

Finance Committee Meeting
September 16, 2013
7:30 PM
Municipal Center – Selectmen's Conference Room

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Present: Chair, Michael Flaherty; Vice-Chair, Peter Carignan; Thomas DeLuca; Stephen Evans; Michael Fiore; Paul Helmreich; William Rotondi; Lee Tarantino; Michael Thomas.
Also present: Town Manager, Michael Yunits.

Absent: Jackie Desrochers; Richard Dorney.

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm.

I. Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Mr. Carignan to approve the September 11, 2013 Finance Committee minutes as written. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: 8 in favor, with Mr. Rotondi abstaining. **Motion carries.**

II. New Business

Town Meeting Warrant Articles:

Ms. Jennifer Carlino, Conservation Commission Agent, addressed the FinCom regarding the Conservation Commission Articles 12 and 13, as follows:

Article 12 – Woodlock Road

Referring to a map handout, Ms. Carlino said that this article is for a "paper street", meaning it is not an actual street, just land that was never developed. The land is off of Freeman Street. She said that the land has both uplands and wetlands.

This article would transfer this land from the Board of Selectmen to the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Helmreich asked if anyone has checked the deeds to see if anyone has rights to this land. Mr. Yunits said that he would check.

Mr. Yunits said that the land is zoned Residential-40.

Article 13 – Land Acquisition – 31.6 Acres Crane Farm

It was noted that landowner Mr. Butch Reilly and his wife, and consultant Mr. Ian Ward were present in support of this article.

This article would authorize the town to purchase the 3 land parcels for \$400K. A handout was provided listing the funding sources as well as a map of the property. Ms. Carlino explained that most of the \$400K cost would be paid for by a grant and a donation. The town would be asked only to pay \$5K.

Ms. Carlino explained that the recording fees (\$2K) and the title examination (\$3K) would be paid for by The Nature Conservancy.

She said that first the donation of \$115K from The Nature Conservancy and the LAND grant for \$259,200 would be received. Next the town would purchase the land, and then it would be donated to The Land Preservation Society.

Mr. Yunits noted that the \$5K that the town would pay would come from Free Cash.

Mr. Helmreich asked why the town would need to donate the land instead of hanging on to it. Ms. Carlino said that the reason for the grant and donation is because of the agreement to donate the land.

The article is written that if the land grant is not received then the project won't move forward.

Article 15 – Watershed Plan

This article would authorize the town to borrow funds to retain services for an overall Watershed Plan.

Mr. Yunits informed the FinCom that an RFQ (Request For Qualifications) has been issued for an engineer to oversee this project.

Mr. Yunits said that the estimate to treat the 4 water bodies in town for the first 5 years is \$500K. He also said that bond counsel has said that the town can go out to bond.

He said that maintenance costs would not be known until the first 5 years has passed.

Mr. Dave Lennon, Water Bodies Committee co-chair, said that each body of water is different and that each will be treated for a season, then monitored, then spot treated, then monitored again. He said that the DCR (Department of Conservation and Recreation), has been treating ponds and lakes for 25+ years.

Mr. Tarantino asked how the costs for each treatment were calculated. Mr. Yunits said that they are based on other ponds and lakes with similar size and plants.

Mr. Yunits said that it may be a couple of weeks until the bids will be in.

Mr. Thomas said that he needs to see the firm numbers before he can vote on this article.

Mr. Lennon said that the anticipated start date would have been early spring or the growing season would be missed and it would have to wait another year.

He said that there is going to be a public informational session on September 24th from 6:30-8:30 in Norton Public Library.

Mr. Lennon also said that he would be happy to take any FinCom members out that were interested in seeing the bodies of water.

Article 21 – Disposition of Abandoned Funds

Mr. Yunits explained that this article would authorize the town to adopt the state statute on abandoned funds which would place the funds into the town's general fund. He said that presently there is \$9K.

Mr. Evans asked if there are any additional costs related with doing this and Mr. Yunits said there are not.

Article 24 – Permanent Building Committee

This article would adopt a new ByLaw that would establish a permanent building committee that would oversee major construction and maintenance projects in town. Mr. Yunits explained that the committee would consist of architects, engineers, lawyers, carpenters, etc. The committee would have a long-range plan and a wish list. The committee would present their requests to the Capital Improvements committee each year.

Mr. Helmreich asked whether the committee would exist even if the members do not meet the requirements regarding the professions and fields of expertise that would be on the committee. Mr. Yunits said that, yes, the committee would still exist, and that the professions listed are what is hoped for.

Mr. Carignan asked if there would be anyone excluded from being allowed to serve on the committee. Mr. Yunits said that he did not think there were any exclusions and noted that each appointment would be a joint appointment by the Select Board and the School Committee.

Mr. Thomas said that he would like to hear the School Committee's thought on the creation of this committee.

Capital Improvements Committee Representative

Mr. Michael Thomas agreed to be the Finance Committee representative for the Capital Improvements Committee for the FY14.

III. Old Business

Town Meeting Warrant Articles:

Article 7 – Electronic Sign

Motion was made by Mr. Tarantino to recommend Article 7 in the amount of \$25K for the purchase of an electric sign for Town Hall. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca.

Mr. DeLuca said that he feels that this is a lot of money to spend on a sign and that he feels that this money could be spent better elsewhere. Mr. Fiore agreed, saying that it would be nice to have but is not needed. Mr. Helmreich and Mr. Thomas also expressed that they do not support this article.

Mr. Kimball said that he somewhat agrees with what FinCom members are saying but that the sign is failing and needs to be replaced.

Vote: All opposed. **Motion FAILS.**

Article 10 – OPEB Contribution

Motion was made by Mr. Carignan to recommend Article 10 in the amount of \$36K for the OPEB contribution. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca.

Mr. Helmreich noted that there is presently \$41K in the account. He said that, since it is looked favorably on when going out to borrow, he would like to see something minimal put in, suggesting \$10K. Mr. Tarantino agreed with the minimal amount.

Mr. Yunits said that since the town will be going out to bond next year for the High School it would be important to show that the town has put something in the OPEB fund.

Mr. Helmreich amended the amount of the article from \$36K to \$10K. Vote on the amendment: 8 members in favor, with Mr. Rotondi opposed. **Motion carries.**

Vote on the new amount: 8 members in favor, with Mr. Rotondi opposed. **Motion carries.**

Article 11 – 40B Legal Fund

Motion was made by Mr. Carignan to recommend Article 11. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca.

Mr. Thomas said that he feels that the town does not do enough for the 40B projects in town and that he does not support this article.

Mr. Kimball said that if the town doesn't use the money for legal fees for 40B projects then the money can be put back into the general fund. He said he thinks that there are a lot of 40B projects in the works and that it would be wise to have the funds available in case they are needed.

Mr. Thomas said that he does not agree with leaving the funds in an article. Instead, the money should be put into the general legal fund and be used as needed. He said the increase in the Legal budget could be explained to the voters and then when the amount decreased (when no longer needed), that would be explained too.

Mr. Yunits said that there is a need for a separate article because the funds would be used for technical as well as legal needs.

Vote: 6 members in favor, with Mr. Thomas, Mr. Evans, and Mr. Flaherty opposed. **Motion carries.**

Article 14 – Land Acquisition – Ch. 61 Daggett-Crandall

Motion was made by Mr. Carignan to recommend Article 14. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca.

Mr. Yunits said that Mr. Keith Silver, Highway Superintendent, is in the process of getting information on fees that other surrounding towns charge for cemetery plots.

Mr. Kimball said that he'd like to see cremations encouraged as they require less land for burials.

Mr. Helmreich said that he supports this because a cemetery needs the right space and the right soil of which this land has both.

Mr. Evans inquired about the Purchase and Sales agreement and Mr. Yunits said that they have until Nov/Dec.

Vote: 8 members in favor, with Mr. Evans opposed. **Motion carries.**

Article 16 – GASB #45

Motion was made by Mr. Carignan to recommend Article 16. Seconded by Mr. Helmreich. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for September 23, 2013 at 7:30 pm.

Adjournment

Motion was made by Mr. Tarantino to adjourn at 9:10 pm. Seconded by Mr. Thomas. Vote: Unanimous. **Motion carries.**

Documents Referenced:

Minutes of September 11, 2013
Conservation maps
Watershed Plan RFC
Draft of Fall Town Meeting Warrant

Respectfully Submitted by:


Michael Flaherty, Finance Committee Chair


Sara Lyons, Finance Committee Secretary

9/23/13
Date Approved