

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heath Finance Committee  
June 5, 2012

Time: 7:05 pm

Place: Sawyer Hall

Present: Don Freeman, Gloria Fisher, Ned Wolf, Kathy Inman, former members Dave Gott and at 7:15  
Jan Carr, and at 8:03 Sheila Litchfield of the BOS

Absent: Jeff Simmons

Copies of the following documents were distributed:

-Agenda from Don

-Minutes of the May 8<sup>th</sup> meeting from Ned

-Report to the Board of Selectmen September 21, 2004 Personnel Classification System from Sheila

Don welcomed Gloria and Kathy as new members.

The minutes of the May 8<sup>th</sup> meeting were read and approved as emended.

In a discussion of officers Don and Ned expressed interest in serving as chair and secretary respectively. Gloria made a motion to nominate Don as chair and Ned as secretary. The motion was approved unanimously.

Members reviewed the past year. Gloria said that the term 'municipal safety complex' could be interpreted as something bigger in scale than the Town can afford. Members wondered about the most effective way to divide the labor of monitoring that project. Ned mentioned the salt shed because it could require attention before completion of a plan to upgrade the sheltering of highway and fire vehicles. Jan spoke of the opportunity for grants to towns that are Green Communities. Regarding highway vehicles, Kathy suggested that time be taken to check out such things as whether a truck body can be repaired rather than replaced.

Turning to the Transfer Station, members noted the issues of enforcing the sticker requirement and the possible purchase of a compacter for paper. Another issue is the system of salaries and stipends. Stipends have not been reviewed in quite a while. Don favors stipends for FinCom members. Members discussed the stipends and responsibilities of those serving on the Board of Health.

Dave said that having the FinCom chairing joint meetings with the BOS was good, but that when budget hearings ended, working with the BOS seemed more difficult. He expressed concern about getting back to people whose budget requests have been turned down. Kathy suggested that anyone making budget requests should leave the hearing with the name of a contact person regarding the outcome.

Members turned to a discussion of Highway Department maintenance procedures. The washing of trucks involves environmental issues. Are maintenance logs being kept? Kathy wondered how the per mile cost of the fleet compares with that of other towns.

Don reported that Tracey has requested that overages of \$2,831.67 in Machinery Maintenance, \$2,096 in Dump Transportation, \$2,645 in Tax Taking, and \$116.04 in Veterans' Benefits be covered by transfers from Property and Casualty Insurance and Winter Salt and Sand where \$31,142.61 is available. Members expressed concern about learning of Highway Department overages in an untimely way. Gloria moved that the transfers recommended by the Town Accountant be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Dave reported on attending a meeting in Hadley on Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB). For the cities and towns that provide these benefits to their employees there is growing concern about under funding. Gloria informed members that Heath provides no OPEB,

At 8:03 pm Sheila joined the meeting. She said she would like the FinCom to be more active in deciding whether the Town pay is appropriate by FRCOG standards and how much a COLA should be. She spoke of the importance of an employee's job description in determining the job's grade as detailed in the Personnel Classification System (PCS) for salaries. She said that recently the job description of an employee requesting a salary increase was reassessed with the result that the employee's job did not rise to a higher grade. Sheila explained to members the grade/rate range chart on page G-5 of the PCS where the numbers determining each range are updated each year there is a COLA. Determining the COLA early in the budget calendar is helpful. Gloria spoke of the need for 'merit'; Sheila said that we need to work on that.

Sheila said that salary data from the FRCOG can be confusing. Gloria recalled that if the FRCOG hasn't received data from a particular town by a given date, it will use data from the preceding year. Members supported Don's suggestion that it would be better to bypass the FRCOG survey by going directly to the towns for salary data. He will draft a letter to be sent to the appropriate person in each town.

Sheila asked members to think about increasing the salary of a particular employee who thinks that in light of what highway department employees in other towns are paid he should be paid more.

Turning to the Budget Calendar, Sheila asked that we think about possible changes. She and Kara have talked about starting earlier, say in October. Don said that last year's budget process appeared to work well although it seemed that after the hearings the BOS was getting last-minute information before the FinCom, and this led to confusion. Members supported Sheila's idea of having quarterly meetings with the Accountant. Don asked Sheila that the Accountant be told that getting legal opinions from outside agencies without getting permission is over the line.

Sheila looked ahead to the June 7 BOS/FinCom meeting as a time for budget reconciliation. The meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm. Respectfully submitted, Ned Wolf, Secretary

