

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

December 5, 2012

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Meeting Date: December 5, 2012
Location: 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA

Board of Selectmen Called to Order: 6:14 PM

Finance Committee Members Present: John Hanold, Michael Naughton, Lynn Reynolds and Greg Garrison. No quorum.

Board of Selectmen Members: Pat Allen and Christopher Boutwell (arrived at 6:14 PM)

Others Present: Frank Abbondanzio (Town Administrator – arrived at 6:14 PM), Carolyn Olsen (Town Accountant), Peter Golrick (resident), and Deb Bourbeau (Town Clerk)

Proposed Amendment to Town Bylaw

- Mr. Hanold discussed his proposed amendment to the Town Bylaw regarding makeup of the Finance Committee.
- Mr. Hanold’s proposal is to replace “consisting of 9 residents” with “consisting of at least 3 residents,” and inserting after the second sentence a new sentence “A quorum of the committee shall be a majority of the members then appointed.”
- Ms. Bourbeau would prefer language that would include a maximum number of members, such as “consisting of not less than 3 but no more than 7 residents” and said that this language would eliminate the need to define a quorum since a quorum would automatically be a simple majority of the public body as constituted or created.
- There was agreement that the language presented by Ms. Bourbeau would be acceptable and should go forward.
- Mr. Golrick suggested that the town get an advisory opinion or letter ruling from the Attorney General’s office to allow a quorum to be a majority of the appointed members.
- Ms. Allen suggested that the moderator be asked to request the letter ruling from the Attorney General. Ms. Bourbeau will contact the Attorney General’s office to determine the best way to proceed and who should initiate the contact.

Minutes

Selectmen Moved:

To approve the minutes of November 28, 2012.

Vote: 1 In Favor 0 Opposed 1 Abstained

Input to Budget Message and Budget Requests

Board Stipends

- Mr. Hanold noted that one of the early issues for the budget is Schedules I and II, including stipends for elected board members. There was discussion last week about the stipends, including a suggestion of an increase to \$1,500.
- Ms. Reynolds, in light of recent issue of state financial issues, would recommend an increase of \$500 for all elected board positions.

- Mr. Naughton is still opposed to making any changes at this time due to the lack of cost-of-living adjustments for other employees. Mr. Naughton doesn't want to decide one piece, even a small one, without knowing what the other pieces will be.
- Mr. Garrison doesn't feel it's necessary to tie those items together, but if you want to recruit people and encourage them to run for office, you need to offer them something.
- Ms. Reynolds reviewed the history of the current stipend level, which was a serious pay cut to elected boards.
- Mr. Abbondanzio was asked his opinion. He's in favor of a phased in stipend increase over a certain period of time until it gets to a level that will entice people to run.
- Mr. Boutwell again suggested that the increase be uniform, and not to worry about paying the Chair a higher amount than the other board members.
- Mr. Boutwell and Ms. Allen both said that the level of the stipend was not important to them.
- Mr. Hanold requested that the budget message include a request to increase all board stipends to \$1,500.

Budget Message for Departments

Mr. Abbondanzio presented his revised budget message, which now includes a request for needs that would be addressed if additional funds became available.

There were no other suggestions from Finance Committee members.

Topics not Anticipated

Mr. Abbondanzio shared the latest information on potential state aid cuts. There is still a lot of uncertainty on the impact to both Fiscal Year 2013 and Fiscal Year 2014, but there should be better information to include in the preliminary budget overview scheduled for January 9th.

Mr. Naughton was asked for an update on the Tech Panel.

- Mr. Naughton noted that one issue is the importance of having a committee called the Tech Panel versus having a group of people doing that work without the title.
- Mr. Naughton does not feel the work of the panel will be done until there is a structure for determining school assessments that work for all parties.
- Another issue is that, based on the fact that the state has not come forward with the assumed 3% increases on table B, table B no longer functions.
- The recent years' ability of the towns to support the assessments has been the district's ability to come in with budgets well below the anticipated increases from table B.
- If the assumptions change, then all parties should meet to discuss what to do. Mr. Naughton feels that it is time for another meeting of all parties (State legislators, DESE, school administration, and towns).

Board of Selectmen Meeting Adjourned at 6:59 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits –

- Minutes of November 28, 2012

Next Meetings

- January 9th Initial budget review
- January 16th Determine questions for departments, Select departments for meetings