a request or simply rely on the revolving account. He will raise the issue at the next meeting of the Recycling Committee.

In discussing the Selectboard's budget Sheila noted the line for Stipends by suggesting there be a review of all Stipends this year. Brian expects that the Municipal Lighting Plant will be a recurring expense. The lines for insurance and for the FRCOG assessment are not yet known. Sheila will inquire as to whether \$10,000 will be needed for the Preschool.

The Conservation Commission and the Dog Officer are level funded.

A hearing is recommended for the Highway Department. Among the items to be discussed are the line for Materials which is not yet filled in, Stipends, COLA's, and Salaries.

In the discussion of the Historic Commission's request for \$2000 there were several suggestions on how to separate the \$250 for Expenses from the \$1750 for Historic Signs. Should the \$1750 appear in a Warrant Article? Members would like to talk about these matters with the Historic Commission.

Another hearing is recommended for the Planning Board whose request includes a note about the possible expenses of developing a bylaw for fracking.

In the Accountant's budget request there is \$4,332 for the Audit Stabilization Fund. Apparently, Tracey is anticipating an Audit every 3 years. Tom spoke of the need for an Audit whenever certain officials such as the Treasurer leave. There is interest in asking Tracey more about this line item in a hearing.

Both the Agricultural Commission and the Animal Inspector are level funded.

Members agreed that there be a word change in the Assessors' request from 'Assessors' Triennial Reval & Viewing' to 'Assessors Consulting'.

Members noted the insertion of more hours in the request for the Police Department and said they would like a chance to discuss this with Margo. A hearing will be planned.

For the Sawyer Hall budget there are at least 2 concerns. First, there is a need to decide whether there will continue to be a Custodian or instead there will be a Building Manager. Secondly, an estimate is needed for repairing the slate roof.

In the Town Clerk's request there is a note asking that the hours per week be increased from 15 to 20. There is also the mention of the bylaw project about which members would like to ask questions in a hearing.

In the listing of Special Projects Brian advised the addition of a new Community Hall furnace.

Something that members would like to confirm with the Tax Collector is that the request for more funds for Tax Collecting coincides with more collecting.

Regarding Veterans' Benefits, members said that despite the departure from the Town of one of the veterans receiving benefits the number of beneficiaries can change quickly. Level funding is recommended.

Finally, Sheila reported that the Verizon Abatement has been paid for.

The Finance Committee approved a motion to adjourn at 9:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ned Wolf, Secretary