

**West Newbury Finance Committee  
Minutes of the Meeting  
Monday, January 8, 2018**

**Finance Committee Meeting**

Vice Chairman Beaudoin called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. in the second floor hearing room of the 1910 Building with Ms. Grammer, Mr. Durey, and Mr. Ellis in attendance. Finance Director Gould was also present.

There being no public comment, the Committee considered its agenda.

**Review of Quarter 3 Tax Bills—Finance Director Andrew Gould**

Acting Chairman Beaudoin began the discussion querying Finance Director Gould why the most recent residential tax bill does not seem to reflect the buy down. Finance Director Gould stated in a healthy economy values increase and therefore rates will as well.

Mr. Durey used his own tax bill as an example. He stated his Quarter 3 tax bill was \$3.00 higher than the Quarters 1 and 2 preliminary tax bills. Finance Director Gould stated the first two quarterly bills are generated using the prior year's tax rate. Mr. Durey stated the value of his home was consistent in all three quarterly bills. He expected, with the \$114,000.00 buy down, the tax bill would decrease. Mr. Ellis suggested the term "buy down" could be misleading. Ms. Grammer added the need to consider the set rate relative to the buy down as a lesser increase than would otherwise have occurred.

Ms. Grammer asked Finance Director Gould who is responsible with determining the tax rate and how does this take place. Finance Director Gould replied it is a joint effort of the Assessor and the Finance Director. The Assessor provides property value information while the Finance Director examines prior year receipts and makes estimates for the current year. Some towns having trouble making budgets balance factor in high, optimistic, estimates. Historically, West Newbury provides low receipt estimates. In addition, the overlay balance, such as exemptions, debt exclusions and unpaid receipts, are factors. Finance Director Gould stated it is a very complex process. He suggested having the Assessor visit the committee to explain to process later. Finance Director Gould restated West Newbury is conservative in its estimates.

Moving forward, Ms. Grammer suggested that FinCom may want to learn more about this process from the assessor. Acting Chairman Beaudoin also requested Mr. Durey author an explanation for the taxpayers as to why the tax bill increased following the buy down. In other words, the buy down covered a portion of the increase but not all of it.

*Mr. Durey will meet with the assessor to discuss the tax base. Additionally, he will compose a document explaining the increase in tax bills in spite of the \$114,000.00 tax buy down.*

**New Finance Committee Member**

Town Clerk/Counsel McCarron joined the committee briefly to introduce a new FinCom member. The Board of Selectmen (BOS) approved Mr. Nathan Kelly as the sixth member of the Finance

Committee. Mr. Kelly offered committee members a brief history of his background. In turn, Finance Committee members introduced themselves to Mr. Kelly.

### **Review of Prior Money Articles**

Acting Chairman Beaudoin stated he had consulted with town account Ms. Laurie Zywiak regarding Article Requests. She did say there was a Special Article Request for \$2,000.00 to set up early voting stations.

### **Spring Meeting Article Requests**

Ms. Grammer reported all materials for the Spring Town Meeting are in the Drop Box, organized by departments or committees.

Finance Director Gould informed FinCom that Fire Chief Dwyer would be requesting \$100,000.00 to replace protective fire clothing. Replacement of the clothing would take place over a two to three year period. FinCom will invite Fire Chief Dwyer to a FinCom meeting after submission of the Article.

Acting Chairman Beaudoin remarked about the timing of the school budget, which is set following the town's budget review, and how the amount is determined. Finance Director Gould stated an estimated amount is typically used. He added there would be a significant amount of unanticipated funds dedicated to Special Education-\$640,000.00.

January 8, 2018 is the deadline for submission of department budgets to the Finance Department. Finance Director Gould added there is a separate file for each department and committee, and he will forward this electronically to FinCom. The Finance Director stated he also submits an estimation of the town's Health Insurance cost. The Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) votes on January 24, 2018 in order to determine health insurance rate for each community. Finance Director Gould stated he factored in a 10% increase in employee health insurance costs for FY19.

### **Schools**

Mr. Ellis recalled there had some issue with charging West Newbury for bus services. Ms. Grammer replied there have been problems with Essex Aggie's mixed up charges (West Newbury's bill was sent to and paid by Newbury) so West Newbury agreed to Essex Aggie's offer of charging only for bus services. Finance Director Gould stated there have been no recent issues.

In response to Ms. Grammer Mr. Gould stated that if no West Newbury residents attend Essex Agricultural and Technical High School, then there would be no fees. Finance Director stated, in October, both Pentucket Regional High School and Whittier reported students from West Newbury attended their schools. *Finance Director Gould will call Essex Agricultural and Technical High School to confirm no West Newbury students attend the school.*

Ms. Grammer inquired where charter schools receive funding, such as River Valley Charter School in Newburyport. Finance Director Gould stated the sending district is responsible for providing funding for students. In the case of a West Newbury resident, Pentucket is responsible to provide funding.

Acting Chairman Beaudoin asked who determines the school budget. Ms. Grammer replied she is attending a School Building Meeting on January 10, 2018. *She will inquire.* Finance Director Gould added West Newbury does have representatives on the Pentucket School Committee, and it has a representative for Whittier. However, West Newbury is out of district for Essex Aggie and therefore has no representatives on the school committee.

### **Drop Box Review**

Acting Chairman Beaudoin reviewed the process of using Drop Box. He suggested, rather than viewing several versions of a document, members edit one central document located in Drop Box, tracking changes. Ms. Grammer stated in Drop Box the hierarchy of folders is from top to bottom, so it is best to start with a broadly name folder and put items, including subfolders, in it. Acting Chairman Beaudoin demonstrated when adding folders to Drop Box, an individual could share files with a right click.

For demonstrational purposes, Acting Chairman Beaudoin suggested reviewing minutes via the Drop Box document. He added Macintosh computers require one additional step. When transferring a file to Drop Box, a Mac user must first export the document as a Word document and then save it to the Drop Box. Ms. Grammer places approved minutes on the Web page. Chairman Beaudoin forwards the minutes to Town Clerk/Counsel Carron. The question arose if editing the draft minutes in this manner would be in violation of the open meeting laws. *Mr. Durey will consult with Mr. McCarron regarding this topic.*

During this process, members realized multiple revisions could not occur simultaneously. Acting Chairman Beaudoin suggested individual members edit the minutes prior to the meeting and then sequentially add changes at the meeting.

### **Meeting Minutes**

*FinCom members voted to approve amended minutes of December 11, 2017, 4, 0, 1, Ellis abstaining.*

### **FinCom Business**

Recent weather conditions caused water damage to the Paige School. Ms. Grammer remarked it is her belief that West Newbury is responsible for repairs and is under the impression the town does have building insurance coverage. *Finance Director Gould will look into it.*

*Mr. Durey will consult Selectman Anderson regarding the Department of Local Services (DLS) process.*

*FinCom members will edit meeting minutes prior to the next meeting.*

*Acting Chairman Beaudoin will review the use of Drop Box with Mr. McGrath.*

### **Tentative Agenda for Monday, January 8, 2018**

- Administrative Assistant discussion
- Mr. Durey's report of meeting with Mr. McCarron regarding use of Drop Box to edit minutes
- Review minutes
- Town Clerk/Counsel McCarron review of Articles

- Town Manager update
- Previous issues to be resolved
  - Housing Authority & Page Apt Housing
  - Essex Agricultural and Technical High School
  - Town Accountant Zywiak updates of prior monies status
  - FinCom template and town meeting
- Divide old tasks of FinCom Secretary

### **Upcoming Meetings**

Tuesday, January 16, 2018: 7:00pm

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer  
Secretary Emerita

*Meeting materials:*

Draft minutes December 11, 2017