

Finance Committee Meeting
May 6, 2013
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; Michael Thomas.
Also present: Town Manager, Michael Yunits.

Absent: William Rotondi.

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm.

I. Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Mr. Flaherty to approve the May 1, 2013 Finance Committee minutes as written. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: 6 in favor, with Mr. Evans and Ms. Desrochers abstaining. **Motion carries.**

II. New Business

Total Budget:

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to recommend the total budget for operational expenses for FY14 in the amount of \$49,435,189. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Other Announcements/Notes:

- Mr. Helmreich recognized the passing of Jim Pastra-Landis, a former Finance Committee member who served from 1962-78. Mr. Helmreich said he was a remarkable man who served the town of Norton in many capacities.
- Mr. Evans requested that the FinCom members receive monthly balances of accounts from the town accountant when he sends the monthly report.

III. Old Business

• **Schools #300:**

Dr. Martes, Interim Superintendent, returned to the FinCom to further discuss the Schools budget. He informed the FinCom that a few more retirements are expected than previously thought, reducing Salaries by about \$200K. He noted that the original request for Personal Service was \$1.56M. Now, because of the retirements, as well as reductions in Special Ed transportation and Sequestration, the lower request is \$400K less at \$1.16M.

The total Schools budget request for FY14 is \$24,167,620. It was noted that the present recommendation from the Town Manager is \$23,661,867, which is about \$500K less than this new number.

Dr. Martes said that if the Town Manager’s recommended budget is the one that is voted then the result would possibly be a hiring freeze and vacancies wouldn’t be filled.

He said that the goal is level-service and when that doesn’t happen, parents get scared and start considering moving to the Charter School which is costing the town a lot of money. He said the town needs to keep level-service if it wants to keep students in the Norton Public Schools system.

Dr. Martes reminded the FinCom of all the recent awards received by the schools in town. He also said that these great stories need to be shared because they will generate interest in the schools which will keep students in town.

Dr. Martes requested that in the future, that the budget process with the schools be started earlier in the year.

Mr. Tarantino expressed his support and gratitude for the team of people that the schools have. He said that he feels very confident in the staff and the job they're doing.

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to recommend \$23,661,867 for the School budget (account #300). Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: All in favor, with Ms. Desrochers abstaining. **Motion carries.**

- **Library #610:**

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to reconsider the Library budget (account #610). Seconded by Mr. Thomas. Vote: 7 in favor, with Mr. DeLuca and Mr. Flaherty opposed. **Motion carries.**

Mr. Helmreich noted that the revised request from the Library is \$361,274. He said that he'd like to see the un-appropriated amount of \$7,251 go to the Library which would bring them closer to their request. It is currently voted at \$345K.

Mr. Thomas said that he would rather wait until the October town meeting and see what funds are available at that time. Mr. Tarantino said that he would like to leave the amount voted as is because there are some unknowns with the budgets being released from the state.

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to amend the Library budget by adding the \$7,251 for a total of \$352,251. Seconded by Mr. Dorney. Vote: In favor – Mr. Helmreich, Mr. Evans, and Mr. Dorney; 6 other members opposed. **Motion FAILS.**

- **Veterans #543:**

Motion was made by Mr. DeLuca to reconsider the Veterans budget (account #543). Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Mr. Yunits informed the FinCom that the Board of Selectmen has voted to withdraw from the Veteran's District after Mansfield and Easton have both done so.

Mr. DeLuca asked if it was possible to get the new VSO hired and working before June, so that he/she and the current VSO could overlap for training. He also said that there are 2 conferences/training sessions in June that would be helpful for the incoming VSO.

Mr. Yunits said that the salary range for the VSO position would be \$45K-\$50K.

Mr. Helmreich said that he would feel more comfortable voting a \$50K salary to be safe, as well as \$7K for expenditures.

Motion was made by Mr. DeLuca to amend Veterans budget #543-510 (Personal Service) to \$50K and #543-570 (Charges and Expenditures) to \$7K. Including \$215K for Veteran's benefits, the new total would be \$272,000. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

- **Annual Town Meeting Articles:**

Article 5 – MFN Wastewater District –

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to recommend "no action pending further information". Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 14 – FY14 Capital Plan –

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to reconsider Article 14. Seconded by Mr. Helmreich. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Mr. Helmreich said that he would like to use Capital funds for the high school construction project, as discussed in an earlier meeting. Mr. Helmreich reiterated that this \$93K was not in addition to what has

already been voted, and that \$600K had already been authorized for borrowing by Town Meeting and only \$507K had been used.

Mr. DeLuca asked whether this needed to be voted upon by the Capital Improvements Committee. Mr. Yunits said that they would be meeting on Monday night, before Town Meeting and would address it then.

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to add \$93,197.74 to the existing Capital amount for the School Building Committee to use for the High School renovation project. Seconded by Mr. Thomas. Vote: 8 members in favor, with Mr. Evans abstaining. **Motion carries.**

- **Special Town Meeting Articles:**

Article 4 – FY13 Water Budget Supplements -

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to recommend “no action” on Article 4. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 5 – FY13 Sewer Budget Supplements -

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to recommend “no action” on Article 5. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 12 – Daggett-Crandall First Refusal –

Mr. Yunits informed the FinCom that the appraised value of the land came in at \$336K. He explained that this article would allow the town to purchase the land for a future cemetery. He recommended that the purchase be made through borrowing.

Mr. Helmreich pointed out that the Board of Selectmen have yet to vote on this article and he would feel more comfortable waiting on taking a vote until after the Selectmen have voted.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to recommend “no action pending further information”. Seconded by Mr. Helmreich. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 14 and Article 15 – Affordable Housing –

Mr. Kimball returned to inform the FinCom that he has re-submitted the articles to town council and has a new draft of the 2 articles. He noted that Article 14, Section 2 and Article 15, Section 5 have been deleted and replaced with the following:

“This act shall be applicable to all low or moderate income housing approved under G.L. c.40B and no comprehensive permit (as originally issued or as later modified) shall be in existence or extended for more than ten years from the date on issuance of the original permit (from the date that it was filed with the municipal clerk’s office) or the date upon which the permit took final effect upon termination of litigation affirming the original permit, whichever date occurs later.”

Mr. Thomas said that he appreciates all the work that has been put into these articles but he just can’t support these articles on principle. He is very much in support of the town providing opportunities of affordable housing.

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to reconsider Article 14. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to recommend "no action" on Article 14. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: 8 in favor and Mr. Thomas opposed. **Motion carries.**

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to reconsider Article 15. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to recommend "no action" on Article 15. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: 8 in favor and Mr. Thomas opposed. **Motion carries.**

A straw vote was then taken on the amendments provided by Mr. Kimball at tonight's meeting.
Article 14 – 7 members in favor, and Mr. Thomas and Mr. Carignan opposed.
Article 15 – 8 members in favor, and Mr. Thomas opposed.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for May 13, 2013 at 6:00 pm, prior to Town Meeting.

Adjournment

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to adjourn at 8:55 pm. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: Unanimous. **Motion carries.**

Documents Referenced: Minutes of May 1, 2013
Schools budget #300
Library budget #610
Special Town Meeting warrant
Annual town Meeting warrant

Respectfully Submitted by:

Lee Tarantino, Finance Committee Chair

Date Approved

Sara Lyons, Finance Committee Secretary