

# Finance Committee Minutes

## March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2018

The meeting was called to order at 6:05PM. Present were, Mr. Mark Carson, Mr. Robert Miller, Mr. John Pshenishny, Mrs. Marilyn Fracasso, Mrs. Sandy Walker and Mrs. Prudence Spaulding. Guests included Mrs. Julia Trumbull, Mrs. Marsha Pshenishny and Ms. Tara White.

The minutes of March 15<sup>th</sup> were accepted as read, Mrs. Walker 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Pshenishny 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously.

### The SBRSD Budgets:-

Operating and Transportation [3000.01] (\$2,822,330) now requesting {\$2,709,304} showing a reduction of \$113,026 this was discussed at some length. The BHRSD is grappling with the possible closure of two small neighborhood schools, namely the South Egremont and the Monterey Schools. Both towns have schools that are in dire need of repair and have very few students that would attend either. But both communities have great emotional attachment to these schools and their final closing seems tenuous. The Monterey School has not been a functioning school for two years. Funds for the operating of the South Egremont's School must be included in the total school budget, although repairing the building and having it operating next fall seems unlikely. The Committee members were questioning if the school did not open would the money set aside for its operation reduce the total operating budget!

General discussion focused upon the continued declining enrollment in the district and the fact that the schools budget continues to rise! Selectman White stated that she could not answer the question about the money set aside for the South Egremont School and how it would affect the SBRSD's school assessment, she did add that the school district was involved in negotiations on staff salaries and had included in the school budget an amount that they hoped would cover the final decision. However this figure was secret since they did not want it to affect the negotiation process! Mr. Carson suggested that with the declining enrollment some staff members might be cut but that would affect the negotiations and would not be made public until the negotiations were complete. He stated that some of the classes had very few students!

Each year the town is assessed payment on the number of pupils coming from that town in relation to the total school population. This resulted in the decrease in New Marlborough's payment for the Operating and Transportation request this year. However next year this figure

may change. Ms. White stated that the towns are going to try to get a ten year rolling figure since the fluctuation in the requests makes it difficult for the towns to know what to expect. Mr. Carson again stated that with continuing declining enrollments he felt that the school needed to work on facing this situation and the budget should not continue increasing. Mrs. Walker made the motion not to recommend this with Mr. Carson 2<sup>nd</sup> and Mr. Pshenishny 2<sup>nd</sup> which passed with one undecided vote.

**SBRSD Capital** [30001.00] (\$89,029) now requesting {\$75,016} Looking over a printout that was received in February from the school the capital expenses appeared to include a new van, a pickup with plow and the payment on some debts. The Committee was not satisfied with the information and a motion was made by Mr. Carson not to recommend this budget request, and this motion passed with one undecided vote.

The **Boiler and Roof Bond** this request was based upon an assessment over which a recommendation would not be required. Mr. Pshenishny did question whether the new furnace was resulting in some savings.

Prior to leaving the subject of the school, Mr. Pshenishny brought in a notification from the "Village Green" (the Sheffield town's paper) in which there is a report from the Administrator of Sheffield describing the internship program that they are initiating with the SBRSD to have an "Intern" working for their Highway Department. The Finance Committee was supportive of the idea if the Town of New Marlborough wished to pursue the idea for our town!

The **Police Expenses** budget was discussed briefly. This will be more fully discussed with the selectmen when there will be a joint meeting with both the selectmen and the Finance Committee. This was set for April 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:00PM. Mr. Miller stated that other options should be considered prior to increasing the police force, for instance Alford hires the state police and Mr. Klein added that the Litchfield County uses their state police on a regular basis rather than have their own town police force. Was the extra police really needed?

The **Building Inspector's Salary** [60241.04], **Expenses** [60241.02] and **Software Expenses**[60241.15] were discussed briefly. First the account for the salary had been assigned the 2% COLA. Since the present building inspector is in the process of terminating his employment the addition of a COLA does not seem to be appropriate or advised. Next there was some question as to whether the software program was being shared with Sheffield. Mrs. Walker stated that she understood that the present building inspector was presently only working half time for the town and questioned whether his monthly paycheck had been adjusted to reflect this! Mr. Carson said that he would bring this up with the Town Administrator. Before a vote to recommend these budgets was made, the above questions needed to be answered.

Prudence Spaulding  
March 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018



The Reserve Fund [9578100] had been entered into the Excel spread sheet that the Town Administrator had made for the committee. Mrs. Walker stated that in the town's Financial Policies it was stated that the Reserve Fund should be 1% of the total budget. If the present total budget was \$5,276,632 then the figure for {\$50,000} was close enough! Also the committee asked that Mrs. Enoch be asked to obtain Broadband legal expenses for the 2019 year!

At the end of the meeting Mrs. Walker stated that she had been interviewing for the Five Village News some of the folks that were involved in the marijuana and solar meetings and she had helped them realize that New Marlborough needed more income from industries etc. They appeared interested in exploring the possibility of forming a committee to look into this.

The next meeting will be on Thursday April 5<sup>th</sup> with the selectmen at 6:00PM.

A motion to adjourn at 7:53PM was made by Mr. Miller and Mr. Pshenishny 2<sup>nd</sup> passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Prudence Spaulding, Secretary