

Finance Committee Minutes

February 22nd 2018

The meeting was called to order at 6:00PM. Present were Mr. Carson (chair), Mrs. Walker, Mr. Pshenishny, Mrs. Fracasso, and Mrs. Spaulding. A motion was made to include Mr. Robert Miller through the telephone. Since this was a joint meeting with the selectmen, present were Ms. White (chair) Mr. Yohalem, Ms. Shalaby, and Ms. Enoch, Town Administrator and Mr. Peter Schuyten from the Five Village News. Guests included Mrs. Marsha Pshenishny, Mrs. Julia Trumbull, Mrs. Rebecca Schreiber, Police Officer Graham Frank and Highway Superintendent Chuck Loring.

Minutes for February 15th were accepted as read, Mr. Carson 1st, Mrs. Fracasso 2nd passed unanimously.

Police Chief Graham Frank had come to present his police budget. **Police Office Rental** [60210.67]. This budget had been put on hold until Chief Frank could come and discuss it with the committee. To date the town has rented a bay in the old firehouse to house the cruiser for \$6,000 per year. However, as it is desirable to have all the departments dealing with emergencies centralized, it is hoped that the Police Chief's office could be housed there as well. Repairs and remodeling need to take place before this can happen. Once the police chief's office is there, the rent will increase up to \$1,000 per month. It is not known when this can happen. The request for this item had been level funded, however after some discussion it was decided to increase it to {\$9,000}.

Police Department Expenses [60210.99] now requests \$24,450. Within this budget was a \$2,000 payment for academy expenses for the police officer who will be attending the academy..

The budget was approved with the extra amount, but could be rescinded should the officer not need to go to the academy. Mrs. Fracasso 1st, Mr. Carson 2nd passed unanimously.

Police Salaries [60210.04] this request represented a sizeable increase. Police Chief Frank explained that he wanted to have a department with equal coverage compared to that of Monterey. This would include two full time police men including the chief and a part time policeman.. At present there were calls that took place when there was no coverage. Ms. Walker asked when the bulk of calls came in, to which Chief Frank replied that there was no specific time although the bulk of calls come between 8AM and 12AM. Ms. White suggested

that the chief explain when the town has coverage. Coverage exists Sunday through Wednesday 8AM to 4PM, with Thursday through Saturday 8AM through 12AM. The chief often takes the cruiser home so that if he gets a call at times when there is no coverage he can respond. Officer Mullen (with 24 hours shift work) covers the afternoons Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 4PM to 12PM and (Sunday 8AM-4 PM is covered by a part-time policeman).

The Chief then began to explain his goal for developing the department. A permanent part-time policeman (Officer Mullen) will attend the academy for 18 weeks and receive \$17 per hour for a 40 hour week. There will be no increase cost of benefits since he is already receiving benefits. The other policeman will not increase his hours and thus not increase the cost of benefits for him. Once Officer Mullen returns to full time he will sign a contract agreeing to work for three years and at the end of the three years he will be reimbursed \$3,000 for his educational expenses.

Police Chief was asked if, in order to have protection at off hours a policeman could be paid to be "on call"? Chief Frank stated that none of the policemen live in New Marlborough for instance Mr. Mullen lives in Housatonic and it takes about 20 minutes for him to come from his home to New Marlborough. He added that there were 24 arrests last year and there have already been 4 arrests this year. Mr. Yohalem noted that a rough estimate if the town decided to agree to Chief's requests would cost about \$50,000. His budget for 2018 was \$105,362, and he is requesting \$147,908. Mr. Yohalem stated that this increase with the increase cost of the upkeep on the second cruiser and the increase on the Police Rental budget will yield an increase of about \$50,000. This budget was then put on hold. Chief Frank left.

Mr. Loring came to the table to answer questions about his budgets.

Roads and Bridges [20422.05] (\$192,000) level funded {\$192,000} there was limited discussion about this request. Mr. Pshenishny asked whether the Tree Removal and Trimming was supervised by the Tree Warden. Mr. Loring stated that this past summer there had to be a lot of trees removed and Mr. Fields has been very helpful. Once road work takes place the removal of a tree may have to be done quickly so that the road work is not held up. In the itemization a few items have changed, but basically they remain the same. Mrs. Spaulding 1st, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed unanimously.

Winter Roads [20423.02] (\$266,334) level funded {\$266,334}. This budget came with a breakdown of supplies and their costs. These included, salt, sand, liquid deicer, hours to cover snow plow contractors and overtime hours for the highway staff. Ms. White reminded the group that this budget needs to remain the same and certainly not cut, because if there are bad storms and the account is depleted the state will not help to pay for it nor can it be kept over to the following year. Mr. Carson 1st, Mr. Miller 2nd passed unanimously.

Highway Department Electricity [20422.15] (\$4,000) level funded {\$4,000}. After some discussion it was decided that this and two other budgets would be included in the Highway Department Expenses.

Highway Department Expenses [20425.00](\$ 22,300) now requesting because of the transfer from **Highway Electricity** of \$4,000 {\$26,300}. It was noted that this account was enlarged to include the **Highway Department Training Expenses** [20422.07] and **Highway Uniforms and Gear**[20422.78]. Mr. Carson 1st, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed unanimously.

Highway Propane [20422.18] (\$10,000) level funded {\$10,000} there was some discussion as to whether this would enough since they had already spent 73.24% of this year's budget. Mr. Loring stated that the new boiler was a great improvement over the old one with 96% efficiency. It was decided not to increase this budget. Mrs. Walker 1st, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed unanimously.

Highway Diesel [20422.19] (\$ 50,000) level funded {\$50,000} only \$11,660.46 has been expended to date. Mr. Loring reminded the group that this fuel was used to run the highway vehicles. However it would appear that the budget was one that might be cut. Mrs. Walker noted that some money saved here might be helpful with other accounts. She suggested that it be cut to \$35,000. Mr. Carson made a motion to put \$40,000 in this account with Mrs. Walker 2nd passed unanimously.

Highway Machinery [20428.00] (\$80,000) level funded {\$80,000} Mr. Fracasso 1st, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed unanimously.

Roads and Bridges Salaries. [20422.03] there was no budget request for this account, however since Mr. Loring was present he was asked to discuss this budget request. He stated that he was one man short, and that man had been cut in 2004. The current thinking is that a town should have one man per every 10 miles, and since New Marlborough has approximately 90 miles we are obviously working with a lack of employees. He added that this year there are three school buses that need to go on Canaan Valley Road, but with the number of men that he has it is difficult to keep that road ready for the school buses. Mr. Yohalem asked if there was an added man did he have enough equipment for the extra man to use in the snowplowing and sanding time. To which he replied that he had. It was suggested that perhaps a part-time worker might be available in the winter, but Mr. Loring stated that men laid off in the winter who might be available would not want to sacrifice their unemployment benefits for a part-time position. He also added that the gentleman that did the roadside mowing was 75 years of age and should he decide to retire it would be difficult to find a replacement.

Mr. Loring stated that he also needed to have extra hours for the office clerk, she works twelve hours at present and he would suggest that her hours be increased to 18 hours which will mean that she will not receive benefits but the department will benefit from her very needed extra time. He stated that there was so much more to do. He added that he cannot keep up with cleaning the culverts of which there are close to 100!

Ms. White asked Mr. Loring to discuss the desired purchase of a washing machine for the **Fire Department**. (This item for \$4,000 was included in the Fire Protection budget.) This washer would remove the cancer material left from fires from the firemen's uniforms. Firemen's gear costs \$10,000 and includes a jacket, pants and boots and is only good for ten years. Mr. Loring had written a grant to get this last year but had been rejected because it was deemed that the Fire Company was "too rich".

Mr. Loring left and Ms. Shalaby began to present some figures relating to the total town budget with the purpose of helping the committee "prioritize" the requests for budgetary increases etc. The FY 19 budget falls into budget Discretionary and Non-Discretionary requests for funds. She suggested that although the total town budget could be raised \$165,592 it might be wise to increase the operating budget only \$82,500 and leave the remaining \$82,500 to be used for a once time discretionary expenses. Attached is a picture of her chart. She also included the figures for the Free Cash and the present Stabilization figures. Her premise being that if we reserve \$82,500 from the general budget and save the expected saving in this year's schools assessment of \$130,00 we will start out next year with a capacity of growth for \$212,560 she did add that the COLA had to be included in the original \$82,500.

Ms. Walker reported that she had read in the Berkshire Record that the school district is working toward closing two of the smaller outlying schools and she wondered if this would help bring the school budget lower and thus help us. Ms. Shalaby reported that this closing would take some time and probably not help this year's requests.

Mr. Yohalem presented a proposed school budget and asked the Finance Committee members to study it and bring questions to the March 8th School Committee Meeting.

The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be March 1st at 6:00PM; Mrs. Spaulding reminded the group that there were many budgets that needed to be reviewed and will be scheduled to be seen at that meeting.

A motion to adjourn at 7:57PM was made by Mr. Carson and Mrs. Walker 2nd passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted, Prudence Spaulding, secretary.