

**Finance Committee Meeting
September 19, 2007
7:30 PM
Municipal Center – Selectmen's Conference Room**

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NORTON TOWN CLERK

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

Absent: Robert Bouchard; Jackie Desrochers; Philip Zawasky.

Call to Order

Meeting was called to Order at 7:35.

I. Approval of Minutes

A. Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to approve the September 10, 2007 Finance Committee minutes as written. Second by Mr. Thomas. Vote: Unanimous. **Motion carries.**

B. Mr. Graf, when reviewing the September 17, 2007 minutes pointed out a typing error regarding an amount of money that was being requested for transfer by the Conservation Commission.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to approve the September 17, 2007 Finance Committee minutes with the discussed amendment. Second by Mr. Barletta. Vote: All in favor, with Mr. Helmreich abstaining. **Motion carries.**

II. Old Business

Mr. Purcell gave a review/summary of the Town Meeting Articles as follows:

Article 1 – Unpaid bills – This article addresses 4 unpaid bills equaling \$2,159.06. \$50.00 would pay employee longevity; \$20.95 would pay a bill to an auto supply store for the Fire Dept.; \$1,926.11 would pay a sewer bill to the city of Taunton (Winnecunnet area homes are pumped into Taunton per an agreement with the city); and \$162.00 would pay for flags for the Memorial Day ceremony.

Article 2 – Capital Improvements – The Fire Department is requesting an air compressor to fill air packs, which costs \$30K. The Fire Department is also making a request to replace the Fire Chief's car, which will not pass inspection. The highway department has made a request for a brush hog, which is a \$110K item. This would not be a cash purchase, but possibly a lease purchase.

Article 3 – (Total approx. \$5K) – The break up is as follows: \$100.00 to a longevity payment in the Assessor's Office; \$3,378.00 to the paying of 2 temps to cover 2 medical leaves in the Clerk's Office; \$100.00 to a longevity payment in the Clerk's Office; \$406.00 to phone expense for the Council on Aging; also an undecided amount to fill 2 vacant positions in the Communications Dept. Mr. Purcell said that it is not safe to have only 1 person on for certain shifts, particularly during a crisis situation. He said that there are certain shifts that need one person on the phone and one person dispatching. Mr. Purcell said that he would address this again next week. There are also 2 requests for budget transfers: one request is from the Emergency Management Dept. to transfer \$2000.00 from Expense to Wages; and another request from the Tree Warden to transfer \$2000.00 from Expense to Wages.

Article 9 – Maple St. – The surveyor has finished his work on this project. South Shore Mill Works is proposing a driveway out on to John Scott Blvd. to prevent trucks from going through the residential areas. The highway dept. hasn't any issues with this – the only issue is involving

a fire hydrant and there would have to be a permanent easement issued for emergency situations. Also, the Conservation Commission will want to address storm water drains. Mr. Purcell said that South Shore Mill Works is also requesting permission to erect some form of barrier. It would need to be a removable gate, for fire dept. access. Mr. Purcell stated that there is a long list of legal documents that need to be submitted by the attorney for South Shore Mill Works, and the town hasn't seen any of them as of yet. Mr. Purcell feels that this Article will not be ready for the Town Meeting on October 15th.

Article 10 – Fuller Drive – Mr. Purcell provided the FinCom with a handout detailing the sequence of events/actions that need to take place in order for a road to be accepted as a public way.

Article 12 – Mr. Tarantino expressed concerns about whether or not this Article will be ready in time for the Oct. 15th meeting. He said that the FinCom should review the article before anyone from the Highway Dept. comes in to discuss it so that the FinCom will have prepared questions.

Mr. Purcell said that since this article is so complex it might take a couple of town meetings for it to go to a vote. He said that at the FinCom meeting on September 26th, he would explain why the town is considering this article. This article is part of the mandated CWRMP.

III. New Business

A. A transfer of \$7,735.00 was requested by the Town Clerk's office to pay for the cost of the Special Election held on September 18, 2007. **Motion** was made by Mr. Helmreich to transfer the requested amount from the Reserve Account to the Elections Account (#01-162-570). Second by Mr. Thomas. Vote: Unanimous. **Motion carries.**

B. Mr. Helmreich asked Mr. Purcell to comment on the financial impact of the Debt Exclusion vote not passing. Mr. Purcell stressed that the town's Free Cash will be extremely low because of the result of the vote. Mr. Purcell explained that "Free Cash" is what remains from a town's operations of the fiscal year just closed. This is a result of more revenue than what had been projected and how much less the town spends than projected. The town submits this balance to the state and it is labeled "Free Cash". Free Cash is available for appropriation. Mr. Purcell said that a town should be directing it into Capital and Stabilization accounts. The past two years Norton has been using Free Cash in the Operating budget. For FY'09, the money will just not be available. Mr. Purcell stated that the margins are getting thinner.

C. Mr. Purcell stated that Norton's bond rating has been good and was for yesterday's bond sale. He does not believe that the town will be able to hold that rating. Because the Debt Exclusion vote did not pass, the town will probably have to borrow \$1M over 20 years. This will involve interest payments of approx. \$440, 000. Mr. Purcell said that if the Debt Exclusion passed, the town instead would be paying interest payments of only approx. \$60,000 over 3 years. Mr. Purcell stated that the difference between \$440K and \$60K is the added strain on the town's budget.

Next Meeting

Mr. Tarantino would like to discuss the possibility of having a workshop for the FinCom sometime between now and January (before budget season), to talk about topics such as what makes up the budget, what certain terms mean, etc. His goal is to get everyone on the "same page" when discussing the issues.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 24, 2007 at 7:30pm.

At this meeting will be Mr. Knapp from the Water Dept.; also Mr. Purcell will further discuss Article 6 (trains) to hopefully raise public awareness on the issue.

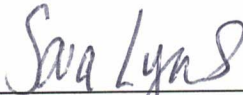
Article 12 (storm drains) may also be discussed.

Also, Mr. Purcell mentioned possibly discussing the need for increased staffing in the Communications Dept.

Adjournment

Motion was made by Mr. DeLuca to adjourn at 8:55pm. Second by Mr. Barletta. Vote: Unanimous. **Motion carries.**

Respectfully Submitted by:



Sara Lyons, Finance Committee Secretary