

Finance Committee Minutes

February 25th 2016

The meeting was called to order at 6:35PM. Present were Mr. John Pshenishny, Mr. David Herrick, Mr. Thomas Stalker, Mr. Mark Carson, Mr. Robert Miller, and Mrs. Prudence Spaulding. Guests were Mr. John Fielding, Mr. Nathaniel Yohalem, Ms. Tara white, Mr. Bill Ruane, Mr. John Fields and Mr. Chuck Loring. The Minutes for February 18th were accepted as read, Mr. Pshenishny 1st, Mr. Carson 2nd passed unanimously.

The committee welcomed Mr. Miller who has now been officially appointed as a member.

Mr. Herrick shared a Town Meeting Timeline and Appointment schedule. The selectmen will sign the warrant on April 18th and present the budget to the citizens on Monday April 25th.

Mr. Herrick then circulated the Tree Work budget, [60294.01], (\$ 15,000) now requesting {\$50,000}!

Both Mr. Ruane, the town's tree warden, and Mr. Fields who has been taking down some of the trees for the town spoke about the problems facing the trees lining the roads. First some of the trees that are on town property and line the roads present a danger to the drivers. Then there are trees that form a canopy covering the roads and preventing the sun from reaching the road's surface. Mr. Fields stated that canopies that prevent the sun from reaching the black topped roads cause the road's surface to age quicker and thus cost the town money. Mr. Ruane stated that he was trying to get National Grid to remove the trees that were related to their service and thus save the town some money. Mr. Field's company has taken some trees down on a certain part of the town's roads and the result has been impressive. Mr. Field's company is now working for about twelve neighboring towns. He cited as an example the 8 ½ mile road in Otis Woodland which had a severe tree situation has been using a 5 year program at \$10,000 per year with amazing results. Because New Marlborough has about 93 miles of road the yearly cost for a 10 year plan would cost about \$50,000 per year.

While the members of the committee recognized the need for a tree service program, they were also cognizant of the tight finance situation that faces the town this year. Both Mr. Ruane and Mr. Fields stated that the trees that they were cutting represented emergency needs and it was like putting out "fires" only to have another. Mr. Fields stated that if he could he would begin at the Sandisfield line and follow it to the Monterey line. Mr. Fields stated that he had worked two days at a cost of \$5,000 and completed one mile! The job is very labor intensive.

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Another situation was discussed. There are trees that are on owner's property and that present a danger to drivers etc. Mr. Ruane has spoken to the owners of such trees telling them that they are responsible for the removal of those trees. The Committee suggested that the town counsel be asked to design a letter that could be sent to the owners of such trees alerting them to the danger provided by the tree or trees, and it was the owner's responsibility for the removal of the dangerous tree or trees. Mr. Loring, Mr. Ruane, and Mr. Fields were thanked and they left.

Mr. Herrick made a motion to appropriate \$25,000 for the tree work, with Mr. Carson 2nd passed unanimously.

Mr. Freddie Friedman the Department head for the Transfer Station came before the committee with two budgets, the first was for the Transfer Station Repairs [70519.04] with no budget request last year he was now requesting {\$2,000}. Apparently one of the machines at the transfer station needs repairs but it is two months out of its warranty period. He also presented the committee the Transfer Station Expenses [70519.03] (\$63,000) now requesting {\$66,483.56}. The increase of this budget was explained by the increase in the cost of taking the loads away, and the other expenses, i.e. electricity etc. The town has a three year contract, but the contract was not tied to a specific cost for each load, and had risen considerably this year. The request for the Transfer Station Repairs of \$2,000 was added to the estimated cost of the Transfer Station Expenses and the result was {\$68,484}. Mrs. Spaulding 1st, Mr. Carson 2nd passed unanimously. Mrs. Spaulding then suggested that when the next tax bill is sent out a letter be included in which the tax payer could send a separate check to pay of the transfer station sticker by mail rather than expecting them to either come to the town hall or to bring the money to the transfer station. She stated that many people would probably buy "transfer station" stickers and this would take the burden from the gentlemen who supervise the work at the transfer station! Mr. Friedman said that he would see that this happened. The setting of the next meeting was discussed. March 3rd the School is planning to have a finance committee meeting, and on March 11th the whole School Committee is scheduled to adopt the budget. The remainders of the budgets for the town include the salaries, the medical insurance, the school budget and the capital expenses. These will be discussed on March 17th when the next meeting of the Finance Committee will be held at 6:30PM. A motion to adjourn at 8:00PM was made by Mr. Carson 1st, Mr. Pshenishny 2nd and unanimously accepted.

Respectfully submitted

Prudence Spaulding, Secretary.