

Finance Committee Meeting
April 23, 2014
7:00 PM
Municipal Center – Selectmen's Conference Room

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NORTON TOWN CLERK
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Present: Chair, Michael Flaherty; Vice-Chair, Peter Carignan; Thomas DeLuca; Richard Dorney; Stephen Evans; Michael Fiore; Paul Helmreich; William Rotondi; Michael Thomas.
Also present: Town Manager, Michael Yunits.

Absent: Jackie Desrochers; Lee Tarantino.

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Annual Town Meeting Article 18 – Zoning ByLaw

Mr. Charles Gabriel, Town Planner, addressed the Finance Committee regarding the article. He explained that this proposed amendment to the bylaw would regulate solar facilities and installations. Presently the town does not have any way to regulate this. Mr. Gabriel said that solar installations would be allowed in Commercial, Industrial, and Residential 80 and 60. It would not be allowed in Residential 40 or Village-Commercial. He said that Planning Board has discussed and agreed on this.

Mr. Gabriel explained that solar panels on roofs would be exempt. He said the new bylaw would regulate large-scale, ground-mounted, 250 kilowatts units. All requests would have to go through site-plan approval.

Mr. Gabriel stated that town counsel has been consulted and that they suggest requiring permit in residential districts. He also said that each request would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Concern was expressed over what the implications would be of someone abandoning a project. Mr. Gabriel explained that the bylaw states that if a solar project has not been used in 1 year, then it needs to be removed by the owner within 150 days. He said that, as part of the initial approval, surety by bond for the cost of removal is required.

Mr. Thomas suggested taking a percentage of the owner's yearly revenue as surety. Mr. Gabriel said this could be a possibility.

Mr. Helmreich said that he still sees some problems with the proposed bylaw and that he feels he hasn't looked thoroughly enough at the bylaw in it's entirety, but he feels that there is a definite need for a bylaw to regulate solar usage, as it is growing.

FY15 Proposed School Department Budget #300

Mr. Yunits stated that the FY15 Town Manager recommended amount is \$24,062,584. He said this still leaves \$300K in Free Cash.

Motion was made by Mr. Carignan to recommend \$18,257,000 for account #300-510. Seconded by Mr. Helmreich.

Discussion: Mr. Yunits said that he spoke with Superintendent Baeta today and that with this budget, he is anticipating 9.3 lay-offs. He said that the brunt of this would be felt outside of the classroom.

Mr. Helmreich noted that Unemployment costs will go up as a result of lay-offs. He said that he is prepared to use the \$300K Free Cash to fund the Technology Director or free Full-Day Kindergarten but that he understands that the \$300K will still not be enough. He also said that he feels that it's important to get free full-day kindergarten in order to avoid losing students to the Charter School. He noted that this year's tuition is \$1.9M.

Mr. Savas, School Committee Chair, said that the free full-day kindergarten and Technology Director position is no longer being considered as part of the budget for FY15.

Mr. Evans said that the Free Cash trend over the years has been around \$900K and that he feels that it would be safe to use \$200K for the School budget.

Mr. DeLuca said that he feels that the town has been fortunate to have Free Cash the past few years but there have been recent years without any and that it is fiscally irresponsible for the town to use non-recurring funds to fund a consistent line item.

Mr. Yunits said that he doesn't think that the Charter School enrollment is that big of a concern as there were only 5 kindergarten students that enrolled this year. Mr. Savas noted that this is 5 kids for the next possible 13 years. Mr. DeLuca said that it would cost the town the same \$1.9M to keep the Charter School students in Norton Schools.

Mr. Fiore stated thjat anything short of a general override is a short-term fix.

Motion was made by Mr. Evans to amend the motion to the amount of \$18,457,000. Seconded by Mr. Helmreich. Vote on the amendment: Mr. Dorney, Mr. Rotondi, Mr. Evans, and Mr. Helmreich in favor, and Mr. Flaherty, Mr. Carignan, Mr. DeLuca, Mr. Thomas, and Mr. Fiore opposed. **Amendment FAILS.**

Vote on the original amount of \$18,257,000: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Motion was made by Mr. Carignan to recommend 45,305,584 for account #300-570. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

8:05 – **Motion** was made by Mr. Carignan to recess the open meeting. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

PUBLIC HEARING

8:05 - **Motion** was made by Mr. Carignan to open the Public Hearing. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Mr. Flaherty, Chair, stated that there is a \$343,559 increase to the General Town Budget for FY15, and a \$400,417 increase to the School Department Budget for FY15. The total proposed budget for FY15 is \$51,106,147. He noted that there was only a \$132,328 increase in Local Aid and about a \$1M increase on the base tax levy. Mr. Flaherty stated that, without a general override, the town's fiscal future will continue to look like this.

Mr. Deniz Savas, School Committee Chair, noted that the Town side of the budget is increasing by 3% but the School side is increasing by only 1.6%. He asked for the reason. It was pointed out that the 70-30 split (Schools-Town) was still intact for FY15 and that the difference in percentage increase is reflective of the size of each of the 2 budgets. It was also pointed out that about \$51M of the total budget is Fixed and Shared and is excluded from the 70-30 split. Mr. Yunits detailed what line items are included in Fixed and Shared.

Mr. Carignan noted that with the 70-30 split, the town is spending more than twice as much on Schools as it is on all other town departments combined.

8:30 - **Motion** was made by Mr. Carignan to adjourn the Public Hearing. Seconded by Mr. Thomas. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

RETURN TO OPEN MEETING

8:30 - **Motion** was made by Mr. Carignan to re-open the open meeting. Seconded by Mr. Thomas. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles:

Article 18 – Solar ByLaw –

Motion was made by Mr. Carignan to recommend Article 18 as written. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 3 – Separation Expenses –

Motion was made by Mr. Carignan to recommend "No Action" on Article 3. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 4 – Collective Bargaining –

Mr. Yunits informed the FinCom that this contract for ASME Clerical would allow for employees to have direct deposit as well as a 1%-2%-2% increase over the 3 years of the contract. The total cost is \$3,600.

Motion was made by Mr. Carignan to recommend Article 4 in the amount of \$3,600. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: 7 in favor and Mr. Evans and Mr. Rotondi opposed. **Motion carries.**

Article 17 – Operating Budget –

Motion was made by Mr. Carignan to recommend Article 17 in the amount of \$50,778,626. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Discussion: A discussion was had on the discrepancy between this amount and the \$51,106,147 that is listed on the FY15 Estimated Operating Revenue and Expenditures. FinCom members and Mr. Yunits did some examination of the numbers and continued to find a discrepancy. It was decided to do some further investigating before moving forward.

Mr. Carignan withdrew the motion.

Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles:

Mr. Yunits said that he anticipates that the Water/Sewer Department will withdraw Articles 4 and 5 from the warrant.

Article 4 – Water Budget Supplements –

Motion was made by Mr. Carignan to recommend "No Action" on Article 4. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Article 5 – Sewer Budget Supplements –

Motion was made by Mr. Carignan to recommend "No Action" on Article 5. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Approval of Minutes:

Motion was made by Mr. Carignan to approve the April 16, 2014 Finance Committee minutes as amended. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: All in favor, with Mr. Rotondi and Mr. Thomas abstaining. **Motion carries.**

Mr. Evans requested that the revenue balances be made available to the FinCom members on a monthly basis. Mr. Flaherty said that he would forward the request along to Mr. Yunits.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for April 30, 2014 at 7:00 pm. Dr. Baeta and School Committee members will be in attendance to discuss implications of the budget for FY15.

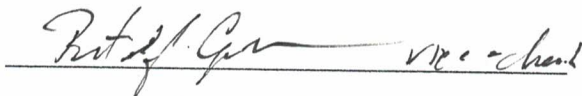
Adjournment

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to adjourn at 8:50 pm. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: Unanimous. **Motion carries.**

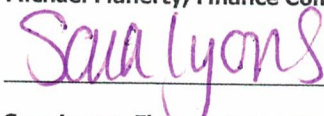
Documents Referenced:

Minutes of April 16, 2014
Annual town Meeting Warrant draft
Special Town Meeting Warrant draft
Budget #300 - Schools

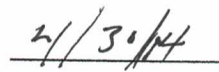
Respectfully Submitted by:



Michael Flaherty, Finance Committee Chair



Sara Lyons, Finance Committee Secretary



Date Approved