

**West Newbury Finance Committee
Minutes of the Meeting
Monday, February 26, 2018**

Finance Committee Meeting

Acting Chairman Beaudoin called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. in the second floor hearing room of the 1910 Building with Ms. Grammer, Mr. Kelly, Mr. Durey, Mr. Ellis, and ex officio member Finance Director Gould in attendance. Also joining the meeting is new FinCom member Mr. Gary Roberts

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

Department of Public Works (DPW) — Mr. Gary Bill

Mr. Bill joined the Finance Committee to review the DPW omnibus budget and DPW article requests. Dr. Beaudoin inquired if the Article Requests for Snow and Ice was too high. He was referring to previous turn backs. Mr. Gould stated it is generally easier to set a higher than expected amount and turn back excessive amounts at the completion of the fiscal year. Mr. Durey asked when the need arises does FinCom approve any emergency funding for Snow and Ice. Mr. Gould replied in the affirmative.

Dr. Beaudoin stated previously the Council on Aging (COA) van was garaged at the public safety building. Recently, public safety vehicles replaced the van at the facility and it now remains outside. Committee members inquired if there is another municipal garage to house the van. Mr. Bill replied there is space available at the Pipestave municipal garage. However, storage of the van at that site requires permission from the Board of Selectmen (BOS).

Mr. Gould noted there was a typographical error in the salary line for FY18. Ms. Grammer asked Mr. Bill to clarify what the line item Town Building Improvements of \$51,000.00 covers. Mr. Bill replied the funds are for use of unplanned and emergency expenses such as boilers. Additionally, Ms. Grammer questioned if certain line items can be placed on the capital improvement schedule and is there a mechanism in place to determine if Community Preservation Committee (CPC) can fund projects.

Mr. Bill stated some maintenance, such as painting, is not eligible for CPC funding unless it occurs in conjunction with another project, i.e. window replacement. Mr. Bill continued some projects are funded via Article Requests. He stated the fiscal year splits the calendar year, whereas funding with an Article Request is more manageable.

It was noted on the original omnibus budget showed a line item ATM/STM with no associated funding. *Mr. Gould will remove the line item.*

Ms. Grammer remarked there are separate electricity and street lighting lines. Some of the electrical costs are under the Town Building Operating Expenses. Ms. Grammer inquired about the typical savings related to the current solar field. Mr. Bill stated the typical savings is generally 75%. However, the credits are approximately two months in arrears.

Highway, Sidewalk & Trees

Mr. Bill stated highways, sidewalks and trees are the responsibility of the DPW. He added it covers the expenses of approximately 200 vendors and bringing storm drains up to code.

Road Improvement Program

Ms. Grammer asked Mr. Bill why the amount of \$70,000.00. Mr. Bill replied the state Chapter 90 Program reimburses municipalities for roadwork such as repaving. Unfortunately, the amount was the same 15 years ago. Therefore, only half of the projects done 15 years ago can be accomplished presently. Mr. Bill added the present day mix for roads has a lifespan of 10 to 12 years where, in the past, roads lasted for 20 years. Previously, the DPW followed a 5-year plan for road repair. However, roads degrade at different rates. Mr. Bill stated DPW would bid for paving this year. He added, even with a contract, there is an oil clause.

Library Project Update

Mr. Bill stated most likely, completion of the project would occur this summer.

Page School Previous Article Update

Mr. Bill reported there is \$32,837.00 remaining from the previous article requesting \$100,000.00. He stated the funds would be used this spring.

Parks and Playgrounds

FinCom members inquired why both DPW and Parks & Recreation list parks and playgrounds. Mr. Bill remarked the amount of \$15,000.00 is devoted to the Pipestave Hill fields for fertilizer and retaining electricians for the pumps. The area is in the Green Belt, which requires the use of organic products. All other expenses fall under Parks & Recreation. The DPW mows the grass in all of the parks, roadsides, and the surrounding lawn of municipal buildings.

Department of Public Works (DPW) — Article Requests

Page School and Cinderella's Castle

Mr. Bill stated the balance of the previous article request would be used to repair holes in the Page School ceilings, unrelated to damage incurred from the recent pipe bursting.

Mr. Durey inquired if there was a cap to the insurance covered the damage caused by the pipe burst. Mr. Bill replied insurance would cover repairs of ceilings, floors, fixtures and pipes damaged by the burst pipe.

Mr. Bill provided some background leading up to the damage. The current generator was installed in 1965 and is scheduled for replacement with CPC funds. Typically, during a cold spell, the generator switches to different motors in the heating system. Unfortunately, a transfer switch wore out taking the boiler off the generator. During the investigation, the engineer determined some of the electrical system is in need of updating. Mr. Bill estimated the entire project might cost \$200,000.00. Mr. Durey asked why ask for \$100,000.00. Mr. Bill stated it is mainly for patching holes.

Mr. Bill requested the BOS initiate a repeat engineering study assessment of the Page School to reevaluate and prioritize projects. In 2009, updates of the school began. To date, wiring, plumbing, and the sprinkler system was not addressed. The renovation occurred in a two-phase project and cost \$10M.

Immediate projects include; repairing holes in the floor, adding new stair treads, and remove loose stones near doorways.

Mr. Bill reported other than the Page School West Newbury is in good shape. He added the air handler on the roof of the 1910 building is in need of replacement.

Dr. Beaudoin suggested Mr. Bill confer with Mr. Preble (CIC) regarding capital projects. Ms. Grammer stated Mr. McCarron would write the final Snow & Ice Article when the final invoices come in.

Assessor's Office — Ms. Meredith Stone

Ms. Stone stated the Assessor's budget is level-funded with the exception of contractual issues. Ms. Stone expressed a desire for increased education for the Board as new laws continuously evolve. She added her office is responsible for approximately 95% of the town's revenue and it is therefore important to keep abreast of new laws.

Ms. Stone is asking for an hourly increase of her part time assistant, Ms. Dot Cavanaugh, from \$13.31 to \$15.00 per hour. Dr. Beaudoin inquired how what the amount derived. Ms. Stone remarked there is a \$1500.00 cap per year. The Board of Assessors approved the salary increase. Ms. Stone remarked the Assessor's clerk is undergoing some medical issues and on occasion, the temporary clerk fills in.

Ms. Grammer asked about the increase in the vehicle allowance. Ms. Stone attributed the increase to mileage going and returning from training sessions. In addition, mileage is accrued when traveling to and from Appeals Court. Mr. Roberts inquired if most of the training takes place at U Mass Amherst. Ms. Stone affirmed most training is in Amherst. Mr. Roberts asked if a mileage log is maintained. Mr. Gould suggested Accounts Payable would have a list.

Aerial Photography Update

Ms. Stone reported the project is complete. Mr. Ellis inquired if it is web-based. Ms. Stone stated it is web-based.

Dr. Beaudoin inquired about the Assessor's role in calculating new growth in the community. Ms. Stone reported her office inspects and evaluates new growth. The property is on the role when the occupancy permit is posted. The Department of Revenue (DOR) reviews and sets the tax rate. Ms. Stone estimates new growth, on average, is \$100,000.00. Ms. Grammer inquired about unpaid taxes. Ms. Stone reported the amount is relatively minor at 1 to 2%. Mr. Roberts added there is a reserve for abatement in the overlay account covering items such as data entry errors or fires.

Cable Advisory — Selectman Glenn Kemper

Mr. Kemper explained the Cable Advisory Fund might be used for improvements in communications. The improvements fall under the Public Education Government Grant (PEGG). Examples include small libraries, cameras, microphones, and web sites. Mr. Kemper anticipates the addition of more programs. Currently, the BOS and School Committee meetings are broadcast. Ms. Grammer remarked there is a link to you tube on the town web site and inquired about posting the cable stations that play the BOS meetings. Mr. Kemper stated he is in the process of purchasing additional equipment. The first quote was for new cameras and microphones covered the cost for the first and second floors of the 1010 building. The decision was to downgrade to \$30,000.00 and limit the number of purchases.

Mr. Kemper stated, prior to spending funds, it is important to set a communications policy in place. Mr. Kemper remarked some funds are reserved for preparing a program for the bicentennial celebration. Mr. Ellis inquired if finding volunteers is difficult. Mr. Kemper replied in the affirmative. Mr. Kelly suggested Mr. Kemper add what the functions of the Cable Advisory Committee are to the town web site. *With Mr. Kemper's permission, Ms. Grammer offered to add the description to the West Newbury web site once Mr. Kemper determines what the text should say.*

Community Center Committee (CCC) — Ms. Vanessa Graham, Chairman

Ms. Grammer noted special temporary committees acquire funds through Articles rather than as line items. Initially the CCC requested funds from both a line item and an Article Request. To date, FinCom has not received any requests for line items from the CCC. Ms. Graham stated she had completed and submitted paperwork. Ms. Grammer suggested Ms. Graham forward paperwork to FinCom within the week.

Ms. Graham updated FinCom on the progress of the committee. The goal of the committee is to establish an intergenerational community center. Aware of the large Pentucket school building project, the CCC focused on existing buildings. Currently they are awaiting reports from structural and acoustical engineers regarding the Annex building. The Annex is near both the Senior Center and the Library. The CCC will soon search for possible grants to develop the center.

Ms. Graham stated the committee plans to increase the hours of the part time administrator. Additionally, they are requesting funds to advertise Intergenerational Meetings. Currently, the committee is assessing the needs of the community. This year, the committee has a Survey Monkey Account. Ms. Mary Burley, a librarian from Beverly, has prepared a needs assessment report. Ms. Graham reported the information is in a crude format and is in need of improvement prior to release.

Ms. Grammer inquired as to why the CCC is proposing to hire a plumber and engineer to assess the Annex before the completion of the needs assessment. Ms. Graham replied it is necessary to dove tail both. Dr. Beaudoin requested a finished needs assessment report be forwarded to FinCom. *Ms. Graham will forward the report.*

Mr. Ellis inquired if there is a standard procedure or policy to follow for strategic planning. Ms. Graham stated there are two intergenerational centers in Massachusetts. She has visited both, one in Randolph and the other in Easthampton. Additionally, Ms. Graham has visited senior centers in

Newburyport, Amesbury, and Tewksbury. Mr. Durey asked why are there only two intergenerational centers in Massachusetts. Ms. Graham stated demographics plays a role. An equivalent amount of citizens who are less than eighteen years old and those over 65 years is a necessary component to success. Ms. Graham added there are approximately 800 people in town over the age of 65.

FinCom members agreed it is important to review data prior to making a decision. Mr. Durey suggested the committee revise the Article Request in lieu of the fact there will be no line item available to the committee. It is important to forward information to FinCom within the week.

Meeting Minutes

FinCom members voted to approve minutes of February 20, 2018, 5, 0, 1, Roberts abstaining.

Solar Project Presentation — Mr. Michael Carey, SWEB Development

Ms. Grammer and Dr. Beaudoin, potential abutters to the project recused themselves, leaving the meeting. Mr. Ellis took charge of the meeting. With several interested citizens attending, Mr. Ellis advised visitors to direct questions to him rather than Mr. Carey.

Mr. Carey presented a project overview, benefits to the town, and property value impacts. Mr. Carey displayed a Solar Overlay map. The Solar Project will cover 20 acres. The company will donate an additional 52 acres to the town to become part of the Essex County Trail System. He noted property values near a solar project in Salisbury increased over time.

In the benefits to the town, Mr. Carey stated West Newbury residents could see a 10% savings in energy. Mr. Ellis inquired for how long. Mr. Carey replied for the length of the Pilot, which is 20 years.

Mr. Durey inquired about the lifespan of the equipment. Mr. Carey replied solar panels generally last for 20 years and the racks have a lifespan of 30 years. At the completion of the project, Mr. Durey asked if West Newbury is responsible for decommissioning of the project. Mr. Carey replied the contractor is bonded to remove it. He added there would be no cement footings.

Mr. Roberts inquired if there is an environmental impact, such as glare, to nearby residents. Mr. Carey stated the panels the panels themselves are black, in order to absorb light, and therefore there would be little glare.

The audience noted the solar field in Salisbury is located in an industrial area and not residential. The resident requested some more comparable comparisons. *Mr. Carey will provide some residential comparisons in the next few weeks.* Another audience member stated the company predominantly ran wind energy projects. Mr. Carey stated that was true. However, the company manages 13 operating solar projects.

Citizens were concerned regarding the infrastructure of the project, such as runoff and failure of a retention pond. Mr. Carey stated, by law, the company is responsible for retaining all runoff on the property.

Mr. Durey stated Mr. Carey had included a revenue slide in his presentation. He requested Mr. Carey forward a copy to FinCom. *Mr. Carey will email the slide to FinCom.*

Mr. Carey noted the approval of the Article allows the process to proceed with negotiations. He also stated there would be a forest buffer between the solar project and its neighbors, lowering any impact to the neighbors.

Upcoming Meetings

Monday, March 5, 2018: 6:00 pm

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer
Secretary Emerita

Meeting materials:

Draft minutes February 26, 2018

FY19 DPW Budget

DPW Articles

- Page School
- Snow & Ice

CCC Budget

Solar Project Presentation