

Westhampton Finance Committee Meeting Minutes  
February 2, 2016

Meeting opened at 7:00 pm

Present: Ellice Gonzalez Brandow (Chair), Jackie Brodeur, Mary Cleary, Thomas Cleary, Aniko Giordano, Joe Pipczynski, Chevy Seney, Celeste Whiting, and Ed Zawacki.

Also Present: Patty Cotton (Town Clerk and Treasurer), David White (Police Chief), Christopher Norris (Fire Chief), and Steve Gagne.

Motion to accept minutes of January 19, 2016, approved 9-0

Review of Correspondence: Ellice shared an invitation to review the Hampshire Council of Governments Annual Report.

New Business

Patty Cotton reviewed key points in the FY17 Treasurer's Budget proposal. Those points were:

- \*The pricing for new office software was unavailable from a new company, so Expenses are estimated.
- \*The Group Insurance line item will have more solid numbers later in February.
- \*Hampshire County Retirement numbers are provided by the retirement board.
- \*Delivery date for the new fire truck could impact FY17, if delivery is taken before 6/30/16.

Patty also reviewed key points in the FY17 Town Clerk Budget proposal.

- \*Elections line item is higher to cover polling in two elections this year; poll workers, postage, and state mandated pre-election training.
- \*Postage costs are higher in the past two years due to unreturned census forms and the need to send multiple copies to many residents.
- \*Preservation is not funded in FY17 budget in hopes of partnering with the Historical Commission. Currently, the Historical Committee has postponed discussion of preservation to a later date. There was brief discussion about whether painting the town hall could be considered preservation along with the preservation of documents. Perhaps this should be discussed in the future with the Select Board.
- \*Employees would like to receive a cost of living increase, especially if teachers are able to negotiate an increase. Patty wanted the committee to be aware of "a feeling that's out there."

David White reviewed key points and fielded questions about the Police Department FY17 Budget proposal.

- \*David discussed the mandate for training which more than doubled the line item for Dues/Training. He would like to try to split the cost of an instructor with Huntington.
- \*David also clarified how grants and awards have helped the department purchase radios, body cameras, and in-car computers. Awards have also improved communication between police and fire responders.
- \*David also submitted paperwork for the transfer of funds to pay for the repair of the repeater at Harvest Valley which was struck by lightning. David has made the Select Board aware of the need to transfer funds for this repair. The vendor for this repair would be Gordon Newell sp? (See later discussion.)
- \*In response to Tom Cleary's question about "how the police budget would look if level funded", David ultimately said that the department would still have to comply with the mandated training standards. Level funding would, therefore, mean reduced patrol hours.
- \*David also explained the value of the hours (~8-10 hrs/wk?) spent at the local schools by the School Resource Officer. He expressed his hope that the cost for the Resource Officer would be included in the HRHS budget in FY17. Ellice suggested that the Finance Committee could help support the Police Department's desire to retain the Resource Officer position when we attend the budget meeting at the high school next week. David felt that it was "worth a try."
- \*Upcoming expenditures in FY18 will probably be related to Accreditation and work on standardizing policies.

Chris Norris reviewed key points and fielded questions about the Fire Department and EMS FY17 Budget proposals. He also reviewed the Public Safety Department FY17 Budget proposal.

Before Chris began, the committee expressed its desire that the Fire Department and EMS budgets remain separate in order to determine the impact of the ambulance costs on the EMS budget. Joe Pipczynski used the Vehicle Repair/Maintenance line item as an example of how combining the budgets render the impact of the ambulance ambiguous. Chris ultimately explained that Fire and EMS function together, in fact, and that separating the budgets does not acknowledge the cooperative nature of the departments. The committee felt that the Town would have to vote to merge the two line items. Joe Boudreau may be able to provide guidance.

- \*Chris explained the need for EMS continuing education and training. He itemized the cost of Epipens and other EMS supplies. Aniko Giordano questioned the apparently high cost of Epipens. Chris offered to share his invoice.
- \*Chris fielded questions regarding the ALS Intercept Fees. The committee wondered if any unused estimated fees were returned to off-set the budget. Chris explained that

“non-used ALS intercept fees” went into an “untouchable” account that can only be allocated at Town Meeting. The unused fees do not “fold back” into EMS automatically.

\*Chris explained how having an ambulance in town really saves on the “retainer fee” that other towns of comparable size pay to have ambulance service. He used Leveret and Pelham as examples.

\*As Chris was reviewing the Public Safety Facility Budget, Ellice asked about the cost of oil. The committee will ask David Blakesly and/or Cheryl Provost about how the Town contracts for oil each year.

\*There was brief discussion of the Feasibility Study for a possible Public Safety Complex as a future expenditure. It will not be an expense in FY17.

After the departmental presentations were completed, the committee took up the Police Department request for a transfer of \$1000 to repair the repeater that had been struck by lightning. Joe P. wondered if Town insurance would cover this damage. Mary Cleary suggested that the committee ask David White or Cheryl Provost. A vote was taken to transfer the funds. The vote was 9-0-0 in favor.

Final business of the evening was to reorganize the work load of the Finance Committee as Ellice will be stepping down, at least temporarily, as chair. Tom Cleary agreed to step in as Chair. Chevy Seney will take the role of secretary. Jackie Brodeur will keep the keys to Town Hall.

There were a few tasks that will be completed:

Ed Zawacki will ask Cheryl Provost about how the Town bids fuel oil. He will also inquire about the possibility of insurance covering the repair of the repeater.

Who was going to ask Joe about the unused ALS Interceptor fees and how they can be allocated?

The Meeting adjourned at 9:35.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Chevy Seney