

**Finance Committee Meeting
October 15, 2012
7:30 PM
Municipal Center – Selectmen's Conference Room**

Present: Chair, Lee Tarantino; Vice-Chair, Michael Flaherty; Peter Carignan; Thomas DeLuca; Jackie Desrochers; Richard Dorney; Stephen Evans; Paul Helmreich; William Rotondi; Michael Thomas.

Also present: Town Manager, Michael Yunits.

Absent: Robert Camp.

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm.

I. Approval of Minutes

Minutes were not reviewed at this meeting.

II. New Business

Town Meeting Warrant Article Review

- Ms. Danielle Sicard, Town Clerk, addressed the Finance Committee regarding 3 warrant articles, as follows:

Article 20 – Codification Services – Ms. Sicard explained that codification services would provide the collection and organization of town documents such as bylaws, charter, etc. She said that there would be a paper document as well as an electronic piece. The codification can interlink documents. Ms. Sicard explained that it would go through Norton's legislation and make sure that it aligns with the Massachusetts General Laws.

The process would take 16 months.

The base cost would be \$13,500 and once it is complete there would be an annual fee of approximately \$1,195 to maintain the site. There would also be an additional cost of about \$800 when new legislation was added.

Article 21 – Voting Machine – Ms. Sicard explained that the town currently has 5 voting machines for the 5 districts in town. She reminded the committee of the recent occurrence of when one of the machines broke down during a vote. Ms. Sicard said that she would like to have the spare machine in time for the upcoming Presidential election in November. The cost of the machine would be \$4K.

Article 23 – Charter Amendment – Ms. Sicard explained that this amendment is because of a typographical error by town's counsel, Ms. Lauren Goldberg. A section of part 6-4d – Report of the Capital Improvement Committee – was inadvertently omitted.

- Representatives from the Water/Sewer Commission presented the following articles to the FinCom, as follows:

Article 4 – Water Operating Budget Supplements – Mr. Steven Wiseman, W/S board member, explained that this article would allow the transfer of \$20K from the Water Surplus Account for the transition of the new Water Superintendent. The transition would occur over a 3 month period.

Article 5 – Sewer Operating Budget Supplements – Mr. Wiseman explained that this would be a one-time adjustment the budget surplus. Mr. Wiseman, referring to a handout, explained that anticipated revenues are less than expected. Most notably, the connection fees for Norton Glen are \$115K less than expected. He also said that the Sewer Department would be collecting user fees.

Article 26 – Change to By-Law – Sewer Connection – Mr. Wiseman, as well as Mr. Duane Knapp, Water Superintendent, explained that presently the by-law states that residents are required to tie-in to the sewer system within 2 years of installment of the system in front of their house. This article would change that tie-in time to 5 years. The Water/Sewer Commission is not in favor of this change. They feel it is not fair to others who have been required to tie-in in 2 years in the past.

Mr. Knapp stated that the cost of tying in is \$10K plus contractor fees to make the connection, about a total of \$11,500.

Mr. Helmreich said that he feels that a 5 year policy going forward is better.

Mr. Wiseman said that a lot of new sewage is public development, not private homes.

Mr. Knapp states that there have been residents in the past that have been taken to court for refusing to connect and that there is a penalty for doing so.

Mr. Tarantino said that he would like to see the requirement be that the home needs to make the connection in the required 2 years, but would be given 5 years to pay for it all. He said that this would benefit the resident in being given extra time to fund the project making it more affordable, as well as the town because they would have a constant stream of revenue coming in. Many members agreed that this was a good idea.

- Mr. Yunits presented the following town meeting warrant articles, as follows:

Article 2 – Collective Bargaining – The contracts have been ratified and \$3,916 is needed to pay for them. The contracts that have been ratified are the SENA-A, SENA-B, and Clerical.

Mr. Yunits said that part of the new contracts is that the sick leave buy back is now spread over two years. Also, the SENA-A contracts have an increase of \$25 in uniform allowance and an increase of \$250 in longevity.

Article 14 – Cygnus Energy PILOT Agreement – This article would allow for a PILOT agreement for a solar project on the Valentine land on Route 123. The town would be paid \$9K per Mega-Watt per year for 20 years. The minimum would be 3 Mega-Watts for \$27K per year and Mr. Yunits said that there is no limit to how many Mega-Watts. Mr. Yunits said that the output would be being sold to National Grid.

Article 15 – Assessor's Online Database – The cost of setting up this database would be \$3,400.

Article 16 – Exemption – Minimum Value of Personal Property – This article would make any personal property that is valued \$5K or less would be exempt from being taxed.

Article 17 – Legal Fund 40B – This article would establish a legal fund with \$25K to be used for some upcoming 40B projects.

Mr. Yunits said that he is looking into getting the legislation changed to say that when the 40B projects are approved they will count towards the town's required 10% 40B housing.

Article 22 – Pheeny's Island – This article would allow the Board of Selectmen to acquire the island in the reservoir by eminent domain. A group of residents would like the town to do this to prevent Kevin Leavitt from developing the land into a ropes course recreational business.

Mr. Herb Ellison, representing The Friends of Pheeny's Island (the residential group) explained that they would like to see the island preserved for the people and animals that use the island.

Mr. Leavitt stated that the property is already under agreement as a Purchase and Sales has been signed. He said that he has obtained the Conservation Commission permit and that the DEP has given their approval because of this ConCom permit.

Mr. Leavitt went on to say that his company would provide an educational, family-oriented activity. All activities would take place on the east side of the island. He said that transportation for patrons to the island would be provided by canoes. He said there is a possibility that they would lease the recreation house on Mansfield Ave. If this happened, Norton Kayak would remain there and a boat ramp would be put in. Mr. Leavitt said that 30+ jobs would be involved with this business and it would be an 8 month season.

Mr. Bob Kimball, Selectman, noted that Mr. Leavitt has invested a lot in this project thus far. He suggested that The Friends of Pheeny's Island could raise the funds to make a counter offer for the purchase of the island. Mr. Kimball expressed a concern over the liability of the town if the town were to purchase the island.

A few more residents expressed their concerns over the ropes course being on the island.

Warrant Article Votes

Article 2 – Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to recommend Article 2 in the amount of \$3,916, coming from Free Cash to fund Collective Bargaining agreements. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 4 – Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to recommend Article 4. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 5 – Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to recommend Article 5 in the amount of \$382,595, coming from the Water Surplus Account. Seconded by Mr. Rotondi. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 14 – Motion was made by Mr. DeLuca to recommend Article 14. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 15 – Motion was made by Mr. Flaherty to recommend Article 15. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Mr. Helmreich pointed out the annual fee. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 16 – Motion was made by Mr. DeLuca to recommend Article 16. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 17 – Motion was made by Mr. Rotondi to recommend Article 17 in the amount of \$25K, coming from Free Cash. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: 9 in favor, with Mr. Thomas opposed. **Motion carries.**

Article 18 – Motion was made by Mr. DeLuca to recommend Article 18 – Goff Road – for \$1, coming from Free Cash. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 19 – Motion was made by Mr. DeLuca to recommend Article 19 – Allen Drive – for \$1, coming from Free Cash. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 20 – Motion was made by Mr. Flaherty to recommend Article 20. Seconded by Mr. Thomas. Vote: 9 in favor, with Mr. Evans against. **Motion carries.**

Article 21 – Motion was made by Mr. Rotondi to recommend Article 21 in the amount of \$4K, coming from Free Cash. Seconded by Mr. Helmreich. Vote: All in favor, with Mr. Thomas abstaining. **Motion carries.**

Article 22 – Motion was made by Mr. DeLuca to recommend Article 22. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Mr. DeLuca said that he feels uneasy with the town taking land by eminent domain. He pointed out that the island has been for sale for 2 years and if the town really wanted it then they had plenty of time to pursue that. Mr. Helmreich agreed with using eminent domain sparingly. Vote: All opposed, with Mr. Dorney abstaining. **Motion FAILS.**

Article 23 – Motion was made by Mr. Flaherty to recommend Article 23. Seconded by Ms. Desrochers. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 26 – Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to recommend Article 26. Seconded by Mr. Rotondi. Mr. Helmreich said that he would like to view this as planning for the future and what's to come, not what has happened in the past. Ms. Desrochers and Mr. Thomas agreed that they would like to see it stay at 2 years. Many committee members expressed that they would like to see it be that the hookup happen would in two years but then the payment of the hookup would be paid over five years. Vote: Mr. Helmreich, Mr. Rotondi, and Mr. Evans in favor, and 7 opposed. **Motion FAILS.**

Members took a straw vote, and all were in favor of the idea of hooking up in two years but paying over five years. Mr. Tarantino said that he would communicate this to the W/S commissioners as well as the Board of Selectmen.

III. Old Business

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for October 17, 2012 at 7:30pm.

Adjournment

Motion was made by Mr. DeLuca to adjourn at 9:50 pm. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: Unanimous. **Motion carries.**

Documents Referenced: Cygnus Energy Correspondence with Town Manager
Memo from Board of Assessors
Town Clerk's Funding Requests – Codification and Voting Machine
Water/Sewer Commissioners – Updated Budget
Collective Bargaining Adjustments

Respectfully Submitted by: _____

Lee Tarantino, Finance Committee Chair

Sara Lyons, Finance Committee Secretary