

**West Newbury Finance Committee
Minutes of the Meeting
Tuesday, February 20, 2018**

Finance Committee Meeting

Acting Chairman Beaudoin called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. in the second floor hearing room of the 1910 Building with Ms. Grammer, Mr. Kelly, Mr. Durey, and ex officio member Finance Director Gould in attendance.

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

Transfers: none

Planning Board: Members Ann Bardeen, John Sarkis, Brian Murphy, Ray Cook & Town Planner Leah Zambarnardi

Dr. Beaudoin asked the Planning Board (Board) for an overview of their activities 2016 forward. Ms. Bardeen replied that the budget consists of salary, wages and expenses. Expenses are reduced because consulting activities are now being done in-house. Some costs, like the Merrimac Valley Planning Commission assessment, are not within the Board's control. Ms. Zambarnardi's salary had an uptick and now the Board has a recording secretary and a proposed administrative assistant.

In response to Dr. Beaudoin's inquiry as to the need for and purpose of a part time administrative assistant, the Board discussed Ms. Zambarnardi's predecessor and prior activities. With the recession behind us, permitting activities have grown in volume and complexity—creating a need for the Board to be proactive by seeing about the West Newbury downtown (sewer inquiry), writing grant applications, etc. As to the need for and purpose of an administrative assistant, the Board described activities such as making copies, managing paperwork, dealing with the public, placing advertisements—"like a paralegal."

Ms. Zambarnardi explained that the Board arrived at \$20 per hour for the administrative assistant by averaging the pay rate for all the administrative positions and using the average. When it was noted that this pay rate exceeds that of the Assistant Town Clerk, the Board suggested that person's pay is a separate problem to be resolved. The Board further noted of all the committees in town, it has the highest standard of **professionalism** in its minutes and that its minutes provide a service to the town in explaining what is occurring with contentious developments.

When asked about using a senior volunteer as an administrative assistant, Ms. Zambarnardi stated that one was working for a handful of hours each week, helping with the filing system. A Board member noted that senior volunteers come at a cost: they receive a tax break from the town. It was noted that the cost of a senior volunteer is less than the proposed administrative assistant. Apparently another senior volunteer had not been sought for the administrative assistant position because that position would need training and would be expected to be a consistent presence.

Ms. Grammer observed that since 2016 the Board has experienced a 25% budget increase. She had compared the Board's fee schedule with other jurisdictions and noted that it is relatively low in comparison. The Board indicated that it may take a look at its fee schedule.

Board members commented that the town should expect incredible demand for housing (being located between I-95 and I-495 to Boston/Portsmouth and with increasing work-at-home), particularly if disruptive innovations ease septic requirements. The state is pressuring areas such as West Newbury to provide additional housing, particularly affordable housing. The easy properties have been developed; accordingly, additional developments have grown increasingly complex.

The Board is working to determine whether Massachusetts General Laws 40B requirements (which waive many local zoning laws in favor of an affordable housing project) apply to West Newbury, which has extensive land mass under water, subject to state or federal ownership or conservation limitations that may result in an exemption. When asked if the Board is developing a current Master/Comprehensive Plan, the Board suggested it would be more productive to discuss this with the Selectmen.

FinCom Consideration

As to the newly hired minutes taker, FinCom determined that this position was in place and the minutes provide a useful report of development activities that are of great interest to townspeople.

In discussing the new administrative assistant position, some members of FinCom acknowledged that large complex developments place increasing burdens on the Board, with the quantity and quality of information from developers continually increases. Others felt that the addition of a professional like a city planner should be able to adequately meet the town's needs, as they should have adequate knowledge and experience to handle the "paralegal-like" filing requirements for applicants. FinCom concluded that the request for the position was not adequately supported. For instance:

- What is the written job description for this position?
- Do current Board fees cover the costs developers impose and if not, when and how will the fees be adjusted so that this position's costs and other costs developers impose on the Planning Board be fully covered?
- Is there evidence that \$20/hr really warranted in the marketplace?
- Are other volunteers available and suitable or could the current volunteer cover more?
- Is the Board deploying automated filing and paper management tools such as computerized, word-searchable files and electronic filings of the sort that the Inspection Department is using?

Absent satisfactory answers to these questions, FinCom voted in opposition to the new administrative assistant position, 4-0-0. FinCom will immediately let the Board know and seek answers to these and related questions that would support a new hire.

Conservation Commission: Chair Dawn Fusco & Conservation Agent Jay Smith

Ms. Fusco explained that the Conservation Commission (ConCom) budget remains the same, except that it is requesting a new minutes taker for 6 hrs/month—ConCom meets twice per month. Ms. Fusco explained that ConCom is charged with applying and enforcing state wetlands regulations and deals with complex issues presented by lawyers, engineers, etc. Mr. Smith is a soils scientist, who must do extensive paperwork as well as currently taking minutes. ConCom minutes form the basis for Orders of Conditions, which run with the land in perpetuity.

FinCom Consideration

FinCom recognized that an accurate record of ConCom meetings is important for determining Orders of Conditions and wondered if audio recordings would provide the accuracy ConCom needs. ConCom's situation, however, is much like the Planning Board's in terms of using minutes to help townspeople understand what is occurring with development. *FinCom determined to support the request for a ConCom minute taker.*

Inspection Department: Building Inspector Glenn Clohecyc

Mr. Clohecyc reported that the Inspection Department has a new computerized system that allows builders to submit applications online and that will allow fees to be paid online. Work overall has gone up: a new 34-unit project is in the works and smaller subdivisions of several houses are occurring.

The only budget change involves Mr. Clohecyc's salary. He stated that over the past several years he has obtained pay increases for others working in his Department, but has not done this for his own pay. He has worked for the town for 21 years and now is being paid less than half of what the grid specifies.

Mr. Clohecyc also reported that the Inspection Department tries to be self-sufficient in terms of covering its costs with fees, so that builders pay the costs they impose. He stated that he will be reviewing and updating fees in the near future.

FinCom supported Mr. Clohecyc's request, in view of his efforts to bring up pay levels for his employees before himself and in view of the Inspection Department's practice of covering costs with fees.

Health Department: Board of Health members Bob Janes, Kim Cole & Blake Seale & Health Agent Paul Sevigny

Mr. Sevigny and the Board of Health members updated FinCom on the status of water testing from wells near the former dump. Previously, some low levels of a pollutant had been detected and water testing of abutters well water was done which required a transfer from the FinCom Reserve Fund to cover costs. The due to an error at the state lab, the tests had to be repeated and the definitive results are not in yet, but preliminary testing seems favorable.

Overall, the Health Department budget has gone down. Trash removal costs in this budget have decreased because the Board of Health reduced the estimated tonnage to reflect more realistic town output levels. This reduced the cost even though the price per ton increased by \$1.

A significant nationwide problem is emerging as regards recycling. China is no longer as willing to accept recycled materials. The town's provider, Mello, reports that it is losing \$70/ton on recycling now. Our contract has a couple years to run, but an increase in recycling costs should be expected. – expect an increase. Another future increase should be expected with respect to hazardous waste. The current provider, Clean Harbors, has announced a 144% increase that will affect us next year.

The Board of Health also explained that the function of the Public Health Nurse is to perform the reporting and follow up concerning state-mandated reporting of certain identified diseases. In West Newbury, this mostly involves Lyme disease.

Parks & Recreation: Tom Flaherty (reported conversation)

Ms. Grammer reported her conversation with Tom Flaherty, Chair of the Park & Recreation Committee, concerning the proposed new \$5K for Action Cove Playground. Mr. Flaherty stated that this amount is to cover the costs of sand and mulch, which pertain to Action Cove safety. In particular, specified levels of mulch—a particularly engineered (and thus very costly) are required for safety. This cost does not overlap the Department of Public Works line item for playgrounds. That involves mowing and related items.

FinCom

The Committee held a general discussion of

- Minute takers and alternatives such as audio and video recordings, as well as a search for an automated approach to reduce costs of minute taking
- Encouraging online payments for all town fees, taxes, etc and encouraging all departments and committees to review and update their fee schedules
- Prioritizing high dollar cost increases in the effort to reduce to budget increases to better levels

Dr. Beaudoin announced that when meeting with the Board of Selectmen on March 5, the Selectmen would also like to get FinCom's read on the proposed budget—and discussed our need to schedule to meet this timeline.

Minutes

The Committee voted to approve the minutes of February 5, 2018, as revised, 4-0-0 and voted to approve the minutes of February 12, 2018, 3-0-1, Ms. Grammer, who was not present, abstaining.

Investment Planning Update

Mr. Durey, FinCom's representative to the Investment Policy Committee, explained that this group manages the town's Other Post-Employments Benefits (OPEB) funds and as well as funds in all of the town's stabilization accounts. Members were provided a different summary for each of these. The OPEB account's gain were ahead of the market index used for comparison purposes. All of the stabilization accounts are in short term investments. This Manage OPEB & Stab. Diff summary for each. OPEB ahead of market index they use. This group does not manage Community Preservation Committee funds, which currently are in excess of \$2M. Mr. Durey intends to inquire whether these funds could be put into something like 90-day certificates of deposit.

DLS Community Compact Review Update

As FinCom's representative with regard to the Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services (DLS) community compact project, in which the town will learn best practices and review its financial planning, Mr. Durey spoke with Marcia, DLS' representative working with West Newbury. At this point DLS is collecting data about West Newbury and finishing up other projects. The report will address policies and forecasting, with policies coming first in about 2 months. A couple of months later there will be a big meeting to discuss findings.

Additionally, DLS will be holding its annual forum for new municipal finance officials in May in Lexington.

Pentucket School Building Update

Ms. Grammer, FinCom's representative on the Pentucket Regional School District Building Committee, shared the documents outlining the available options <http://pths.schoolloop.com/file/1211910111464/1142676719237/2048500078565204700.pdf>, which range from remodeling the high school only to building a new combined high school/middle school.

At a joint meeting on February 13, the School Committee and the School Building Committee voted unanimously to present to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) four options for considerations, the favored options being a 2-storey or 3-storey new high school/middle school located where the football field currently is located. These options are the most cost effective and involve the least disruption in terms of construction/demolition as children continue to go to the existing schools on the site. Other options mandated by MSBA include a renovation of the high school only and a renovation/addition to create a high school/middle school.

Tentative Agenda for Monday, February 26, 2018—6 pm

- Department of Public Works 1 ½
- Cable Advisory 30 min
- Assessor
- Community Center Committee
- Solar Proposal at Coffin Street
- Review and approve draft minutes from February 20, 2018

The meeting adjourned at 9:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer
Secretary Emerita

Meeting materials:

Draft minutes February 5 & 12

FY19 Omnibus budget

Budget materials from the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Inspection Department,
Health Department