

**West Newbury Finance Committee
Minutes of the Meeting
Monday, February 29, 2016**

Chairman Codair called the Finance Committee to order at 6:35 p.m. in the second floor hearing room of the 1910 Building with Mr. Winch, Mr. Phillips, Mr. McGrath, and Ms. Grammer present. Mr. Bertino and Selectman Anderson were also present.

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

Budget Review

Chairman Codair welcomed representatives from the following departments:

- Assessor's Office
- G.A.R Memorial Library
- Water Department
- Police Department
- Fire Department

Assessor's Office

Representative—Mr. Michael Bertino, Director of Finance

Mr. Bertino requested to begin the meeting with a review of the Assessor's Office budget. He reported an increase in the salary budget encompasses a stipend for the assessor as well as a merit raise for the Chief Assessor and the Assistant to the Assessor.

Currently, the Chief Assessor is performing data collection and thereby decreases the need of outside data collectors. He also stated there has been a change in the re-rate schedule from 3 to 5 years. Ms. Grammer commented the staggering of re-rate allows for an increase of an internal assessment of more houses.

Mr. Bertino stated the new Chief Assessor was brought on as an Assistant 3.5 years ago. Mr. McGrath asked if the Chief Assessor was certified. Mr. Bertino replied in the affirmative but followed up by saying the current Chief is a lower grade than the previous Chief Assessor. Mr. McGrath asked about future plans regarding the Chief Assessor's salary. Mr. Bertino stated the benchmark is typically one full tax-setting cycle. Over the next two years the salary would be raised within the current grade. After that time period a raise in grade may be warranted and will thereby need to be brought to the Personnel Advisory Committee.

Mr. McGrath asked for a brief summary on what was included in the salary line item. Mr. Bertino stated it included the merit raises (\$6,700) and the base salaries with a 2.5% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). Mr. Bertino reported his original COLA of 3.0% was adjusted by the Selectmen to 2.5%.

Historically, the Assessor's Board has been required to obtain 8-12 Continuing Education Units (CEU) annually. It is difficult to find elected Board members. In order to compensate any costs associated with the attainment of CEUs, Board members are awarded stipends of \$83.00 per month.

Chairman Codair asked how many full-time employees work at the Assessor's Office. Mr. Bertino replied there are two full-time employees – the Chief Assessor and the Assistant. Both have fixed working hours and are paid hourly.

G.A.R. Memorial Library

Representative – Ms. Susan Babb, Library Director

Board Members Present – Ms. Alexandra Guralnick

Ms. Holly Cole

Ms. Amy Custance

Chairman Codair invited Ms. Babb to review the Library Budget. Chairman Codair's initial inquiry was directed to the increase in the salary line from last year. Both Ms. Babb and Mr. Bertino affirmed the salaries remained the same and any increase was due to the COLA. Mr. Bertino further explained that depending on the calendar, the number of days per fiscal year would vary by a few days.

Mr. Phillips remarked on the \$800.00 increase in expenses. Ms. Babb stated a fair amount of expenses is earmarked for membership to the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium. The library is also continuously updating technology with the purchase of new computers. Mr. McGrath requested an expanded explanation on the line item *Books and Periodicals*. Ms. Babb remarked in order for the Library to maintain accreditation, they are required to purchase a certain amount of materials. Ms. Grammer asked if they used all of the budget allotted last year. Ms. Babb stated they did turn back a small amount of the budget. Chairman Codair stated the line items seemed straightforward. The Board agreed. Ms. Babb then brought up the Special Article Request.

G.A.R. Memorial Library Special Article

Article: to remodel the Children's Room into a dynamic early learning space

Amount Requested: \$30,401.00

Ms. Babb explained the funds would be used for the purchase of mobile furniture in the children's room. Mr. McGrath commented free cash would cover the purchase. Ms. Babb remarked the current furniture was installed along the walls and attached to the floor 40 years ago. Mobile furniture would allow for greater flexibility in the library space meeting needs for now and for the future. Book shelves attached to the walls will remain. Ms. Grammer inquired if the children's room was handicap accessible. Ms. Babb stated it was. However, the second floor of the library is not, but as needed programs can be moved to the first floor. She continued by stating the changes to make the first floor space more flexible would help eliminate any current barriers.

Ms. Babb shared the Library has received a two year federal grant of \$15,000.00 through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) to address spaces for both Teens and Tweens. This would include: increase in technology, furnishings, special programs and a small salary for support staff.

Chairman Codair asked if there any long term goals for the second floor. Ms. Babb replied they are looking into another grant, which would cover the cost of a feasibility study and the possibility of increased accessibility with the installation of an elevator. Suggested uses may be the establishment of historical archives. Currently, the space is used as storage by the Library staff.

Mr. McGrath expressed concern that the 2019 Centennial is fast approaching and planning is very time consuming. Mr. McGrath directed his remarks to the Library Board of Trustees. As an integral part of the town's past, he requested the Library take a leading role in the planning. Ms. Guralnick remarked the Library possessed several 1918 pageant materials.

Mr. McGrath brought up future capital plans which would allow the Library to host more Community activities. He was particularly interested in the courtyard area. Accessibility would need to be addressed. Ms. Babb stated the Library will be applying for a grant funding a feasibility study by the end of March. Ms. Babb remarked this would be the first step in developing future plans.

Chairman Codair asked if the Library had received bids for the moveable furniture. Ms. Babb replied they had received a quote from a local company in order to accurately prepare the special article request. The quote was provided by Tucker Library Interiors based in Manchester, NH. According to standard practices, they will obtain two additional quotes.

Chairman Codair asked Ms. Babb if the article were approved will the furniture be acquired this year. Mr. Babb replied it would be this year. Ms. Grammer followed up by inquiring if the installation was included in the quote. Ms. Babb said it was included and there may be some involvement of the West Newbury DPW.

Special requests for Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds will be used for the repair of the side brick way and resetting the curb. Mr. McGrath passed on the information the distributors of the funds — the Conservation Preservation Committee (CPC) will meet with the Finance Committee on Monday March 14, 2016.

Planning Commission

Representative – Ms. Leah Zambernardi, Planning Administrator

Review of Budget

Chairman Codair remarked there was no change in salary. However, there was a \$1,500.00 increase in expenses. Ms. Zambernardi stated the increase is to be dedicated for professional technical services in the form of a minutes note taker for meetings.

Chairman Codair asked if the \$1,000.00 budget for advertising was necessary. Ms. Zambernardi replied in the affirmative stating the Board is obligated to advertise Public Hearings. The cost of each advertisement is \$200.00.

Chairman Codair suggested the Planning Board may benefit by working with other departments with regards to a shared group of note takers.

Ms. Grammer requested information regarding two projects falling under the realm of the Planning Board:

1. Downtown Revitalization
2. Affordable Housing

Ms. Zambernardi explained the town applied for a grant in order to conduct a market study by a state-funded consultant.

Ms. Grammer inquired about fees or funds collected from developers who were unable to provide 10% affordable housing in their construction due to infrastructure issues. Ms. Zambenardi reported the town recently received a fee installment of \$14,750.00. Mr. Bertino remarked the monies would normally be deposited into a housing trust fund. West Newbury does not have such a fund set up. Ms. Grammer asked if the funds were dedicated. *Mr. Bertino replied they were and asked Ms. Zambenardi to include the funds collected in the annual report.*

Water Department

Representative – Mr. Michael Gootee, Superintendent

Board Members Present – Mr. Albert Knowles, Chairman

Mr. W. Lawrence Corcoran

Mr. Robert Janes

Mr. Bertino prefaced by stating unlike other committees, the Water Commissioners are elected officials. Additionally, the Water Department utilizes an Enterprise Fund Account System. This type of fund ties fees with services. In other words, if the cost of service increases then the fee will as well. Mr. Gootee was invited to sit at the table with the Finance Committee.

Mr. Gootee stated the Water Department runs close to 1,000 services annually. Mr. Winch inquired as to the number of full-time employees at the Water Department. Mr. Gootee responded there two full-time employees — the Superintendent and an operator/laborer. There is also a part-time administrative assistant (24 hours) working in the office.

Chairman Codair noted there was an approximate 10% rise in insurance. She questioned Mr. Bertino if the amount reflected a true number. Mr. Bertino replied from year to year insurance rates will fall in a range of 4.5 to 11.8%. This year West Newbury's rate was 9.5%. Last year the rate was 10.9% Mr. Gootee commented some expenses such as retirement and insurance are uncontrollable. Mr. Phillips requested a breakdown of other expenses. Mr. Gootee responded other expenses include:

- Office
- Contractors
- Electrical
- Chemical

Mr. Phillips remarked West Newbury buys water from Newburyport. He asked Mr. Gootee how much was the cost of water West Newbury buys from its neighbor is. Mr. Gootee reported the annual cost ranges from \$100,000 to \$200,000. Mr. Gootee state the department is actively looking for a new water source. Chairman Codair inquired if there is another water source. Mr. Gootee said West Newbury previously had purchased water from Groveland. However, the quality of the water was poor. The possibility of using wells within the town lines is also being explored.

Mr. Phillips inquired as to the length of the water agreement with Newburyport. Mr. Gootee stated it was more of a timing issue. The budget for West Newbury is finalized at the Town Meeting in April. Newburyport sets its budget at the end of June. An Article for \$40,000.00 was written to cover the increase of 26% increase in rate from Newburyport. Mr. Gootee further stated West Newbury is paid through June.

Mr. Winch brought up instances of water abuse especially by residents living along the river. It appears that during the summer months there are people who choose to ignore water bans in

place. Mr. Gootee replied there is definitely an increase in conservation rate issues during that time period. Mr. Winch remarked the abusers increase the rates for all residents of West Newbury.

Chairman Codair inquired about fees or penalties issued during a water ban. Mr. Gootee answered it was difficult to actually find residents in the act of noncompliance. Many offenders would water in the evening after business hours. If an individual is found breaking the water ban, they would be issued a written warning. In some circumstances, the residents may be irrigating using water from a private well.

Mr. McGrath asked if the Water Department has investigated if revenues collected covered both wage and project costs. Mr. Gootee stated there had been a rate study in the recent past. Mr. McGrath requested an example of a service cost. Mr. Gootee responded there is a \$3,000.00 fee followed up by stating the cost of connecting a new 30-unit construction would calculate to be 30 X \$3,000.00 or \$90,000.00. Mr. Gootee agreed. He further remarked Tata & Howard Engineering Systems determines the pipe sizing. The study is paid for the study by the developer.

Article \$57,300.00

- ***\$50,000.00 New Pickup Truck***
- ***\$7,300.00 hydraulic pump and generator***

Mr. Gootee explained the Water Department is currently running a 2003 pickup truck. The request is to obtain a new Chevrolet Silverado with a hydraulic pump installed. The Department also requested a separate hydraulic pump with a generator. The portable pump would be used in areas inaccessible to the truck.

Ms. Grammer questioned if the hydraulic pump could be removed from the old truck. Mr. Gootee stated it was part of the truck. Mr. Wench asked what the plan was for the old truck, but would be a detachable item on the new truck. Mr. Gootee stated it would go to a surplus supply auction.

Chairman Codair asked the approximate annual maintenance cost is for the old truck. Mr. Gootee estimated the cost to be \$3,000.00. Mr. McGrath asked if it also had a plow. Mr. Gootee replied it does have a plow. *Mr. McGrath suggested Mr. Gootee consult with Mr. Bertino about his handling of surplus vehicles.*

Article \$42,000.00

- ***Step 1 in building new water tank, clear land for easement to the tank***

Currently, if the water main were to break, a portion of West Newbury would be without water. The installation of a water tank and connecting pipes would improve water quality by increasing water flow in the current system.

The site of the proposed water tank is near Hilltop Circle. The Article would fund step one which involves the removal of both trees and stumps creating a 50 foot easement to the potential tank. Ms. Grammer mentioned the Article was previously submitted but later pulled. Mr. Gootee agreed but stated it was the same price.

The easement would pass between two properties. The Right of Way needed to connect the tank was approved at the All Town Meeting last year. Mr. Gootee reported the pipes in the area are 8

inches in diameter. The code now is 16 inches. Chairman Codair asked why the original Article was pulled. Mr. Gootee reported, at the time, more pressing issues arose. He also stated \$200,000.00 is banked in anticipation of drilling a new well. The town must receive permission from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The process would not be complete by April. The earliest this could be addressed would be at the Fall Meeting. Ms. Grammer inquired about the testing involved in finding water. Mr. Gootee stated testing takes 6-8 weeks. Initial results look promising. The Water Department is looking at an aquifer below the Jarvis property. The aquifer would produce 1,000,000 gallons of water daily.

Wellfield #1, located at 999 Main Street, produces half the water for the town. Newburyport provides the remainder of the water.

Article \$30,000.00

- ***Insertion valves and labor***

Currently, water valves were placed along the water main in 1936. The distance between valves is significant. Insertion valves would allow small areas of pipe to be isolated in the event of a break. Timing is important because Route 113 will be repaved this summer and therefore the ground would be opened. Mr. Gootee explained the insertion valves is expensive but can be placed in live.

Ms. Grammer inquired about the level of lost and unaccounted water. Mr. Gootee said it was 7%. He also stated in order to be allowed to drill for a new water source, the amount of lost water must be under 10%.

Chairman Codair questioned with regards to the insertion valves, if the ground were not opened would the Water Department proceed with the insertion valves. Mr. Gootee replied no but by coordinating with the paving project the labor costs would be reduced.

Mr. McGrath asked for the difference in price between water shut off and insertion valves. Mr. Gootee explained the insertion valves would run approximately 50% more.

Police Department

Representative – Chief Arthur Reed

Chairman Codair invited Chief Reed (who had begun work for the town only recently, having replaced retired Chief Holmes) to join the committee at the table. In the Police Department, salaries are negotiated therefore Mr. Bertino reported a COLA is not factored into the salaries. Mr. McGrath stated the Police and Dispatcher salaries have been locked in.

Overtime & Reserve Officers

Chairman Codair questioned the requested increase of \$3,000.00 for Overtime. Chief Reed explained his budget was inherited but he was aware the Overtime budget was short \$4,000.00 last year. The Chief stated the Overtime budget is difficult to anticipate. Part-timers or Reservists are not always available to fill shifts. Most have other commitments and consequently are not able to work. Chairman Codair commented there are eight individuals on the Reserve list. She questioned how many have been able to fill a shift since his appointment. Chief Reed replied no shifts have been filled by a Reserve Officer during his six week tenure. Chairman Codair requested why an individual would remain on the Reserve List if they are unable to commit. The Chief commented that situation would change.

Mr. McGrath stated there are 7 full-time officers on the West Newbury Police Force. Chief Reed commented, unlike the Reservists, the full-time Police Officers have a vested interest in the community and are therefore willing to work the overtime when necessary. Mr. McGrath suggested if Reserve Officers are not willing to take shifts, they may not be reappointed. He also mentioned \$35,000.00 was allotted to overtime in FY16. At the 6 month point approximately $\frac{7}{12}$ of the amount had been expended.

Staffing Issues

Mr. Winch inquired if the addition of one more full-time officer would reduce the need of part-time officers. Chief Reed remarked Mr. Winch's timing was good. He stated, in his 6 week tenure, he has noted two shortfalls:

1. Safety Issue
 - a. There is only one officer on the Midnight shift, and it extremely difficult to get Reserve officers to take this shift.
 - b. For safety sake, there should be two officers on each shift.
2. School Resource Police Officer
 - a. This position is an important step in becoming a community friendly Police Department
 - b. The officer would also be available to work Midnight shift on holidays and school vacations.

Chairman Codair inquired if the school officer could act as a buffer for Overtime. Chief Reed responded it would not be possible to pull the officer from the school. He envisions the officer would spend a majority of their time at the high school and spend the remainder of the time at the Middle School and the elementary school in town.

Mr. McGrath stated if the Chief were indeed passionate about the addition of a School Resource Officer, there remains time to submit an Article for this year's budget. As a "heads up", Mr. McGrath warned Chief Reed the topic has previously been brought up with mixed reviews. Mr. McGrath continued with an inquiry regarding the thoughts of the Groveland and Merrimac Police Chiefs on the subject. Chief Reed replied he had spoken to both and they are in agreement about the need of a School Resource Officer.

Mr. Wench queried Selectman Anderson regarding the possibility of the other towns contributing to the salary of the Resource Officer. Selectman Anderson replied the Superintendent of Pentucket is willing to pay a portion of the salary.

Ms. Grammer stated each town oversees its own elementary school. She followed up by questioning if the School Resource Officer would visit the elementary schools in Groveland and Merrimac. Chief Reed replied in the negative.

Ms. Grammer suggested a scenario in which a 911 call was placed from the Middle School. She questioned as to where the call would be directed. Chief Reed replied the call would be received by the West Newbury Dispatcher because the School Office is located in the town.

After a discussion whether the Middle School was located in West Newbury and/or Groveland,

Ms. Grammer reiterated West Newbury has 2 patrol officers on both the day and evening shifts but only 1 officer on the Midnight shift. Mr. Phillips asked about the possibility of backup support for the Midnight from Newburyport or Groveland. Chief Reed responded they each have to deal with their own issues and therefore cannot always be counted on.

Ms. Grammer requested a run through of the activities of the Midnight shift. Chief Reed responded the first few hours of the shift involve monitoring pass through travel in the town. This period is followed by a lull allowing the officer to complete security check lists. The traffic pattern picks up again between 4:30 and 5:00 a.m.

Request for New Cruiser

Mr. McGrath noted in the FY17 requested budget, there was an Article for a Vehicle Request. The chief stated the oldest vehicle has 112,000 miles on the odometer. As a police vehicle, it most likely has idled for a period of 4,100 hours which impacts the Power Tran. Ms. Grammer inquired if the replacement car would be the same type of vehicle as the SUV recently purchased. Chief Reed responded it would be the same.

Chairman Codair stated the expense line increased \$2,000.00 from last year. Mr. Bertino responded the increase was an inflationary cost for maintenance of equipment such as computers.

Mr. McGrath presented an account of the Police vehicles. Prior to 2006, the Police Department maintained 4 cars. Currently there are 5 vehicles:

- Ford Explorer
An unmarked vehicle purchased for the
chief before last.
- 2—Ford Taurus
Marked
- 2—Ford Crown Victoria
Marked

If one vehicle was sidelined, the Police would be maintaining a fleet the same size as it had prior to 2006. Chief Reed replied a new vehicle would maintain the status quo. He also stated the alternative would be an increase in the vehicle maintenance costs. When asked if there were other reasons to have an additional vehicle, Chief Reed confirmed that the reason is fleet management.

Chief Reed remarked in his past experience (in N.H.) officers on detail duty would use the police cars. The Utility Company needing the service would pay a fee which would be deposited into a revolving account dedicated to the purchase of new vehicles. Selectman Anderson asked if it were possible, where the fee money would be placed. Mr. Bertino was not aware of the legality of collecting fees in Massachusetts and expressed concern about a possible backlash. Mr. McGrath stated in most municipalities, the officer would use their personal vehicles. Chief Reed followed up with the comment cruisers are more visible and therefore safer.

Ms. Grammer asked if at any given time not all of the cars are on the road, in light of the fact that only two officers are usually on a given shift. Chief Reed replied in the affirmative. He believes the amount of vehicles now in use by the Police is working and allows for a rotation of vehicles.

Chairman Codair asked the approximate value of the older vehicle. Chief Reed remarked the car was most likely valued \$1,000.00 to \$1,200.00.

Mr. Phillips summarized the Police Department vehicle inventory:

- 2—Ford Taurus
- 1—SUV Ford Explorer
- 2—old LTD (Crown Victoria)

Ms. Grammer questioned if West Newbury did hire a School Resource Officer, would a car be dedicated to the officer. Chief Reed stated if a car were available, they could use it. He added he was not looking to add to the fleet for the additional officer.

Public Safety Dispatch

Representative – Chief Arthur Reed

Chairman Codair noted a raise in salaries by approximately \$30,000.00. Mr. Bertino stated the contract has been settled. There are currently three full-time dispatchers. The Department is actively recruiting for a fourth member whose salary is included. Chief Reed stated the West Newbury Police are accredited by the state but the Dispatch Center is not. The position to be filled is that of a lead dispatcher who would assist the Department in obtaining accreditation.

Chairman Codair questioned if the Department was adding a fourth person, why raise the overtime budget. Mr. Bertino remarked the West Newbury dispatcher's salary levels are low compared to the surrounding towns. Once a fourth person is hired, we should see a reduction in overtime.

Ms. Grammer inquired if there were a similar situation with the part-time dispatchers as there was with the Police Reserve Officers. Chief Reed commented overall it is difficult to find dispatchers. Originally the position was clerical and now it is considered professional requiring medical 911 training.

Chairman Codair stated there is little change in expenses for the department. Chief Reed was thanked for his time.

Board of Fire Engineers

Representative – Chief Michael Dwyer

Chief Dwyer reported no basic changes. Mr. Bertino mentioned the increase in expenses is driven by COLA. Chief Dwyer stated the \$1,000.00 increase in licensing fees is the cost, set-up, and maintenance of an electronic medical call system. There is an annual fee associated with the system. Chairman Codair stated next year the amount should decrease because there will be no set-up fee. Chief Dwyer agreed.

Mr. McGrath mentioned previously the Miscellaneous Fire Department wages included stipends and extra duty fire inspections. Currently, personnel are paid by the hour.

Mr. McGrath asked Chief Dwyer about fees collected for fire code and tank removal inspections. The Chief replied they collect \$25.00 per permit. Mr. McGrath asked if the fee balanced the cost of service. ***He asked if Chief Dwyer would reach out to the local Chief's Association to inquire the level of their fees.***

Mr. McGrath noted the Capital Outlay dedicated to a new truck. He recollected, in 2009, a truck was leased but to his knowledge has not been paid off. Mr. Bertino suggested he was not a fan of leasing. ***He will look into paying it off.*** Mr. McGrath stated they would need to present it to the Selectmen.

Ms. Grammer questioned the status of the Breathing Apparatus owned by the Department. Chief Dwyer remarked they are near the end of their productive life span. Unfortunately, the Department was unable to acquire a grant for the purchase of new equipment last year. ***The Chief will mount a joint effort with Mr. Bertino to improve the verbiage of a new application. If the grant is approved, the topic will be brought before the town in the Fall.***

Mr. McGrath was also interested in the condition of the protective clothing. Chief Dwyer stated some of the clothing is in better shape than others. The Fire Department plans to ask for gear replacement next year for the core group of 15-17 individuals. ***They will be actively searching for grants to replace the clothing.***

Next year the Department would also want to replace the tanker. In the past, they have experienced success in obtaining grants in this area.

Additionally, Chief Dwyer is investigating Federal grants to replace the current air packs. The most popular type costs \$4,000.00 per unit. Mr. McGrath asked how many unit comprise a full complement. Chief Dwyer answered 28 units represent a full complement. Ideally, all of the units would be purchased at once to avoid some changes in style which can occur over the years. By owning all units of the same type, training is streamlined and also allows a smooth transition during an emergency situation.

FinCom Business

- In reference to the Article Request reducing the FinCom quorum from 4 to 3. Mr. McGrath reported a public hearing is only necessary in cases of zoning. ***The committee will wait to learn the thoughts of the Selectmen.***
- During the next meeting FinCom will meet with:
 - Inspection Services
 - Pentucket Regional School System
 - Finance Department
 - Town Clerk
- Mr. Bertino stated the CPC will not be able to meet until March 14, 2016.
- The All Town Meeting is scheduled for April 25, 2016.
 - Special Town Warrant to be submitted by April 15, 2016
- Mr. McGrath stated the committee should avoid discussing personnel issues, such as COLA, when guests from other departments are present. The committee members agreed.

Upcoming Schedule

The next meeting of the Finance Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, March 2, 2016 at 7:00 PM.

The Committee meeting adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Mahoney
Recording Secretary