

Finance Committee Minutes

February 9th 2012

A joint meeting was held with the board of selectmen, present were Ms. Tara White, Mr. Larry Davis, Mr. Nat Yohalem, Mr. David Herrick Mr. Ira Yohalem, Mr. Edgar Zukauskas, Mrs. Prudence Spaulding, with guests being Mr. Peter Marks Highway Superintendent, Mr. Scott Farrell Police Chief, Mrs. Pat Mielke and Mr. Michael Skorput. The purpose of the meeting was to review the police and highway budget.

The minutes of January 19th 2012 were distributed at 7:00PM and approved as read, Mr. Herrick 1st, Mr. Zukauskas 2nd passed unanimously.

The group began with examining the police budget, Police Expenses [60210.99] (\$17,715) now requesting {\$17,900}. The expenses had been expected to drop since there will be a new cruiser, however Mr. Zukauskas stated that the rise in gasoline alone might account for the increase in this budget. Mr. Zukauskas questioned as to whether the Umpachene Falls telephone should be charged to the Falls account, Mr. Farrell stated that it had been placed at the falls by Chief Harvey and was a phone that could only reach the dispatcher for help and even then the dispatcher could not be heard if he choose to answer any questions that person initiating the call had. It does provide a safety net however for those who use the park. It was decided to leave it in the police budget. The group moved to Police Salaries [60210.04] (\$54,060) now requesting {\$74,576}. When questioned, Mr. Farrell explained that he had cut the allotted amount for himself by \$2,480 to provide a cushion for those times when court appearances are needed. The police are required to appear in court on the second Tuesday of every month at 3:00PM and of course appear in court when they have a "case "being tried. The town is at present covered 66 hours per week, with Mr. Farrell covering a 6 hour session and retaining 4 hours for paperwork. The part time policeman will receive a raise from \$19.50 per hour to \$20.75 at the next fiscal year. This appears to be a 4% raise. The amount allocated for "overtime" {\$5,000} covers call outs, arrests court (in Pittsfield) investigations and holiday pay. Besides the Monthly Tuesday court meetings, Mr. Farrell stated that he thought that other court appearances might average to about 20 hours per year, although that might change.

The committee then proceeded to review the Highway Budget. Mr. Zukauskas questioned the purchasing of some equipment stating that he was under the impression that the selectmen had decided to outsource much of the work, doing maintenance in the roads. Mr. Marks stated that he was requesting an excavator which would work mainly on the ditches and the drains. While there are companies that have excavator they are so large that they take over the whole road and are not effective as a small excavator. He also added that he was requesting a trailer so that he could move the roller from place to place (such as from Hartsville to Clayton corners) without dragging it and thus

damaging it in transit. Mr. Marks did add that remaking roads with chip and seal would be outsourced as well as paving and plowing. The New Marlborough Highway department would be patching potholes and keeping the roads in repair. Discussing the Roads and Bridges Salaries [20422.03] (\$237,629) now requesting {\$244,929.24} , these salaries are divided into four categories, the superintendent's salary, the regular highway workers salary, the part timer salary and the grader worker who works approximately 500 hours with a salary of \$20.00 per hour. The figures included reflect a 2.5% increase.

In the Roads and Bridges Account[20422.05] (\$187,000) level funded {\$187,000} there was some concern that figures remained the same, however Mr. marks stated that he didn't anticipate and increase.

Highway Department Training Expense [20422.07] (\$ 1,000) now requesting {\$1,200} the committee had no questions.

Propane Account [20422.18] (\$16,000) level funded {\$16,000} again no questions.

Diesel Account [20422.19] (\$50,000) now requesting {\$52,000} again no questions.

Electricity Account [20422.15] (\$5,500) now requesting {\$4,500}, Ms. White asked why the reduction and Mr. marks stated that the new lights in the garage used less electricity.

Highway Uniforms and Gear [20422.78] (\$2,000) level funded {\$2,000} again no questions.

Winter Roads [20423.02] (\$233,675) level funded {\$233,675} there was some concern that the sand and salt budget had remained the same. But Mr. Marks assures the group that the amount requested would prove adequate.

Town Garage Maintenance [20425.00] (\$9,000) level funded {\$9,000} no questions asked.

Machinery Expense [20428.00] (\$62,790) now requesting {\$64,046} again no questions.

Finishing with the Highway Budget Mr. Zukauskas introduced a budget concern that had proved troubling to the Finance Committee. The Library Trustees had requested a substantial increase in salary for the librarian. The Finance committee has on numerous occasions stated that merit raises should be introduced and granted on the basis of specific criteria. Mrs. Mielke stated that she thought that in a small town this would be very difficult to effect and leave workers that work every day in close harmony with each other very uncomfortable. And it could result in a destructive force. At this point Mr. Nat Yohalem stated that he has always been in favor of merit raises stating that they will provide motivation to improve the quality of the work, and that our present librarian does an excellent job and should be rewarded for her efficiency and efforts. A regular evaluation of workers and supervision of their work with specific factors evaluated should be considered as a part of merit pay. Mr. Skorput stated that he has been exploring the various tools used to evaluated staff. He suggested that in giving raises perhaps ½ could be a "cost of living" and ½ could be "Merit". But all agreed that elected personnel would not receive merit pay, allowing the voters to decide upon their rate of increase.

The Finance Committee had received a letter from Ms. Callahan the chairman of the trustees of the Library providing some information about what other librarians receive as salaries. If the Finance Committee suggests an increase because of her performance (which all agree is excellent) it will in fact be a "Merit" increase.

Ms. White gave a brief report on the school budget held at Mt Everett on February the 8th and she did share with the Finance committee that the selectmen had on their next Monday meeting a group of parents coming before the board to request that the selectmen write to the School Committee asking them to maintain the school in Mill River. The selectmen had not discussed what their response would be.

Ms. Mielke came before the group stating that our computer program could not effectively process overtime pay. She asked if she could hire Jennifer Goewey to do this taking between 2 or three hours a week. Everyone agreed to this.

Mr. Yohalem spoke briefly about the quarterly billing. At one point the Tax Collector thought the only increase in cost would be the postage; however the Point Software Program will charge \$4,000 for the first year, and from then on an increase of \$1,100 per year. Mr. Yohalem asked the Tax Collector for an estimate in increase in the tax flow which she stated should be between \$6,000-\$7,000, and there should be less delinquent payers. Mr. Zukauskas stated that he believed that people would be able to pay more easily because the amounts would be smaller, although more frequent. Mr. Skorput added that the state is urging the towns to go to quarterly billing. Everyone seemed to feel that the town should go to quarterly billing.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15PM. The next meeting will take place on February 16th 2012 at the Town Hall at 7:00PM.

Respectfully submitted ,

Prudence Spaulding, Secretary.