

Finance Committee Minutes

March 31st, 2016

The minutes were distributed at 6:25PM. The meeting was called to order at 6:31PM. Present were Mr. John Pshenishny, Mr. David Herrick, Mr. Mark Carson, Mr. Thomas Stalker, Mr. Robert Miller, Mr. Ira Yohalem, Mrs. Prudence Spaulding and Ms. Mari Enoch. Guests were Mrs. Michele Shalaby, Ms. Tara White, Mr. Nathaniel Yohalem, Mrs. Marsha Pshenishny and Mr. Chuck Loring.

The minutes for March 24th were accepted as amended, Mr. Carson 1st, Mr. Herrick 2nd passed unanimously.

The salary requests were to be reviewed first. The Committee had discussed giving the staff a 2% raise. The selectmen had incorporated a 2 ½ % raise into the proposed budget. A general discussion took place. Because in the increase in the medical insurance a 2% raise would barely cover the employee's part of the medical insurance. However it was noted that Social Security had not given raises to its recipients, and that other business people were dealing with the same issues. A motion was made to recommend at 2 % raise, Mr. Carson 1st, Mrs. Spaulding 2nd passed unanimously.

After a discussion it was decided that there would be a motion recommending the 2% raise in all of the salary items in the various categories. Mr. Carson 1st, Mrs. Spaulding 2nd passed unanimously.

Article X (1) Mr. Carson 1st, Mrs. Spaulding 2nd passed unanimously.

Article X (2) General Government (with the salary proviso) Mrs. Spaulding 1st, Mr. Miller 2nd passed unanimously.

Article X (3) special article to deal with transfer from Perpetual Care Cemeteries the sum of \$2,700 Mrs. Spaulding 1st. Mr. Miller 2nd passed unanimously.

Article X (4) Highways/Public Works, this article passed with again the general salary proviso, and with the exception of the highway workers who will receive \$.75 per hour increase as was voted in the past meeting. Mr. Carson 1st, Mr. Herrick 2nd passed unanimously.

Article X (5) special article to deal with providing Vocational Education of town students for \$17,000 Mrs. Spaulding 1st, Mr. Herrick 2nd passed unanimously.

Article X (6) special article to deal with providing School Committee members with their yearly stipend \$1,500. Mr. Carson 1st, Mr. Miller 2nd passed unanimously.

Article Y this article generated a great deal of discussion. The total School budget has gone up by \$197,104, which represents almost most of our needed over ride to cover the town's budget. Mr. Ira Yohalem asked what the selectmen's opinion was of our possible decision not to recommend the acceptance of this budget. Mrs. Shalaby stated that there was an increase in the number of children going to school from our town which accounted for part of this increase. Mr. Nathaniel Yohalem stated that in order to decrease the budget by half, because ours was only a share, it would involve decreasing the total school budget to a much larger degree. He also stated that the Finance Committee should attend the Finance Meetings of the School District and thus be better informed. Mrs. Shalaby also added that the selectmen had not decided what their position on the school budget would be, however the total school budget was only raised between 2% and 3 %, and they too had fixed increases to factor into their budget.

A motion was made not to recommend the acceptance of the school budget, Mr. Carson 1st, Mrs. Spaulding 2nd passed with Mr. Miller recusing.

Article X(7) Culture and Recreation passed with the salary proviso in place, Mr. Carson 1st, Mr. Stalker 2nd passed unanimously.

Article X (8) Protection of Persons and Property, passed with the salary proviso in place i.e. numbers 1 and 13. Mr. Carson 1st, Mrs. Spaulding 2nd passed unanimously.

Article X (9) this article dealt with the transfer of \$46,350 from the New Marlborough Rescue/Comstar Account to fund the operation of the ambulance. Mrs. Spaulding 1st, Mr. Carson 2nd passed unanimously.

Article X (10) Health and Human Services, there was some question about the raises in the Transfer Station Hours, Ms. Enoch stated that the workers were being paid by the hour and that this accounted for the increase of a little more than 10%. Again this category was passed with the salary proviso in place, Mr. Herrick 1st, Mr. Miller 2nd passed unanimously.

Article X (11) Debt and Interest, Mr. Herrick 1st, Mr. Carson 2nd passed unanimously.

The following articles were unclassified and in order as following:-

Article (a) the transfer funds from the Overlay Account to the Overlay Deficit Account Mrs. Spaulding 1st, Mr. Carson 2nd passed unanimously.

Article (b) to fund the Stabilization Account from Free Cash for \$50,000, Mr. Yohalem 1st, Mr. Carson 2nd passed unanimously.

Article (c) to pay for the police cruiser \$48,000 from Free Cash Mr. Yohalem 1st, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed unanimously.

Article (d) to pay for a new one ton pickup with plow for the highway department to replace the 2008 truck that has 140,000 miles on it. Mr. Yohalem 1st, Mr. Herrick 2nd this was not recommended with four opposing because of the other requests for the highway department.

Article (e) to transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$165,000 to repair the roads, namely Corahire and Norfolk Roads. While this will not lower the requested money for Roads and Bridges it will improve these roads. Mrs. Spaulding 1st, Mr. Carson 2nd passed unanimously.

Article (f) to transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$25,000 to purchase in conjunction with Sheffield a "hotbox". Mrs. Spaulding 1st, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd passed unanimously.

Article (g) to pay for the purchase of an excavator as presented to the Committee at the last meeting. This item generated a lot of discussion. Mr. Loring stated that this item had been on the long term purchasing goals and the five year plan, that although he could rent an excavator the renting of a machine changed his schedule of work as he felt he should use the rental every day. He stated that it would pay for itself over 6 to 8 years and the estimates saving about \$15,000a year in road repair money. Some of the members were concerned about the number of expensive machines being purchased this year especially as the budget was going to need an override just to pass. Motion to change the method of payment from stabilization (which requires a 2/3 vote) to taking this out of Free Cash was made Mr. Herrick 1st, Mr. Carson 2nd passed with a 4/3 vote.

The vote was then taken as to whether to purchase this item and passed with a 4/3 vote.

Article (h) this article relates to the continuance of revolving funds for the Gas Inspector, the Electrical Inspector, The Plumbing Inspector, The Health Agent and now to be added the Conservation Commission. Mrs. Spaulding 1st, Mr. Yohalem 2nd passed unanimously.

The committee then asked how the budget would be written with the difference in the percentage raises of the staff. This will be presented at the next meeting, scheduled for Thursday April 14th at 6:30PM. Mrs. Shalaby reminded the committee members of the meeting to be held on Saturday April 30th at 10:00 AM to review the budget when the voters are invited to come. She also asked that the Finance Committee sit together at Town Meeting on Monday May 2nd at 7:00PM. The Finance Committee generally meets at half an hour ahead of the Town Meeting to assign various members the task of presenting various articles. A motion to adjourn was made at 8:25PM by Mr. Carson 1st, Mr. Miller 2nd and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Prudence Spaulding, Secretary