

Finance Committee

Meeting minutes – February 25, 2010

Present: **Committee Members:** Chris DeSimone (Chair), Alan Leao Jr., Michael Landino, Holly Seiferth, Melissa Tzanoudakis, George Zacharakis

Absent: Chris Johnson (Vice Chair)

Guests: John Moak (Town Administrator)

Also present: Thomas Wilson (Town Accountant)

Chris DeSimone called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

Business: Chris DeSimone started the meeting with old business budgets. Chris DeSimone noted that in the Assessors budget, the Wages, Hourly (100-14100-51113) which is for the clerk position. The Wages, Hourly budget is \$13,360.00 less than the original budget. The original budget had 34 hours for the clerk, but until the selectmen approve the increase, they can only budget 19 ½ hours. Michael Landino noted that Assessors, Sundries (100-14100-54425) could have a reduction of \$100. Chris DeSimone pointed out the department agreed with the reduction to Assessors, Sundries.

Melissa Tzanoudakis questioned what the consulting fees for town counsels were for; could they get a list of the cases. John Moak replied that there were two town counsels – the labor attorney and the general town counsel. Melissa Tzanoudakis noted that in 2008, the Law Department, Consulting Services (100-15100-52307) had only spent \$5,949.00. There was a discussion about Law Department, Consulting Service actual being \$17,108.00 for a lot of searches, but no successful hiring. Melissa Tzanoudakis noted that the actual spent had tripled in 2009, and more than tripled for the 2010 budget. John Moak noted that he would verify the previous and current year budgets.

Chris DeSimone moved the meeting for an update on the Street Lighting department. Thomas Wilson noted the handout that lists information he pulled together such as National Grid rental costs is 60% of the electricity costs. In order to have any savings, the lights would have to be permanently shut off. The cost for shutting off is \$50.00 per pole. It would take several years to see any savings. The first 10 months or so would not be any savings depending on the light. The town would save approximately \$5.00 per month after the first year. On a motion from George Zacharakis, seconded by Melissa Tzanoudakis, to leave the street lighting (100-42400-52213) as funded was put into motion to be recommended to be discussed and voted on. There was no additional discussion and it was approved by a vote 5(Aye)-0(No) and 0 abstained.

Chris DeSimone moved the meeting for an update on the Town Clerk department. Thomas Wilson noted that there was an extra week for the current Town Clerk. Alan Leao Jr. questioned if the current Town Clerk (Lois Libby) had anyone to help her out during her first week as Town Clerk. Chris DeSimone noted that Lois Libby wanted to help out briefly during the transfer period. John Moak commented that the law allows for overlaps. Chris DeSimone noted that he would convey to Lois Libby that the Finance Committee supports her staying for the extra week.

Holly Seiferth arrived at the meeting at 7:15 pm.

Chris DeSimone moved the meeting to discuss the Gas Inspector department. Alan Leao Jr. commented that the Conference Registration (100-24200-57714) for \$300.00 was for professional associations. John Moak noted that the Gas Inspector had to attend a certain number of conferences in a year to keep up with their certifications. Alan Leao Jr. noted that the Plumbing Inspector had attended two conferences in 2010 and spent \$100.00 (100-24300-57714). Alan Leao Jr. noted that the Wiring Inspector had not attended any conferences yet in 2010 (100-24500-57714). Thomas Wilson added that the Wiring Inspector has conferences budgeted for 2011. Alan Leao Jr. wondered why the Wiring Inspector had added the new conference budget for 2011.

New Business: Chris DeSimone moved the meeting to discuss the Police department. Chris DeSimone questioned why there was an increase in Wages, Hourly (100-21100-51113) if there was a freeze. Chris DeSimone wondered why there was a decrease in the Educational Incentive (100-21100-51141). John Moak replied that both of these line items were the Chief's wages and education, noting that the Longevity line item was the Chief's also.

Chris DeSimone questioned if the Uniform Allowance (100-21100-51192) could be decreased at all. George Zacharakis asked if the Uniform Allowance was part of the union contract. John Moak replied that the Uniform Allowance was part of the union contract.

Chris DeSimone questioned if the Town Water (100-21100-52231) and Town Sewer (100-21100-52232) was a shared expense. Michael Landino pointed out that the Electricity-Building (100-21100-52211) had an increase of \$7,000.00. Chris DeSimone commented that the Police department had tried to cut Electricity-Building budget for 2010, adding that the 2010 YTD actual should be looked at. George Zacharakis added that the natural Gas-Heating (100-21100-52215) 2010 YTD was low compared to what was budgeted. Chris DeSimone concluded that it was worth asking about both line items. Michael Landino pointed out the Town Hall budget for electricity is \$8,000.00 and the Police budget is \$23,000.00. Michael Landino continued with noting if the Police building is that much less efficient than other buildings, could something be done.

Chris DeSimone questioned if either the R&M – Building & Grounds (100-21100-52241) or R&M – Office Equipment (100-21100-52244) could be decreased at all. Chris DeSimone wondered what the R&M – Other Police Equipment (100-21100-52253) is. Chris DeSimone questioned what the R&M – Heating/Air Cond Equipment (100-21100-52261) is. Chris DeSimone wondered what was different between each of the vehicles in R&M – Vehicles 1-4 (100-21100-52265 through 52268).

Chris DeSimone noted several other line items that needed clarification; R&L – Communications Equipment (100-21100-52273), R&L – Office Equipment (100-21100-52280), Prof & Tech – Misc Other (100-21100-52319), Telephone(100-21100-52341), Miscellaneous Other (100-21100-52299), Medical/Random Drug Testing (100-21100-52303), Advertising, Legal Notices (100-21100-52306), Prof & Tech – Misc Other (100-21100-52319), and VACS Ticket Processing (100-21100-52385). Melissa Tzanoudakis noted that Medical/Random Drug Testing (100-21100-52303) might be required under the law. Alan Leao Jr. wondered if Advertising, Legal Notices (100-21100-52306) was for taking possession of goods. George Zacharakis wondered who Snow Removal (100-21100-52292) was paid to.

Chris DeSimone noted several other line items that needed clarification; Gasoline (100-21100-54411) – could any money be saved in this line item, Data Processing (100-21100-54426) – overspent for 2010, Cleaning (100-21100-54451), Parts & Accessories (100-21100-54485) – overspent for 2010, Photographic (100-21100-54584), Uniforms (100-21100-54593), Uniform Accessories (100-21100-54593), and Miscellaneous Other (100-21100-54599). George Zacharakis added Other Custodial (100-21100-54459), and Melissa Tzanoudakis added Batteries & Anti-Freeze (100-21100-54483) to the list of line items.

George Zacharakis questioned what Food Service (100-21100-54492) is for. Chris DeSimone replied this was for food for prisoners, adding that the Police department had to feed prisoners. Melissa Tzanoudakis questioned what was in Communications (100-21100-54589). Chris DeSimone replied that it was for the radios in the cars. George Zacharakis added Training (100-21100-54515) to the list of line items. Michael Landino questioned Ammunition (100-21100-54585). Chris DeSimone replied that ammunition expired, and the Police Department used up ammunition in their shooting range.

Chris DeSimone noted several other line items that needed clarification; Meetings (100-21100-57712), Conferences (100-21100-57713), Dues (100-21100-57731), Subscriptions (100-21100-57732), and Public Building Inspection (100-21100-57794). Chris DeSimone noted ADDIT EQUIP-DEPARTMENTAL (100-21100-58852) and REPL EQUIP-DEPARTMENTAL (100-21100-58872).

Chris DeSimone moved the meeting to discuss the Fire department. Chris DeSimone questioned why the Wages, Hourly (100-22100-51113) had less than ½ year in the first half of the year. Chris DeSimone questioned if Overtime (100-22100-51130) could be cut.

Chris DeSimone noted several other line items that needed clarification; Natural Gas-Heating (100-22100-52215), Town Water (100-22100-52231) and Town Sewer (100-22100-52232) – are they shared with another department, R&M-Vehicles (100-22100-52242), Electricity-Building (100-22100-52211), R&M-Office Equipment (100-22100-52244), R&M-Firefighting Equipment (100-22100-52254), R&M-Cascade System (100-22100-52256), R&L-Communications Equipment (100-22100-52273), R&L-Minor Outside (100-22100-52276), and Miscellaneous Other (100-22100-52299). George Zacharakis added Advertising, Legal Notices (100-22100-52306), Alan Leao Jr. added Medical/Random Drug Testing (100-22100-52303), and Michael Landino added Prof & Tech – Misc Other (100-22100-52319) to the list of line items.

Chris DeSimone noted several line items in Supplies that needed clarification, such as Gasoline (100-22100-54411), Sundries (100-22100-54425), and Parts & Accessories (100-22100-54485). Chris DeSimone also noted several other line items that needed clarification, such as Mileage (100-22100-57711), Dues (100-22100-57731), and Subscriptions (100-22100-57732). Chris DeSimone noted REPL EQUIP-DEPARTMENTAL (100-22100-58872).

Chris DeSimone moved the meeting to discuss the Ambulance department. Chris DeSimone questioned the Wages, Hourly (100-23100-51112), Wages, Hourly (100-23100-51113), Overtime (100-23100-51130), and Longevity (100-23100-51142). Under Services, Chris DeSimone noted R&M-Communications Equipment (100-23100-52245), R&M-Vehicle 2 (100-23100-52266). George Zacharakis noted Data Processing Equipment (100-23100-52308), and that there was an \$800.00 increase. Alan Leao Jr. added Motor Oil & Grease (100-23100-54481) and Melissa Tzanoudakis added Magazines/Newspapers (100-23100-54514) to the line items. Chris DeSimone also noted several other line items that needed clarification, such as Mileage (100-23100-57711), Meetings (100-23100-57712), and Dues (100-23100-57731).

Chris DeSimone moved the meeting to discuss the Communications Center department. Chris DeSimone questioned Overtime (100-25100-51130). Chris DeSimone noted several other line items that needed clarification; Electricity-Building (100-25100-52211) – why an increase and YTD for 2010, R&M-Building & Grounds (100-25100-52241), R&M-Data Processing Equipment (100-25100-52252), Photocopy (100-25100-54424), Sundries (100-25100-54425), Hardware (100-25100-54431), and Communications (100-25100-54589).

Chris DeSimone noted that the Police, Fire, Ambulance, and Communications Center departments would come in the on March 4, 2010. Chris DeSimone noted that the Finance Committee needed to add in some Tuesday night meetings starting on March 2, 2010.

Chris DeSimone moved the meeting to discuss the next budgets for the next meeting, noting that the budgets were the Public Works department budgets, such as Town Engineer, Safety and Highway departments. Holly Seiferth volunteered to be the primary in-depth person for the Public Works department budgets. Melissa Tzanoudakis volunteered to be the backup in-depth person for the Public Works department budgets.

Business: Chris DeSimone moved the meeting to discuss the state aid for schools, and that it could be a cut of 3%. Maureen Marshall had volunteered to split her time between the North Middlesex district and Quabbin district again. There was a discussion of the school budget and issues surrounding the school budget.

Holly Seiferth noted that she would bring in the letter she had drafted in support for the State 2011 budget for the next meeting.

Thomas Wilson brought the updated forecast to the Finance Committee member's attention. Thomas Wilson spoke of two memos that would be going to department heads. The first memo is about department heads planning ahead to keep their budget balanced. The second memo is about old warrant articles that are still open, leaving a balance of about \$129,000.00. John Moak added that the articles were all legitimate articles. George Zacharakis asked for an example of an

outstanding warrant article. John Moak replied that one warrant article still open is for upgrades for the Communication Center department. Chris DeSimone noted that starting in 2008, warrant articles would now expire if not used in three years.

Chris DeSimone noted that the selectmen had a meeting with the Public in 2009 to discuss the budget. This is something that may possible be repeated for the 2010 budget.

Upcoming Meetings: Tuesday, March 2, 7:00pm
Thursday, March 4, 7:00pm
Tuesday, March 9, 7:00pm
Thursday, March 11, 7:00pm
Tuesday, March 16, 7:00pm
Thursday, March 18, 7:00pm

Adjournment: On a motion from George Zacharakis, seconded by Melissa Tzanoudakis, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm and it was approved by a vote 6(Aye)-0(No) and 0 abstained.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynne Henderson