

**West Newbury Finance Committee
Minutes of the Meeting
Monday, January 29, 2018**

Finance Committee Meeting

Acting Chairman Beaudoin called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the second floor hearing room of the 1910 Building with Ms. Grammer, Mr. Kelly, Mr. Durey, and Mr. Ellis in attendance.

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

Transfers: none

Meeting Minutes

FinCom members voted to approve amended minutes of January 22, 2018, 4, 0, 1, Durey abstaining.

FinCom Business

Acting Chairman Beaudoin announced the Department of Local Services (DLS) survey is moving forward. Mr. Durey agreed to represent FinCom during this process.

Ms. Grammer stated that as regards the DLS review, she hopes that the status of the Capital Investment Committee (CIC) Plan will be considered and improved. Acting Chairman Beaudoin stated he is awaiting an electronic copy of the plan. Ms. Grammer promised to transfer her latest electronic copy to the FinCom dropbox.

Acting Chairman Beaudoin reported Selectman Anderson inquired as to who was representing FinCom on the Investment Policy Committee (IPC). Considering his election to the DLS committee, Mr. Durey asked about the frequency of the IPC meetings. The committee convenes once monthly. *Mr. Durey agreed to be the FinCom representative for both committees for a period.*

The Board of Selectmen (BOS) informed Acting Chairman Beaudoin a sixth member would join the FinCom in the near future. Reportedly, the individual has a fair amount of experience in local municipal government.

Solar Field Project Article

Acting Chairman Beaudoin suggested the committee reserve the discussion until the new member joins the committee. Both Acting Chairman Beaudoin and Ms. Grammer own residences abutting the property for the potential project. Therefore, they may both recuse themselves from the vote. Ms. Grammer did state the committee could apply the rule of necessity, in which they are present during the discussion but abstain during the voting process. *Mr. Ellis will contact the Solar Project Manager to set an appointment for the group to meet with FinCom when the sixth member is in place.*

Ms. Grammer reported that when an Article was written but not in the correct legislative format Town Clerk /Counsel McCarron would most likely rewrite the Article Request. *Mr. Ellis will reach out to the project managers but will wait to schedule when FinCom has a full quorum. Mr. Durey will continue to update the FinCom booklet spreadsheet.*

FinCom members discussed possible questions for the solar representatives. Mr. Ellis stated the project is on private property, therefore does this indicate the use of town funds for the improvement of private property. He also added he would like to view the modified map. Ms. Grammer declined to participate because of her recusal.

Mr. Durey asked what the boundaries of the solar overlay district are and what the criteria to set them is. Ms. Grammer responded to Mr. Durey's question by suggesting he contact Town Planner Leah Zambenardi. Mr. Ellis added the property at 28 Coffin Street remains privately owned. He inquired if connection to the existing storm/drainage system is necessary. *When contacting the solar project managers, Mr. Ellis will request a copy of the map. Additionally, Mr. Durey will ask Ms. Zambenardi for a copy of the existing overlay map as well as a list of criteria which are used to define the current boundary.*

Review of FY19 Omnibus

Acting Chairman Beaudoin suggested members review the budget and prepare questions for individual departments and committees.

Board of Selectmen (BOS)

The BOS requested budget for FY19 includes only \$5,000.00 for expenses. The funds cover such items as Trade Show attendance. Acting Chairman Beaudoin remarked that with the addition of the Town Manager funds shifted between departments, it is important that the changes be reported to the citizens in a clear and transparent manner. Ms. Grammer noted that explaining the movement of funds could be part of the chairman's FinCom Booklet cover letter. Acting Chairman Beaudoin added a speaker, perhaps the Moderator, could explain how changes in the government resulted in a shift of expenses. .

Acting Chairman Beaudoin stated it is important to clarify the salary shifts and where the funds for Professional and Technical Services are now located.

Mr. Durey will follow up with the BOS regarding Professional and Technology Services.

Town Manager

Acting Chairman Beaudoin stated again the need for clarity regarding the transfer of funded items from both the Finance Department and the BOS to the Town Manager. Both Mr. Durey and Mr. Kelly commented on the need for further itemization of the expenses line item. Mr. Durey recalled some discussion of reconfiguring office space and the purchase of computer equipment to accommodate the Town Manager.

Ms. Grammer stated approval of a Special Article Request for \$150,000.00 occurred at FY18 Town Meeting. The request was to cover remodeling and salary, benefits, and expenses associated with the Town Manager. As January is ending and no Town Manager is yet on board, what is the status of the funds?

Finance Committee

FinCom members discussed the need to include a salary request for an administrative assistant for the Finance Committee. Ms. Grammer remarked the Open Meeting Act requires committees to supply meeting minutes, which had been a problem. Recognizing the importance of providing minutes, the town has approved salaries of some note-takers and/or administrative assistants. She cited the FinCom, Planning Board and Selectmen as examples. At times, individual developers offer promises to the Conservation Commission and then not follow through. Without written minutes, they are less able to dispute suggested promises occurred. Acting Chairman Beaudoin suggested if a board meeting four times a year, the members could rotate as note takers.

Ms. Grammer suggested FinCom remain with the status quo for FinCom for now. If needed, the Finance Committee could present an Article for funds to employ an administrative assistant at the fall Town meeting. Previously, Acting Chairman Beaudoin reported the Groveland Finance Committee splits the duties of an administrative assistant among the members. The town of Newbury Finance Committee employs an administrative assistant. Merrimac did not respond to Acting Chairman Beaudoin's request. Ms. Grammer is attending a School Building meeting on Thursday, February 1, 2018. *Ms. Grammer will follow up with the Finance Committee member regarding the use of an administrative assistant.*

Board of Assessors

The Board of Assessors is requesting a pay increase to \$15.00 per hour for administrative assistant Dot Cavanaugh. Ms. Grammer asked if they followed protocol by contacting the Personnel Committee. Additionally, FinCom is not aware of how many hours a week Ms. Cavanaugh works.

Mr. Kelly questioned the 60% increase in vehicle allowance when turn backs from FY17 amounted to 50%.

Finance Department

There was a direct transfer, \$35,744, of Technology Expenses to the Town Manager. However, Telephone and Postage expenses totaled \$21,517.00. The Finance Department eliminated the expenses from FY19 budget. The unexplained expenses line item total \$31,517.00. FinCom members questioned what the \$10,000.00 additional expense was.

Ms. Grammer questioned \$36,400.00 level funding request for expenses when the department has downsized.

Town Clerk/Town Counsel

Preservation of Town Records is complete. *FinCom members will request Treasurer/Collector Gould to remove the line item from the budget.*

FinCom members noted the requested budget for expenses was the same as requested for FY18. However, the department turn back for FY17 was greater than 50%.

The salary request is a level amount from FY18. Ms. Grammer stated she was unsure if the salary request included a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA).

FinCom will confer with Mr. Gould or Town Clerk/Counsel McCarron regarding expense and salary requests.

Board of Registrars/Elections

FinCom will ask Mr. McCarron for further itemization of \$6,100.00 requested for expenses. Members noted the \$2,000.00 Article Request for the upcoming gubernatorial election is a separate expense.

Conservation Commission

Ms. Grammer stated the increase in salary included the request to employ a note taker. Acting Chairman Beaudoin asked if a note taker were necessary. Ms. Grammer remarked it would be helpful in such cases as plot plan disputes.

Mr. Kelly questioned the vehicle allowance of \$600.00. Other members explained Conservation Agent Jay Smith traveled extensively through town, including wetlands.

Planning Board

Mr. Kelly remarked the overall budget of the Planning Board has increased 25% since FY16. Ms. Grammer replied the town now employs a professional planner. The Planning Administrator Leah Zambenardi is a part time employee. The board currently employs a note taker (recording secretary) during meetings. The Planning Board is additionally requesting a part time Administrative Assistant.

FinCom members generated questions to address to the Planning Board:

- *Requested Administrative Assistant*
 - *Is it necessary—no reason given*
 - *Is the salary consistent with other Administrative Assistants in town?*
- *Current Minute taker*
 - *Does the expenses line item include salary?*
- *Turn backs are unclear*
- *Is it possible to institute or increase fees to cover some of the expenses?*

Board of Appeals

FinCom members stated the budget was straightforward.

Open Spaces Committee

FinCom members noted a negative transfer of \$86.00 for FY17. *FinCom will inquire if there was a reserve transfer.*

Cable Advisory Committee

Ms. Grammer explained to new members the committee consists of one member, Selectman Kemper. There is a fund, derived from cable bill fees, of \$40,000.00. Expenditure of funds are limited to improvements of town communications-related items. To date, the use of funds included the improvement of the Annex Audio System for Town Meetings, improvement of the town web site, and coverage of the BOS meetings. Mr. Durey inquired if it were permissible to apply funds for Informational Technology (IT) in town facilities, specifically the addition of screens in meeting rooms.

Mr. Ellis will confer with Mr. Gould regarding itemization of the use of funds. Additionally, FinCom will invite Selectman Kemper to review the function of the Cable Advisory Committee.

Public Safety—Police Department

Mr. Durey commented he is unclear regarding the cruiser rotation schedule. He remarked it is a combination of mileage on the odometer and the idle meter. Other FinCom members replied that one hour of idle time is equivalent to 33 miles on the odometer. The calculation of both occurs at the time of oil changes. Mr. Durey remarked he understands the importance of considering the useful life mileage for resale purposes.

Mr. Kelly remarked the overall police budget has increased over \$250,000.00 since FY16. Other members explained when Chief Reed came to West Newbury two years ago; he came with the intent of modernizing the police department. Two important issues on his agenda were the addition of a second midnight officer and hiring a SRO for the school. Chief Reed also encountered high overtime expenses. The town does employ reserve officers. However, they have full time jobs and often turn down requests to work a shift. Therefore, paying full time officers overtime becomes necessary. Ms. Grammer noted the chief increased the overtime budget in order to prevent the need of requesting a reserve transfer later in the fiscal year.

Ms. Grammer remarked the town is currently in mediation with the police union. Costs will most likely increase. FinCom members queried what the public safety budget for other towns of similar size was. Acting Chairman Beaudoin found statistics online for two towns:

- Avon, MA
 - Population-4,356
 - Police Budget-1.8M
 - Replace two cars this year
- Sherbourne, MA
 - Population-approximately 4,000
 - Police Budget-1.5M
 - Replace one car this year

Mr. Durey remarked West Newbury falls in the upper 1/3 of towns in Massachusetts based on income levels. Ms. Grammer expressed the need for more transparency. She suggested the midnight shift could author a police log published in the local newspaper. Acting Chairman Beaudoin stated the log would reflect a decrease in break-ins due to increased police presence.

School Resource Officer (SRO)

Acting Chairman Beaudoin, expressed concern regarding West Newbury potentially paying the full cost of the SRO. Pentucket Regional School System had previously stated it would contribute to the cost of the SRO. However, a figure has not been determined. Ms. Grammer stated the SRO provides community outreach concerning the use of drugs and bullying. She added she has heard positive comments regarding the SRO.

Mr. Durey stated he supports the need of an SRO, but does not believe West Newbury should carry the entire expense of the SRO. Ms. Grammer stated the BOS agreed to hire the SRO contingent on contributions from the Pentucket school system. It is possible that increased costs for Special Education (SPED) services will have an impact on their contribution. Mr. Durey also is concerned there is nothing in place to share the cost of the SRO. Ms. Grammer stated that last year Police Chief Reed did meet with the Pentucket School Board regarding a contribution to the cost of the SRO. However, she is unaware any outcome for this year. *Ms. Grammer will inquire at the School Building Committee meeting this week.*

Mr. Kelly stated he is in support of both the SRO and police modernization. However, when will the budget plateau?

FinCom members generated questions to address to Public Safety

- SRO
 - *Shared expenses with Pentucket School System*
- *Review of police cruiser rotation schedule*
- *Plateau of the Police Department budget*
- *New police firearms*
 - *Possibility of a gun buyback for used firearms.*

Animal Control

FinCom members have no further questions regarding animal control

Public Safety—Dispatch

Ms. Grammer stated dispatch, similar to the police, relies on part time people. Additionally a dispatcher requires extensive training. Essex Regional Dispatch has not been a success. Ms. Grammer suggested the possibility of a smaller cooperative dispatch-one with a nearby town such as Newbury. Mr. Durey inquired as to the number of staff on duty per shift. *FinCom will address questions to Chief Reed including:*

- *Staffing*
- *Overtime*
- *Regionalization*

Action Plans

Ms. Grammer suggested the possibility of scheduling the Assessor next Monday, February 5, 2018. Ms. Grammer added scheduling Police and Fire on the same evening would be helpful.

Mr. Ellis will contact and schedule the following departments or groups:

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|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • <i>Assessor</i> | • <i>Cable Advisory</i> |
| • <i>Planning Board</i> | • <i>Fire</i> |
| • <i>Town Clerk</i> | • <i>Police</i> |
| • <i>Conservation Commission</i> | • <i>Community Center Committee</i> |

Mr. Kelly asked if FinCom should set a time limit. Ms. Grammer replied in the affirmative. The committee has several questions for both the Fire and Police Departments. She suggested a period of approximately 45 minutes for each. Ms. Grammer also stated both health insurance and school budgets were beyond control of FinCom.

Tentative Agenda for Monday, February 5, 2018

- Review and approve draft minutes from January 29, 2018
- Continue to work through the draft budget
 - Discuss the net operating budget with Mr. Gould
- Review transfer requests
- Review any new Article Requests
- Assessor

Upcoming Meetings

Monday, February 5, 2018: 7:00pm

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer
Secretary Emerita

Meeting materials:

Draft minutes January 29, 2018

FY19 Omnibus budget