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NORTON TOWN CLERK

**Finance Committee Meeting
March 28, 2007
Municipal Center - Selectmen's Conference Room**

Call To Order

Meeting was called to Order at 7:35 p.m.

Present: Chairman, Paul Helmreich; Vice-Chair, Lee Tarantino, Wayne Graf, Mike Thomas, Jackie Desrochers, Mike Fiore, and Philip Zawasky. Tom DeLuca was absent. Town Manager was also present.

1. Approval of Minutes

MOTION was made by Mr. Fiore to approve the Finance Committee Minutes of Meeting of March 5, 2007 as amended. Second by Mr. Thomas. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

MOTION was made by Mr. Fiore to approve the Finance Committee Minutes of Meeting of March 19, 2007 as amended. Second by Mr. Thomas. Vote: All In Favor, except for Mrs. Desrochers abstaining. MOTION CARRIES.

Communications/Correspondence:

Mr. Helmreich referenced Dr. Ansay's e-mail speaking of level services to be used for reading language program. It would be a one-time non-recurring expense and asked if it could come from stabilization was her inquiry. No need to discuss this tonight but inquiry "on table" from Dr. Ansay.

2. New Business

Mr. Purcell spoke of two documents he distributed to FinCom: F07 appropriations and F08 level-funded along with scenario with accompanying (impact) attachment for various departments. He explained and reviewed. He said he would have binders ready for distribution on Monday.

Mr. Purcell discussed various departmental cuts: clerical services reduction with 468 hours per year loss (budget #147) treasurer/collector.

Data Processing: TenCore is hired for 8-10 hours per week and he felt Town could do better in-house with employee on a contract basis.

Reduction of clerk's hours from 1950 to 1879 under Town Clerk (loss of 71 hours).

Planning Board loss of hours from 1560 to 1394.

Mostly cutting support staff and dept. heads taking on more and trying to minimize exposure of unemployment.

Union problems/issues with cuts discussed.

Mr. Purcell stated Police Dept. would lose two patrol positions and according to Chief of Police they would close Police Station on first and third shifts. Two people at desk would be eliminated and need to have three people out on road. Mr. Purcell assumed it would be for seven days a week but would check on this info.

Mr. Purcell referenced Fire Dept. and spoke of reducing training and reduced fire alarm maintenance and Chartley Fire Station to be closed. Loss of two firefighters and call firefighters impacted. He said he will scrutinize other departments to keep public safety less impacted.

Mr. Helmreich had questions on the closing of police dept. Mr. Purcell said he would find out specifics.

Building Dept. - at Special Town Meeting they may incur some expenses Present staffing is quite good. Inspector and two part-timers at 19 hours per week. The person doing full-time job does a lot.

Communications center: Level funded less than present and level-services slightly higher. A funded but unfilled vacancy there currently. One person works alone (dispatcher dispatching to police/fire/other calls coming in and juggling a lot at once).

Animal Control: Town will continue to be without an assistant dog officer. This is a 24/7 job and current dog officers works 52 weeks per year.

Highway: Mr. Silver said \$6,000 remaining in account and asked for deficit amount spending in case for snow/ice removal.

Sewer: \$72,000 in interest income and discussed FY07 Sewer operating budget and Sewer Debt Info..

Mr. Kimball, Chairman of Board of Selectmen, said Norton is still being charged for 500,000 gallons by Mansfield. Enterprise account discussed.

Mr. Helmreich said it appeared Mansfield is getting full payment from Norton and leasing out part to others.

Board of Health: Assistant Health Agent would lose 91 hours per year.

Public Health Nurse would lose 88 hours and Mr. Purcell had concerns about that.

Council on Aging (COA): Part-time clerk is gone. COA has been without it and proposed it.

Veterans Agent: Town uses veterans' benefit line for pay increase. At least five or six clients will be dropped from program and another town will take over.

Cherry Sheet: Possibly a \$40,000 loss and he looked into it and it is an estimate not a bottom line.

Library: Minimum funding requirement. Mr. Purcell said he wished they could do more for library.

Recreation: Some things are needed such as repair to pool. Maintenance costs were discussed.

Mr. Helmreich said FinCom needs to recommend one budget. Level-service is keeping what Town has or level-funded to improve on what we currently have (both require additional services of revenue).

Mr. Purcell said he has been told that Town really should get \$203,000 annual number under a debt exclusion per what bankers/financial advisors are telling him. He referenced Middle School (roof issue) and no idea on scope of project. Discussion on debt exclusion, etc.

Mr. Helmreich said they need to be realistic of what Town should be doing. He felt to keep level-services was his opinion. He did not see level-funded recommendation but could be possibly "talked into it".

Mr. Thomas said the override is a political question. Discussion followed.

Mr. Helmreich said one thing FinCom can do is to make a statement as a committee as to what Town needs for services and fund it (at least make a case for keeping what Town has currently). When Town reaches a point where services are so bad an override does pass; it will make it easier in subsequent years to pass future overrides.

Mrs. Steele, Board of Selectmen member, said she agreed with FinCom's comments and agreed it is responsibility of FinCom and Board of Selectmen to get message out as soon as possible to people in Town to proceed, etc.

Mr. Helmreich said it is obligation of FinCom to make recommendation to Board of Selectmen. Need in place "budget for anticipated revenue". Discussion followed.

Mr. Tarantino said there was no reporter from newspaper here this evening because he believed they know people from Norton do not care. Losing firefighters and police station front desk to potentially be closed, etc. are large issues.

Mr. Kimball spoke of F07 with school libraries shut down; two dispatchers not replaced and need to tell townspeople the issues again for F08. Costs are going up and Ch70 going down and his person feeling is Town needs to feel the pain. He recalled the year the Town shut down a school and got special consideration from State. It appears the Town does not have the ability to educate general public; they need to be shown.

Mr. Helmreich said they need to be as firm as possible for level-funded figures and need to carefully examine what Town needs for a level-service budget. A level-service includes an override now.

Mr. Purcell said on Monday evening the Town Accountant will be in to discuss Gasbe 45 and Platform Project (windows) with vendor. Also Ben Mello, assistant assessor, will talk about reval program.

Mr. Purcell said on Wednesday of next week Mr. Knapp to be in on water budget and possibly FinCom can chat about sewers. He said he will not be attending FinCom meeting Wednesday night as he has a conflicting MMA meeting and it is important he attend that meeting.

Mr. Purcell said some changes he feels strongly about is tree warden issue. National Grid doing huge project and tree warden needed.

Mr. Purcell said Town is struggling to stay within the legal expenses (\$80,000 number is in there) and there will be a lot on warrant FinCom can vote on.

Mr. Helmreich said FinCom needs to think about using stabilization for buying textbooks.

Mr. Purcell said warrant closes on April 3. Mr. Helmreich said he will advise Dr. Ansay in case she wants to get it on the Special Town Meeting warrant.

Adjournment

MOTION was made by Mr. Thomas to adjourn at 9:30 p.m. Second by Mr. Fiore. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

Respectfully Submitted
Janet Lucey, Recording Secretary