

Finance Committee Meeting
March 19, 2008
7:30 PM
Municipal Center – Selectmen's Conference Room

Present: Chairman, Lee Tarantino; Vice-Chair, Michael Thomas; Pasquale Barletta; Robert Bouchard; Thomas DeLuca; Wayne Graf; Paul Helmreich; Philip Zawasky.

Absent: Jackie Desrochers.

Call to Order

Meeting was called to Order at 7:30.

I. Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to approve the March 17, 2008 Finance Committee minutes as written. Second by Mr. Bouchard. Vote: All in favor, with Mr. Graf abstaining. **Motion carries.**

II. New Business – Budgets from the Police Department, the Fire-Rescue Department, and the Emergency Management Agency.

Police Department –

Police Chief Brian Clark provided the FinCom with written copies of the Police Department's FY '09 Budget Request. He explained that the budget that he is requesting is a level service budget. He said that there would be a total increase of \$30,092 (a 1.3% increase) over the FY '08 budget. He said that there would be an increase of \$28,595 in personnel services and an increase of \$1,497 in expenses.

Chief Clark went on to say that he is seeking rank structure changes. He is not looking to add personnel, but instead change the rank structure. This change would add a second Lieutenant position and eliminate a Sergeant position, changing the department from having 1 Lieutenant and 5 Sergeants, to 2 Lieutenant and 4 Sergeants. Chief Clark reviewed a second Lieutenant position cost-analysis with the FinCom, concluding that this change would yield an overall savings of \$3,772.

Chief Clark also said that the budget request includes a \$12K increase in the chief's salary, as well as step increases for Patrolmen and Sergeants.

When questioned about the substantial increase to the chief's salary, Chief Clark said that his contract is currently in negotiations and made mention that the present salary of the chief is abundant in benefits and lacking in salary.

Mr. Helmreich pointed out that although an overall increase of 1.3% is a good, solid budget, the town needs to *cut* \$158K on the general government side and that level service, and even level funded, may not be enough.

Chief Clark stated that included in the requested budget is a vacant position.

Fire Chief Richard J. Gomes provided the FinCom with written copies of the FY '09 budget requests for both The Emergency Management Agency and the Fire-Rescue Department.

Emergency Management Agency –

Chief Gomes reviewed the requested budget for the Emergency Management Agency, stating that the request is \$1K more than the FY '08 budget. He said that he reduced the budget from \$7,500 to \$6,500 (Equipment and Supplies were each reduced by \$500), but then added a request for a \$2K stipend for the Deputy Director. Chief Gomes went on to explain that the

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entire agency is composed of volunteers, including the Deputy Director. He discussed the amount of work that goes into the Deputy Director's position and stressed his feelings that the position is deserving of a stipend.

Mr. Helmreich questioned whether or not the Deputy Director, if given the stipend, would then be eligible for benefits through the town. Mr. Gomes said he was not sure of the answer to that, but that it was not his intention to have that be the case.

A discussion took place on the subject of grants. Chief Gomes stated that the town being classified as 'Multi-Agency' as well as 'Multi-Jurisdictional' increases the availability of grants tremendously.

Fire-Rescue Department –

Chief Gomes reviewed the FY '09 budget request with the FinCom, stating that the request is at level service, just above level funded, and that it does not include any raises.

He said that in the last 3 years the **Salaries** part of the budget has been over an average of \$30K because of under budgeting. He said the areas in which they have consistently exceeded the budget are: sick leave, compensatory time, and on the job injury. This FY '09 budget includes budgeting for previously under budgeted line items and is off set by replacing a higher-paid employee with a younger, lower-paid employee. He went on to discuss each line item of the budget, stating that they reflect more accurately what is needed. He also pointed out that he put in a request for 4 additional employees but did not budget for them.

Mr. Helmreich pointed out that the salaries part of the budget reflects current salary levels, without increases (pre-negotiations).

Chief Gomes stated that the \$2,200 increase in the **Operating Expenses** part of the budget is due to an increase in energy costs and station repairs.

Chief Gomes said that the **Emergency Medical Operating Expense** part of the requested FY '09 budget shows an increase of \$3,850 because of the costs of medical equipment. He also noted that the Purchase Services line of the budget went up significantly because of the cost of software maintenance, allowing the FD to bill and collect ambulance receipts quicker and more efficiently.

Mr. Helmreich asked Chief Gomes about the possibility of decreases in the budget. Chief Gomes said that if decreases needed to be made to the budget that it would come from the salaries portion and it would cause the Chartley Fire Station to close.

Chief Gomes discussed the moving of communications equipment to the communications pole near Red Mill Village.

Chief Gomes discussed the possibility of a 3-year grant for Reverse Notification Systems (known as Reverse 911). He said that because Norton can be part of this Multi-Jurisdictional grant that there would be no cost to the town. After the 3 years there will most likely be more grants with matching funds from the state.

III. Old Business

Mr. DeLuca reported to the FinCom what the Capital Improvements Committee has been discussing at recent meetings. He discussed requests from the Fire Department, Police Department, and Conservation Commission.

Mr. Tarantino presented the idea of FinCom members being "assigned" to various town committees and departments as a contact person for when the committees and departments had any questions that the FinCom could be helpful in answering. He said that the members of the

FinCom should think about a possible committee that he/she may be interested in being the contact for, and the FinCom would discuss the subject again at the next meeting.

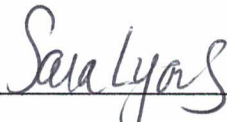
Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for March 24, 2008 at 7:30pm.

Adjournment

Motion was made by Mr. Zawasky to adjourn at 9:05 pm. Second by Mr. Thomas. Vote: Unanimous. **Motion carries.**

Respectfully Submitted by:



Sara Lyons, Finance Committee Secretary