

Finance Committee Meeting
April 20, 2011
7:30 PM
Municipal Center – Selectmen’s Conference Room

Present: Chair, Thomas DeLuca; Vice-Chair, Paul Helmreich; Robert Camp; Jackie Desrochers; Michael Flaherty; Brett Franklin; William Rotondi; Lee Tarantino; Wayne Graf.
Also present: Town Manager, Michael Yunits.

Absent: Michael Thomas.

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm.

I. Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Mr. Tarantino to approve the April 13, 2011 Finance Committee minutes as written. Seconded by Mr. Camp. Vote: All in favor, with Mr. Graf abstaining. **Motion carries.**

II. New Business

Sewer Budget – Account #440

Mr. Duane Knapp, Water/Sewer Superintendent, addressed the FinCom regarding the Charges and Expenditures portion of the FY12 proposed budget. He explained that \$75K of the \$80K Engineering line item would go towards the engineering for the Sewer Study, and that the remaining \$5K would be used for other engineering projects throughout the year.

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to recommend account #440-570 (Sewer Department – Charges and Expenditures) in the amount of \$717,195. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

School Department Impact Statement – Account #300

Dr. Ansay provided a handout that outlined what the impact would be on the schools if the FY12 budget were to be level-funded. She said that the biggest impact would be that 11 teachers would lose their jobs. In addition, 3.5 paraprofessionals would lose their jobs, and general supplies and educational materials would be severely cut. Dr. Ansay pointed out that the budget reflects step increase obligations, and she also noted that it is a contract bargaining year. She included a handout that illustrates the on-going decrease in regular education funding, and pointed out that special educational funding consistently increases year after year because of state regulations.

There was a discussion on whether the total budget has been split 70/30 as has been the policy in the past. Mr. Yunits pointed out that all fixed and shared expenses are taken out first and then the remainder is split 70/30.

The FinCom discussed how to decrease the School Department’s proposed budget (of \$22,362,218) to get it closer to level-funded and it was concluded that if there weren’t any salary increases the budget would be cut by \$540,587, which would leave a delta of approximately \$202K.

Mr. Deniz Savas, School Committee member, provided the FinCom with a handout that listed expenditures-per-pupil for 7 area schools including Norton. It was noted that while Norton has one of the lowest number of students enrolled, it has by far the highest insurance and retirement costs. It was also pointed out that, of the 7 schools, Norton has the lowest expenditure-per-pupil. Mr. Savas stressed the importance of investing in the schools. Dr. Ansay noted that the School Department does not negotiate health benefits.

After the School Committee exited the meeting, the FinCom further discussed possible ways of funding the School budget. The remaining \$20K in Free Cash and the \$158K in Free Cash reserved for Snow Removal were discussed as possible ways to get the School budget closer to the requested amount. Mr. Tarantino expressed that he is strongly against using the Snow Removal funds for the schools. Mr. Franklin said that he does not

agree with using a 'one-time fix' for funding the schools. He said that maybe teacher layoffs may be necessary. Mr. Rotondi disagreed, saying that if using the Snow Removal funds is the only way to keep from laying off teachers then it should be used to do so. Mr. Helmreich pointed out that the town side of the budget does not call for layoffs, but year after year the School Department's budget does, and that he would support using the Snow Removal funds, though reluctantly. Mr. Tarantino pointed out that if the Unemployment Compensation budget of \$180K includes anticipated School layoffs, then if there weren't layoffs that number would be lower.

Mr. Yunits stated that in reviewing the proposed FY12 budgets, the FinCom has cut the total by \$49,450. He said if this amount was added to the Schools budget, along with \$100K from Unemployment Comp., then it would bring the School Department budget to \$22,511,668. This would not include any funds from Free Cash or the Snow Removal Free Cash.

Mr. Camp stated that he is still very concerned about the insurance costs referred to by Mr. Savas. Mr. Tarantino said that he thinks that Mr. Savas would be happy to address the FinCom via letter to speak further about the figures he presented.

Motion was made by Mr. Tarantino to recommend account #300 (School Department) in the amount of \$22,511,668. Seconded by Mr. Rotondi. Vote: All in favor, with Mr. Camp opposed. **Motion carries.**

Unemployment Compensation – Account #911

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to recommend account # 911 (Unemployment Compensation) in the amount of \$80,000. Seconded by Mr. Rotondi. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

III. Old Business

Highway Department – Account #420

Mr. Silver, Highway Superintendent, submitted a letter to the FinCom, explaining costs that were included in his FY12 proposed budget. He said that both Equipment Rental and Trash Removal are for emergency situations. Mr. Tarantino noted that neither has been expended in the past few years.

Motion was made by Mr. Tarantino to recommend account # 420-570 (Highway – Charges and Expenditures) in the amount of \$91,900. Seconded by Mr. Rotondi. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Veteran's Agent – Account #543

Mr. Yunits explained that the Dues and Membership line has been reduced to \$50. He also reported that Norton pays 45% of expenses and health insurance for the Veteran's Agent that is shared with Easton.

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to recommend account # 543-570 (Veteran's Agent – Charges and Expenditures) in the amount of \$38,250. Seconded by Mr. Camp. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Inspection – Account #241

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to recommend account # 241-510 (Inspection – Personal Service) in the amount of \$142,160. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Motion was made by Mr. Tarantino to recommend account # 241-570 (Inspection – Charges and Expenditures) in the amount of \$9,150. Seconded by Mr. Rotondi. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Library – Account #610

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to recommend account # 610 (Library) in the amount of \$311,000. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor, with Mr. Camp opposed. **Motion carries.**

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for April 25, 2011 at 7:30pm.

Adjournment

Motion was made by Mr. Tarantino to adjourn at 9:35 pm. Seconded by Mr. Camp. Vote: Unanimous.
Motion carries.

Documents Referenced:

Dr. Ansay's handout on the impact of level-funding
Mr. Savas' handout of pupil costs
Mr. Silver's letter regarding Highway budget requests
Minutes of April 13, 2011

Respectfully Submitted by:

Tom DeLuca, Finance Committee Chair

Sara Lyons, Finance Committee Secretary