

Finance Committee Meeting
September 17, 2007
7:30 PM
Municipal Center – Selectmen's Conference Room

Present: Chairman, Lee Tarantino; Vice-Chair, Michael Thomas; Pasquale Barletta; Thomas Deluca; Wayne Graf; Town Manager, James Purcell.

Absent: Robert Bouchard; Jackie Desrochers; Paul Helmreich; Philip Zawasky.

Call to Order

Meeting was called to Order at 7:35.

*****Mr. Tarantino said that there was an oversight in the posting of this meeting. Therefore, this is not an official/legal meeting and votes cannot be taken.**

Review of Minutes

Minutes will be reviewed and voted on at the next meeting.

New Business

Jennifer Carlino, from The Conservation Commission, addressed the Finance Committee regarding **Articles 7 & 8** in the Town Meeting Warrant.

Ms. Carlino updated the FinCom on the Norton Reservoir Dredging Project as follows:

- In 2004 the Conservation Commission worked with Baystate Environmental Consultants to prepare the final design for the project, prepare permit applications as well as bid documents. An informal meeting with the Planning Board was held to discuss operations and traffic issues.
- In 2005, the Conservation Commission had a pre-bid meeting with contractors and dredging companies. Ms. Carlino said that none of the bids received met the requirements. After contacting the companies that were at the pre-bid meeting that did not submit a proposal, the Conservation Commission ascertained that proposals were not made for the following reasons: the location and quality of the disposal/processing area; uncertainty in the quality and marketability of the sand and gravel; method of payment for the actual work by sale of the sand and gravel; inefficiency in construction due to mobilization and demobilization during winter months and the long term commitment of a potentially 13-year project.
- In 2006, the Conservation Commission came to the conclusion that they were left with 3 choices: (1) alter the funding approach, (2) reissue the RFP with minor changes, or (3) abandon the project. The Conservation Commission sought the services of 2 consultants for evaluation.
- In May of 2007, the Conservation Commission reviewed the evaluations of the consultants and concluded that the dredging project is not feasible at this time. The consultants found that the concentration of silt is much higher than the initial evaluations had showed. Even with the sale of the sand and gravel, the project would cost between \$23 million and \$30 million. If the town limited the dredging to a smaller portion of the reservoir, the cost would still be \$19 million.

Ms. Carlino stated that the dredging project has been put on hold. The Conservation Commission is investigating the feasibility of addressing the aquatic plant issue, which may alleviate some of the concerns of abutters and meet some of the original project goals.

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Ms. Carlino said that another project, the Winnecunnet Pond project, is also one that addresses an invasive plant issue. This project is further along in feasibility and design than the Reservoir project.

At the Fall Town Meeting, the Conservation Commission will be requesting that \$40K of the remaining \$52K in the Reservoir project fund be transferred into The Winnecunnet Pond project account. The requested funding transfer would allow the Commission to proceed with the final design and permitting for the Winnecunnet Pond project.

Mr. Tarantino asked what the end goal of the dredging project is.

Ms. Carlino said the major goal is to improve wildlife habitat. An additional goal is to improve recreation.

Mr. Tarantino pointed out that the goal of improving recreation only applies to a very limited amount of the population of Norton.

Mr. Graf stated that \$130K has been spent on the dredging project just to find out that it can't be done.

Mr. DeLuca stated that a lot of money has already been spent on study and design, and he questioned how much money would be required to actually do the job of dredging the Reservoir. Ms. Carlino said she wouldn't know an answer to that question until she knows which way the Conservation Commission is going to go with the project.

Mr. Thomas asked what happens if nothing is done about the invasive plant issue. Ms. Carlino said that first the plants continue to grow, which causes sand and gravel to get caught in them. More plants grow on top of that. The area becomes a wet meadow, then a field. This is what happens after many, many years.

Mr. Graf suggested the possibility of transferring all \$52K to the Winnecunnet account and then using the remaining \$12K for the actual "doing" of the project when the time comes.

Ms. Carlino said she would provide the Finance Committee with a total amount that has already been spent on the Winnecunnet project as well as a breakdown of tasks.

Article 6 – Trains

Mr. Purcell said that the Selectmen will be taking a position on Article 6 during their next meeting on Thursday, September 20th.

Mr. Purcell said that when previously the trains had been an issue, the town had money in a train account. It slowly got transferred to Shpack and ALI over the years. It is being requested that \$14K be left in the account for Shpack and ALI, and \$30K be put in a train account.

Article 10 – Acceptance of a Public Way (Burt Farm Estates, Fuller Drive)

On September 13th, the Selectmen stated their intent to layout the public way. Now the discussion goes to other town departments (water/sewer, highway, etc.).

The Planning Board will be meeting on September 25th and will be discussing this article.

Article 11 – Amendment of Town By-laws "Fiscal Town Report"

Mr. Purcell welcomes the public to aid in looking at town by-laws and charters and suggesting changes and/or improvements.

Other Business

Mr. Tarantino stated that on November 3, 2007 is The Association of Town Finance Committees' annual meeting. He said that although he has never attended, he has heard that it is very informative. If anyone on the FinCom would like to attend they should let him know.

Mr. Tarantino notified the FinCom that there are seminars for Financial Professionals available.

Mr. Tarantino notified the FinCom that the Municipal Advocate is available for reading.

Next Meeting

Mr. Purcell, Town Manager, will give a summary of all the Town Warrant Articles.

The FinCom will vote on a transfer of funds.

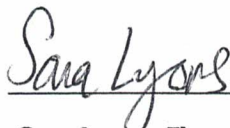
The FinCom will review and vote on Minutes.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 19, 2007 at 7:30pm.

The meeting of Monday, September 24, 2007 will discuss Article 6 (Trains), Article 11 (Town By-Laws), and Article 12 (Storm Drain System). Duane Knapp from the Water/Sewer Department will be present.

The meeting concluded at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by:



Sara Lyons, Finance Committee Secretary