

# Finance Committee Minutes

## March 19<sup>th</sup> 2015

The meeting was called to order at 7:05PM. This was a joint meeting with the selectmen. Present were Mr. John Pshenishny, Mr. Mark Carson, Mr. David Herrick, Mr. Burt Imberman, Mr. Ira Yohalem, Mrs. Prudence Spaulding, Mr. Joseph Kellogg, Mr. Nathaniel Yohalem, Ms. Tara White and Mrs. Michele Shalaby.

The minutes for March 11th were accepted as amended, Mr. Pshenishny 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Carson 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously. There were but five budgets remaining to be reviewed.

SBRSD Operating [30000.01] (\$2,422,293) now requesting {\$2.504,250} representing a 3.38% increase. A motion was made to accept the budget Mrs. Spaulding 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Yohalem 2<sup>nd</sup>. The following discussion took place. Mr. Carson asked the selectmen to express their opinions regarding this budget. Mr. Nathaniel Yohalem [selectman] stated that he did not support it. The Town had written to the School Committee requesting that they level fund this year's budget which they obviously have not done. He stated that the continuing operation of the Monterey School, with an enrollment of 4 children from that town, and the school's decision to allow twins that were not age appropriate to enter increasing the number of students to 6 did not appear wise! The operation of this small school requires both a teacher and teacher's aide, the building does not have a gym, library, or playground and requires the traveling services of a principal, special needs teacher, physical education, art, music teacher and a school nurse resulting in the cost of about \$130,000 per year. And this does not include the cost of transportation. The students housed within this school are pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, and then are transferred to New Marlborough School. New Marlborough's percentage of the cost is about \$32,000. It would appear from the past actions that Sheffield agreed with New Marlborough that this school should be closed. Several years ago when the closing of the small schools was discussed, members of the School Committee were reluctant to vote for the closing of Monterey. The continuing increase of the cost of the operating of these schools with the continuing decline in the enrollment in the district is not something that Mr. Yohalem can support.

Ms. White stated that she agreed with Mr. Yohalem and the school had been open about not level funding the budget, stating that they would bring the operation costs under 2 ½ , however this they did not do. She stated that the town had again asked them to control both their operating and capital budgets, especially when they were requesting a large amount of money to replace, both the roof and the furnaces. Ms. Shalaby state that she agreed with the concerns

expressed by both Mr. Yohalem and Ms. White, but she also stated that she had heard that the members of the School Committee were afraid that Monterey would withdraw from the district leaving the district with the burden of paying the Monterey portion of the debt. However, Mr. Kellogg stated that the agreement formed to establish the regional school would remain the same even if Monterey choose to leave the district. Ms. Shalaby added that three years ago when the then superintendent proposed to close the satellite schools discussion resulted in many hard feelings. Mr. Yohalem reminded the group that at a meeting with Mr. Downing and other town business managers, and selectmen Mr. Downing stated that the state would have to take some action to force the schools into facing their declining enrollments and working together to provide education for the children at the same time be respectful of the costs. A motion was made to write a letter to the school administration explain that New Marlborough would not support the school budget as long as it contained money to run the Monterey school. The motion to support both the **SBRSD Operating**[30000.01] and the **SBRSD Capital** [30001.00] Mr. Imberman 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Pshenishny 2<sup>nd</sup> was not approved unanimously, and it was decided that the letter sent to the school would be from both the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen. And when the Warrant was listed in the Annual Report of the Town there would be no recommendation from either the Finance Committee or the Selectmen to approve it!

**Police Salaries** [60210.04] (\$87,256) now requesting {\$93,517} this increase reflects the payment for an increase in hours when the Chief needs to be doing office work. The total police budget has however decreased. Mr. Imberman 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Yohalem 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously.

**Emergency Management Salary** [60291.00] (\$4,330) level funded {\$4,330} This though termed a salary is actually a stipend and thus was not subject to the automatic 2% increase. Mr. Imberman 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Yohalem 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously.

**New Marlborough Rescue Expenses** [60291.77](\$56,350) level funded [\$56,350] This budget includes that \$10,000 stipend which pays for the coverage of the ambulance at night. Mr. Imberman 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Yohalem 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously.

**Stabilization Fund** [90100.00] (\$50,000) requesting only [\$10,000] the remainder will be covered under a separate Article, and the committee did not vote on this account since it was attached to a Article item.

The Committee began review the Article Items:-

Article One: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from the FY2015 **Assessors Consultant Account** the sum of \$5,000.00 or another other amount, and appropriate said amount, or any other amount, to the FY2016 Assessor's consultant Account for the purpose of paying

consulting fees, or to take any other vote in relation thereto. Mrs. Spaulding 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Carson 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously.

Article Two: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$2,700.00 ,or any other amount from the **Perpetual Care Interest Account** and appropriate said amount, or any other amount, to the **Cemetery Expense Account** for the purpose of maintaining the Town Cemeteries or to take any other vote in relation thereto. Mr. Imberman 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Carson 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously.

Article Three: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$8,500.00 for the purpose of providing **vocational education** as required by State Law, or to take any other vote in relation thereto. Mrs. Spaulding 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Imberman, 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously.

Article Four: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$ 46,550.00 or any other amount from the **New Marlborough Rescue/Comstar Reserved Account** and to appropriate said amount, or any other amount, to the **New Marlborough Rescue/Comstar Reserved Expense Account** for the purpose of the operation of the ambulance, or to take any other vote in relation thereto. Mr. Yohalem 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Carson 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously.

Article Five: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$90,000.00 from Free Cash and appropriate said amount to the **Stabilization Account** for the purpose of funding future capital expenses, or to take any other vote in relation thereto. This was voted together with the above Stabilization Fund [90100.00] Account to result in the account having now \$100,000.00. Mr. Spaulding 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Pshenishny 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously.

Article Six: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$60,000.00 from Free Cash and appropriate said amount to the **Highway Department Roadside Mower Account** for the purpose of jointly purchasing a roadside Mower with the Town of Sheffield (each town contributing 50% of the cost), to take any other vote in relation thereto.

Article Seven: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$10,000.00 from Free Cash and appropriate said amount to the **Highway Garage Emergency Generator Account** for the purpose of purchasing an Emergency Generator for the Highway Garage, or to take any other vote in relation thereto. Mrs. Spaulding 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Carson 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously.

Article Eight: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$5,000.00 from Free Cash and appropriate said amount to the **Unemployment Trust Fund** for the purposed of paying unemployment insurance claims, or to take any other vote in relation thereto. Mr. Carson 1<sup>st</sup>, Mrs. Spaulding 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously.

It should be noted that this fund will have a balance of \$38,000 and is rarely used.

Article Nine: to see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of money for the Town's share of the costs of the construction, installation and start-up of a **high speed broadband network**, including the payments of all costs incidental or related thereto, such project to be carried out by the Town's Municipal Light Plant: to determine whether this appropriation shall be raised by borrowing or otherwise, or to take any other vote in relation thereto. Mrs. Spaulding 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Carson 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously.

Article Ten: To see if the town will vote to authorize revolving fund accounts pursuant to MGL Chapter 44 Section 53E ½ to authorize the receiving of inspection fees to be expended during FY2016 without further appropriation for the purpose of administrative duties, or to take any other vote in relation thereto.

Gas Inspector	FY 2016	\$5,000	2015	\$5,000
Electrical Inspector	FY2016	\$7,500	2015	\$7,500
Plumbing Inspector	FY 2016	\$7,500	2015	\$7,500
Health Agent	FY2016	\$17,000	2015	\$17,000

Mrs. Spaulding 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Yohalem 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously.

Prior to the adjournment of the meeting Ms. Shalaby stated that she would like to suggest some items to be discussed at the next meeting, There will be a sizable amount of money entering Free Cash resulting from the sale at auction of a piece of property last year, and she is concerned about how the town proposes to use this money and she also added that the town needs to review it's debt service and the planning of the purchasing of capital items in the future. The next meeting will be held on April 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40PM.