

Finance Committee Minutes

March 14th 2019

The meeting was called to order at 6:00PM. Present were Mr. Steven Klein, Mrs. Sandra Walker, Mr. John Pshenishny, Mr. Robert Miller, Mr. Douglas Newman (arrived at 6.05PM) and Mrs. Prudence Spaulding. Guests included Mrs. Marsha Pshenishny, Ms. Mari Enoch, Ms. Michele Shalaby, Mr. Richard Long, Mr. Thomas Stalker, Mr. Freddie Friedman, and Ms. Tara White.

Minutes for February 28th 2019 were accepted as read, Mrs. Walker 1st, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed unanimously. Minutes for March 7th 2019 were accepted as read, Mr. Robert Miller 1st, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed unanimously. Mr. Klein began the meeting stating that most of the budgets had been submitted, but there remains some documentation lacking. The following budgets were reviewed:

Moderator [10114.00] (\$145) Level Funded {\$145} Mrs. Spaulding 1st, Mr. Miller 2nd passed unanimously.

Conservation Commission Clerical [10123.02] (\$600) now requesting {\$1200}, because of the increase PUT ON HOLD.

Conservation Commission Expenses [10124.00] (\$1400) now requesting {\$1900} From information that Mr. Friedman provided verbally this account is spent upon clerical, mileage, and expenses allowing the members of the committee to attend educational conventions and other meetings. Mr. Friedman stated that members of the Commission often paid themselves for trips to get further education. Mr. Klein made a motion to approve \$1700 for this account, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Expenses [10147.44] (\$3,300) now requesting {\$9310.60} because of the increase further documentation is required, PUT ON HOLD.

Treasurers' Software [10147.88] (\$ 3,975) now requesting {\$4,935} again because of the increase further documentation is required PUT ON HOLD.

Tax Title (Collector) [10148.00] (\$ 1,300) now requesting {\$800} PUT ON HOLD.

Tax Title (Treasurer) {10149.00 (\$6,000) now requesting {\$5000} PUT ON HOLD.

Agricultural Commission [10172.00] (\$200) now requesting {\$250} Mr. Miller 1st, Mr. Klein 2nd, passed unanimously.

Printing [1019500] (\$1,800) Level Funded {\$1,800} Mr. Newman 1st, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed unanimously.

Street Lights [20424.00] (\$4,848) now requesting {\$3,404} when questioned Ms. Enoch stated that the power company stated that they expected a 33% decrease and so this is that estimate. Mr. Newman 1st, Mr. Miller 2nd passed unanimously.

Umpachene Falls Park [50650.00], Mr. Klein stated that he understood that the members of this committee were planning to take their information to the BOS on Monday March 18th.

Animal Inspector's Expense [60293.78] (\$800) now requesting {\$835} Mr. Miller 1st, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed with Mrs. Spaulding recusing.

Board of Health Expenses [70510.01] (\$1,500) now requesting {\$2,500} this requested the inclusion of 1900 miles and although the request of \$2,500 for last year's account had been lowered to \$1,500 and that had not been fully spent. It was decided to allot {\$1,500} for this year's budget. Mr. Klein 1st, Mr. Newman 2nd passed unanimously.

Board of Health Software [70510.01] (\$1,600) now requesting {\$1,750} this is part of a contract that extends for three years and had had some grant money to pay for the first year. Mr. Miller 1st, Mr. Klein 2nd passed unanimously.

Berkshire Regional Group Purchase [70524.00] (\$600) now requesting {\$1,000}. The town has collaborated with other towns to purchase materials and thereby gets them at a lower cost. This activity is supposed to be taken over by Berkshire Regional Planning in the future. Mr. Klein 1st, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed unanimously.

Council on Aging Expenses [70541.00] (\$250) Level Funded {\$250} Mr. Klein 1st, Mr. Newman 2nd passed with Mrs. Spaulding recusing.

Senior Tax Work-Off Abatement Program [70560.01] (\$150) Level Funded {\$150} Mr. Klein 1st, Mr. Miller 2nd passed with Mrs. Spaulding recusing.

Workman's Compensation Insurance [90912.00] (\$ 16,500) now requesting {\$15,000} this is an estimate. Mrs. Spaulding 1st, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed unanimously.

General Insurance [90914.11] (\$68,000) now requesting {\$64,800} Mr. Klein 1st, Mr. Newman 2nd passed unanimously.

Group Insurance [90914.70] (\$196,221) now requesting {\$176,061} Mrs. Enoch stated that this insurance is based upon one less person taking medical insurance, however if this changes the amount might rise. Mr. Klein 1st, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed unanimously.

Medicare [90917.00] (\$ 13,500) now requesting {\$13,700}, this is partly based upon the COLA of 2%. Mr. Miller 1st, Mrs. Walker 2nd passed unanimously.

Veterans' Benefit Trust Chapter 115 [90918.00] (\$12,000) now requesting {\$10,000} Mr. Newman 1st, Mr. Miller 2nd passed unanimously.

Insurance Reimbursement [90920.00] (\$5,000) Level Funded {\$5,000} paid to employees who do not use the town's medical insurance. Mr. Newman 1st, Mr. Klein 2nd passed unanimously.

Longevity Stipend [90925.00] (\$2,500) Level Funded {\$2,500} Mr. Klein 1st, Mr. Newman 2nd passed with Mr. Pshenishny recusing.

Election Expenses {10162.00} (\$2,200), now requesting {\$12,925}, at present each election requires the programing of the "handicap machine" at the cost of (\$ 600). Many of the staff at the polling booths are seniors working under the Senior Tax Work-off Program with a few paid personnel. The ballots are printed at the Town Hall.

The town clerk is requesting a voting tabulator machine. The initial (onetime cost) would be \$5,700. Using this machine would show the results of the election as the last ballot was passed. It would keep track of the number of ballots cast, and alert the voter of any errors or providing options. The machine would eliminate the need for counters at the close of voting except for write-ins.

A number of surrounding towns are using this machine, Great Barrington, Otis, Egremont, Stockbridge and West Stockbridge.

The annual maintenance of the machine will be \$200 after the two year warranty period has expired. The programing for each election runs from \$500--\$1000 depending upon the of ballot content. The ballots must be printed for every eligible voter (about 1100) at a cost of about \$.42 per ballot plus shipping and handling (or about \$462 per election). Thus the approximate cost would be \$660 for one election.

Committee members noted that the use of this machine was not mandated by the state. A motion was made by Mr. Newman to table the purchase of this machine, with Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed with Mr. Klein opposing.

SBRSD Operating and Transportation {30000.01}; **SBRSD Capital** [30001.00]; **SBRSD Boiler & Roof Bond Payment**[30001.00]; **SBRSD Vocational-Technical** [30002.00] were not discussed,

since the final figures for these accounts have not come in as yet. A change in the assessment formula has been proposed. All the towns of the district must accept it before it is enacted. If passed by June 30th 2019 the new formula would take affect for FY2020 if later then not until FY 2021. As a result, we will use the more conservative version until the timing of the voting is clearer.

Mr. Newman asked if the Finance Committee should make a motion to accept the use of the new formula. But since it has not been formally presented to the BOS the Finance Committee will await further action.

The following presentation and discussion (without action by the Committee) occurred.

Transfer Station Expenses [70519.03] (\$ 69,000) now requesting {\$ 95,046} Mr. Friedman came to present this budget. The costs of single stream, bulky waste, wet waste, metal, electronics and tires are all different; however they are all expected to increase. The ability to sell some recycled materials has changed. When these items go out to bid the method of disposal may remain independent (run by the town) or the town may use MRF (Municipal Recycling Facility). The transfer station's internet costs (once our town has an internet provider) will allow the programmer of the compactor to do its programing via the internet. Some of the members questioned the \$1500 office supplies, which turns out to be the purchase of a new and much needed gate to the facility! The \$500 mailing costs will cover a single mailing, however Mrs. Walker stated that this activity could take place on the Town's Website or information could be sent home within one of the real estate bills' mailing. Regarding the amount assigned for tree work, there are saplings that need to come down along the entrance pathway. John Fields Tree Service stated to Mr. Friedman that his men would do that for \$500. Within the Transfer Station Expense budget was the Household Hazardous Waste. This was a separate item in the past years' budgets. Mr. Friedman stated that this provider has gone out of business and the DEP is at present working with towns to establish a new program. Mr. Klein asked how much of 2019's budget has been expended, \$44,708, which will probably leave enough funds for the remainder of this year. Mrs. Walker asked how much money was generated by the sale of the Transfer Station Stickers, (about \$40,000), she suggested that the price of the Transfer Stickers be raised to about \$160 and that might generate enough funds to cover the costs of the operation.

Mr. Miller thanked Mr. Friedman for coming and sharing his concerns regarding the increases for the coming year.

Police Salaries[60210.04]; **Police Departmental Rental**[60210.67]; and **Police Expenses** [60210.99]. Based on discussion last year regarding the expansion of coverage by the town, this year's budget would increase coverage to 16 hours a day in two shifts y 8:00AM - 4:00PM. and

4PM - 12AM with training, overtime and vacation time included. If the police chief is on vacation another police officer is appointed during those hours. It was noted that the town has approximately 1100 voters with a police budget of nearly \$200,000!

The extra police vehicle is housed in the old Fire House for which the town pays rent of \$6000 per year. Mrs. Walker questioned why the town has two police cruisers.

Roads and Bridges [20422.05] it was noted that more information on how the highway staff was being used would be helpful. Mr. Loring stated that during the winter month's vacations for the staff is not granted, and that during the summer one of the Highway Department's men leaves to work on the Cemeteries. And it is in the summer that the Highway Department does road repairs and maintenance takes place. Some reference was made that a company had been hired to come in and evaluate the roads in depth thus helping the Highway Department plan for their care. Apparently this report has not been completed. Mr. Newman questioned whether this company would have done their evaluation in the summer months since the roads were very different in the winter He also questioned whether Mr. Loring would use this study to mend the roads .

In the **Roads and Bridges Salaries** [20422.03] The approved figure for 2019 was \$301,130, and this year's request was \$344,592.60 this shows an increase of \$43,462.50 representing the request to hire one additional employee.

Fire Protection [60220.00] (\$58,900) now requesting {\$64,400} when comparing the breakdown of the Fire Protection budget there was on the list the increase of \$6,000 for KME truck. Mr. Klein stated that he had heard that the Company needed new hoses and since it was a capital item he wondered if the company should put aside certain funds on a yearly basis to cover the cost of such an item. Mrs. Spaulding noted that they had included \$5,000 for hoses in last year's budget.

Some of the logistics of the Fire Company reflect the fact that that the Fire Company built and owns the Fire House, which the town insures on a yearly basis. Many of the donations that they solicit are put toward the EMS expenses, paying off the mortgage and hopefully putting aside money to renovate the old fire house which in part is rented to the town to house the town's second police cruiser.

Since the Fire Company is a "not for profit" agency Mrs. Walker stated that their finances are public and should be located on the web.

Regarding the NM Rescue Services budget, Mrs. Spaulding questioned whether some of its expenses were covered by COMSTAR.

Ms. Shalaby has been working with the Regional Ambulance Sstudy and reported that a consultant had been hired to investigate the services in the surrounding towns. This consultant is scheduled to present a report of his/her findings on April 6th at 6:00PM in the Great Barrington Fire House.

A motion to adjourn at 8:15PM was made by Mr. Newman with Mr. Klein 2nd passed unanimously.

The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be March 21st at 6:00PM and will be a joint meeting with the BOS to review the Highway Department's budget, the Police Department's budget, the Fire Company's budget, the Transfer Station's budget and the Building Inspector's budget with the department heads present.

Respectfully submitted,

Prudence Spaulding, secretary.