

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE & BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
September 16, 2015

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Meeting Date: September 16, 2015 **Called to Order:** 6:00 PM

Location: 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA

Finance Committee Members Present: John Hanold, Fred Bowman, Patricia Pruitt, Greg Garrison and Michael Naughton. Chris Menegoni arrived 6:10 PM

Selectmen Present: Rich Kuklewicz

Others Present: Planner Walter Ramsey, residents Jeff Singleton, Ariel Elan, and Ray Rosenblatt

Minutes

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of August 26, 2015.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed ___ Abstained

October 1, 2015 Special Town Meeting

Recommendations by Finance Committee for each article.

Mr. Menegoni arrived.

\$7,000 to increase IT Discretionary article for Fiscal Year 2016

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$7,000 to increase Article #23 of the May 2, 2015 Annual Town Meeting, to be funded from Taxation.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed ___ Abstained

Mr. Naughton and others observed that the prior Information Technology Coordinator had attempted to hold annual requests to \$8,200, and needs appear to be in excess of this amount. This may be explored during the upcoming budget discussions

\$63,000 for Triennial Revaluation

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$63,000 for the triennial revaluation, to be funded from Overlay Surplus.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed ___ Abstained

The years of excess overlay to be released exclude the amounts reserved for pending Appellate Tax Board proceedings, and do not include any recent years.

\$100,000 of Sewer Retained Earnings to reduce sewer rates

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$100,000 to reduce sewer rates, to be funded from Sewer Retained Earnings.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

It is expected that rates will increase even if this article is passed.

\$100,000 of Sewer Retained Earnings to increase the WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend transferring \$100,000 to the WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund, to be funded from Sewer Retained Earnings.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

\$4,856 of Airport Retained Earnings to increase town share of AIP17

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$4,856 to increase the Town's share of AIP17, to be funded from Airport Retained Earnings.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

\$1,500 to increase Fiscal Year 2016 Shared Budget (#159) to pay for additional town e-mail licenses for town board and committee members.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend 1,500 to increase Fiscal Year 2016 Shared Budget (#159), to be funded from Taxation.

Vote: 5 In Favor 1 Opposed Abstained

Mr. Kuklewicz described his proposal to confine correspondence on town business to a town server, both to minimize individual members' liability and to increase transparency, and he communicated a sense of urgency on this issue. Mr. Hanold felt implementation could be postponed until a more complete plan is developed.

\$18,000 to increase the Fiscal Year 2015 Veterans Benefits budget

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$18,000 to increase the Fiscal Year 2016 Veterans Benefits budget, to be funded from Taxation.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

The Veteran's Agent submitted the budget request based on the caseload at that time. The caseload has since increased.

\$5,000 for cable TV contract

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$5,000 to for legal costs associated with the Cable TV Contract, to be funded from Taxation.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Mr. Kuklewicz confirmed that the contract has now been signed.

\$15,000 for repairs to Libraries

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$15,000 for repairs to Libraries, to be funded from Taxation.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

The Library Director previously provided photos of deterioration at all libraries; The Committee agrees that safety considerations and the avoidance of more decay make action necessary. There was considerable discussion of the recurring repairs in recent years and whether a more comprehensive repair plan is needed.

\$6,000 for repairing Montague Center Library brickwork

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$6,000 for repairing Montague Center Library brickwork, to be funded from Taxation.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

The comments on previous article apply here as well.

\$15,000 for repairs to DPW preliminary design

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$15,000 for developing a preliminary design and engineering plan for a new DPW building, to be funded from Taxation.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

\$20,000 for legal representation and technical assistance related to pipeline application at the federal level

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$20,000 for legal representation and technical assistance related to the Tennessee Gas Pipeline's application before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Mr. Ramsey described this effort as a consortium of towns attempting to mitigate the effects of a possible pipeline, via Federal channels.

\$10,000 for legal representation and technical assistance related to pipeline application at the state level

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend \$10,000 for legal representation related to the Tennessee Gas Pipeline's application before the Department of Public Utilities, to be funded from Free Cash.

Vote: 5 In Favor 1 Opposed Abstained

Ms. Elan described this effort as an attempt to block a possible pipeline, via State channels. Mr. Bowman questions the clarity of the scope of work and users of funds.

Amend town Zoning Map for Millers Falls property

No action by the Finance Committee is needed.

Establish and fund an Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) trust fund

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend establishing an Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) trust fund, and it with \$250,000 from Free Cash.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

The main content of OPEB is retiree health insurance. The Town already plans to repurpose the current retirement system appropriations towards funded OPEB obligations once the system reaches full funding an about ten years; our auditors recommend we make provision for OPEB liabilities now rather than waiting until our retirement obligations are fully funded.

Rescind remaining appropriation and borrowing authority for Article #14 of the September 12, 2013 Special Town Meeting (related to Industrial Park emergency)

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend rescinding the remaining borrowing authority for Article #14 of the September 12, 2013 Special Town Meeting.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

Rescind the unused balance, currently \$12,894, of #21 the May 2, 2015 Annual Town Meeting (Montague Center School maintenance)

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend rescinding the remaining appropriation for Article #21 of the May 2, 2015 Annual Town Meeting.

Vote: 6 In Favor 0 Opposed Abstained

With the sale of the property to a developer the responsibility for maintenance ends earlier than provided for.

Amend town bylaws so Finance Committee can have minimum of 3 members

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend amending the Town's bylaws so that the Finance Committee must have a minimum of 3 members.

Vote: 5 In Favor 1 Opposed Abstained

There was a reminder that when the request was made to change membership to a minimum of three members in 2012, Town Meeting amended the request to a minimum of five members, which Town Meeting considered desirable to ensure broad involvement in fiscal matters. Mr. Naughton still feels this a five member minimum is desirable; Mr. Hanold noted the lack of members this past summer, the resulting postponement of a reserve fund transfer, and that he has contacted 18 candidates over recent years with only one acceptance.

Lease for dog shelter

No action by Finance Committee is needed.

Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements- None offered.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 PM

Set Next Meetings:

October 7 2015 will be posted; agenda to be determined later.

List of Documents and Exhibits:

- Minutes for August 26, 2015
- Special Town Meeting Warrant, Motions, and Background Information