

**West Newbury Finance Committee
Minutes of the Meeting
Tuesday, January 16, 2018**

Finance Committee Meeting

Vice Chairman Beaudoin called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. in the second floor hearing room of the 1910 Building with Ms. Grammer, Mr. Durey, and Mr. Kelly in attendance.

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

Update: Using DropBox for Minutes Editing, DLS Consulting, etc.

Mr. Durey reported to the Committee about his conversation with Town Counsel/Clerk McCarron concerning various questions raised at the January 8, 2018 FinCom meeting:

- It is permissible under the Open Meeting Law for FinCom members to place draft meeting minutes in DropBox and collaboratively edit them so long as the edits pertain strictly to factual matters. A potential issue arises if comments or edits become deliberative or offer opinion, such as edits providing a member's interpretation.
- There's no status update at this time about Massachusetts Department of Revenue Division of Local Services (DLS) process for consulting with West Newbury about Town finances and best practices because Mr. Durey was not able to get in touch with the Board of Selectmen. *Ms. Grammer will share BOS contact information with the Committee.*
- With regard to the transition from Finance Director to Town Manager as we head into spring budget season, the Selectmen are in contract negotiations with the new Town Manager and Finance Director Gould is staying on as the temporary treasurer—and may well continue through the budget season

The committee also discussed the pipe burst at Page School, including insurance and cost ramifications as well as lessons learned and measures that can be taken to avert problems or quickly minimize damage once a problem occurs. The committee noted that an earlier pipe burst under Pentucket High School caused serious damage and was caught not by an alarm system, but rather by an alert patrolling police officer.

Administrative Assistant

Acting Chairman Beaudoin polled the Committee's views on the notion of hiring an administrative assistant to take on many of the Committee Secretary tasks (<https://www.dropbox.com/s/zijf12z9w8p5lqy/Dec2017FinComSecretaryTasks.docx?dl=0>). Ms. Grammer identified and listed in DropBox, as well minute-taking. The Committee's current administrative assistant, Carol Mahoney, will be leaving FinCom to meet increased family and work obligations—and will be sorely missed.

Ms. Grammer questioned who would be in charge of budgeting for, hiring, training and supervising the person charged with the larger array of tasks, which range from developing interactive Adobe Acrobat forms for the webpage to developing the articles spreadsheet that forms the basis for

FinCom town meeting booklets. Would the management/personnel work be greater than the tasks spread out among committee members? She also expressed thanks to the committee members who have taken on various tasks, such as Mr. Ellis in undertaking to contact persons the committee would like to meet with; Mr. Durey in assuming control of the articles spreadsheet, and Dr. Beaudoin in handling the agenda, forwarding completed minutes, and other matters.

Mr. Kelly wondered if hiring an administrative assistant with greater responsibilities could be more trouble than it is worth, although relieving committee members of some of these tasks could reduce turnover.

Mr. Durey noted that FinCom turnover has been significant and the committee seems chronically short member(s). Perhaps investing in an administrative assistant could provide longevity and continuity. Such a person would also have the computer skill set that individual members might not have. Further, if freed from administrative tasks, committee members might have more time to engage in their primary responsibilities to monitor financial and other issues affecting the town.

Dr. Beaudoin expressed concerns that hiring an administrative assistant to take on the tasks in question would expand bureaucracy and costs to the town. Committee members donate their time to the town and are inclined to pitch in. FinCom should act as a check on expenses. Also, FinCom should be independent and objective—if a long-standing FinCom administrative assistant with institutional memory (and perhaps another job with the town) developed particular agendas, might that result in undue influence?

It was generally agreed that Mr. Ellis should also be part of this decision.

Matters for Follow-up this Budget Season

Ms. Grammer went over a list (a work in progress) of matters FinCom had previously addressed that may warrant follow up in this budget season

(<https://www.dropbox.com/s/iwh7iwh58oogacf/2018%20Spring%20Areas%20For%20Follow-up.xlsx?dl=0>), which is in DropBox.

Mr. Durey will obtain an update on the status of Carr Post. Mr. Kelly will inquire whether the Council on Aging van has found an indoor winter home and can be regularly washed. Ms. Grammer will follow up with Mr. Gould concerning a) the Omnibus Budget containing a line item for town electric costs, so that the economic impact of the solar field is clear and b) why/how the Community Center Committee, which is an ad hoc committee, is in the Omnibus Budget and not an article. Dr. Beaudoin will a) follow up with BOS concerning the Page School pipe break and b) call other local Finance Committees to determine whether/how they use administrative assistants.

Meeting Minutes

FinCom members voted to approve amended minutes of January 8, 2018 4-0-0

Adjournment

8:23 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer
Secretary Emerita

Meeting materials:

1/8/2018 Meeting Minutes

Spreadsheet of 2018 Spring Follow-up Items