

**West Newbury Finance Committee  
Minutes of the Meeting  
Monday, April 25, 2016**

Chairman Codair called the Finance Committee to order at 6:05 p.m. in the Town Annex with Mr. DeLena, Mr. McGrath, Mr. Winch, and Ms. Grammer present. Mr. Bertino was also present.

***Public Comment***

Mr. Richard Baker approached FinCom regarding Articles 24 and 25.

***Board of Assessors***

***Representative — Mr. Richard Baker, Chairman***

Mr. Baker remarked both Articles had been discussed in Committee. However, the Board considered them in process and has not voted on the Articles. The Board had not realized the Articles had been forwarded until the FinCom Booklet was released. Mr. Baker wishes to affirm the Articles had not been presented at the request of the Board of Assessors.

***Article 24 — Vote to accept the Provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 59, Section 5, Clause 22, which section authorizes the town, to grant the exemptions for real estate taxes available pursuant to MGL c. 59 Section 5 Clause 22 A-F to otherwise eligible persons who have resided in the Commonwealth for one year prior to the date of filing for exemptions granted for any fiscal year beginning on or after July 1, 2016, This acceptance will reduce the residency requirement for veterans who were not domiciled in Massachusetts six months before entering the service from five years to one year before application. By request of the Board of Assessors.***

Mr. Baker reported this Article could have a large impact on an individual veteran. In some cases a veteran may be eligible for zero property tax. He continued by saying the state requires towns to offer veterans exemptions following five years of residency.

Article 24 proposes the wait time in West Newbury be lowered from 5 years to one year of residency. The Board was concerned the reduced wait period may attract outsiders to move to West Newbury. Mr. Baker further stated, depending on the disability, the veteran could receive 100% tax relief. Ms. Grammer inquired about the amount of taxes lost by the town. Mr. Baker replied it was not a great amount of money. Mr. McGrath asked what the town would be saving. Mr. Baker replied the savings would be the cost of four years of exemptions. He clarified, it was not about the money, but rather about the principle of due process. Chairman Codair queried if it would apply to new residents only. Mr. Baker replied in the affirmative. Mr. DeLena asked for specific examples of a resident who is able to receive a 100% exemption. Mr. Baker offered two examples: one of a paraplegic veteran and the other a surviving spouse of a qualified disabled veteran. Chairman Codair inquired if there were any veterans in town who were 100% disabled. Mr. Baker reported there were one or two. Mr. Winch shared, he himself, is a 30% disabled veteran. In his case, he had waited the five years and gained eligibility last year. Mr. Winch remarked he had resided in various towns in both New Hampshire and New York. The wait time in each town differed from six months to several years.

Mr. McGrath suggested if the Board of Assessors believes West Newbury to be a magnet town regarding veteran benefits, the Board of Assessors as a whole should take action.

**Article 25 — *Vote to accept the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 59, Section 5, Clause 37A, which section authorizes the town to grant exemption for real estate taxes in the amount of five hundred dollars to a blind person who is a legal resident, to be effective for exemptions granted for any fiscal year beginning July 1, 2017. This will replace the exemption granted in MGL c. 59, Sec. 5 Clause 37. By request of the Board of Assessors.***

Mr. Baker stated the difference in funds regarding this Article is minimal. Once again, it is important to follow due process. Chairman Codair stated she understood the Board's desire to follow due process and suggested Mr. Baker speak when the Articles are introduced. Mr. Baker remarked he would request no action on both Articles. Mr. Bertino was of the opinion, the Article will be presented by the Board of Selectmen. Additionally, he mentioned the Assessor will dispute the Article.

The Committee considered its agenda.

**Article 23 — *Intergenerational Community Center Committee Representatives — Ms. Marge Peterson, Mr. Richard Cushing, Ms. Mary Harada, and Ms. Susan Babb***

***Vote to transfer available funds the sum of \$6,000.00 for administrative costs for the Intergenerational Community Center Committee. By request of the Community Center Committee and the Board of Selectmen.***

Chairman Codair noted the requested amount had been reduced from \$10,000.00 to \$6,000.00. The chairman asked who was presenting the Article. Today, FinCom had received a copy of the proposal put forth by the Intergenerational Community Center Committee (CCC). The CCC (Ms. Peterson and Mr. Cushing) arrived at 6:45 and challenged the FinCom rationale. Chairman Codair suggested the information presented did not alter her opinion due to the late submission of the presentation. Ms. Grammer agreed stating more information is necessary in order to vote in favor of the Article. Mr. McGrath stated the mission statement presumes the need for a new facility to accommodate activities the Council on Aging offers, but does not provide concrete examples. Mr. DeLena attempted to describe FinCom process and Ms. Peterson interrupted. Mr. McGrath also proposed a survey could be conducted by volunteers and bringing a consultant aboard may be somewhat premature.

Members of the Committee approached FinCom. Ms. Peterson and Mr. Cushing each spoke. Ms. Peterson noted the committee had reduced the amount of their request to conduct a feasibility study regarding the possibility of establishing such a facility. Mr. Cushing reported they had received a quote of \$250.00 for a facilitator. Chairman Codair stated some clarification of what the funds are to be used for is necessary. Ms. Peterson disagreed stating it was a feasibility study to determine if an Intergenerational Community Center could be established in West Newbury. She stressed there are fees involved for residents to attend centers in nearby cities and towns. Chairman Codair suggested other committees had developed without seed money. Mr. Cushing said there is a need for a proposal and cost analysis. Ms. Grammer asked if the committee had approached the CPC. They have administrative funds available for the open space assessment of property without going through the town. Mr. Winch added the possibility of removing the Article until the Fall Meeting to allow time to gather more facts. Ms. Peterson disagreed. Ms. Grammer remarked intergenerational gatherings do not always need to take place at a designated facility. She cited the recent Fire Department's Pancake Breakfast as a prime example. Chairman Codair asked for a vote.

*As a consideration to the CCC request with new information, FinCom re-voted, 0-5-0.*

***Article 11 — Vote to transfer the sum of \$9,422.00 from the Septic Loan Revolving Account for the repayment of debt service. By request of the Board of Health.***

Mr. Bertino proposed a correction in the omnibus budget changing the amount of \$9,422.00 to \$21,191.73. He reported nothing else changed. A short time later, Mr. Bertino spoke with the Selectmen. It was suggested to leave the Article as is to prevent confusion. The debt is not due until February allowing time to readdress in the Fall.

***Line Item 24 — Board of Health Salary***

Ms. Grammer proposed the salary portion of the budget be passed over to the Selectman because they have access to employee personnel files unavailable to FinCom members.

***Upcoming Schedule***

Chairman Codair suggested FinCom meet on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. to review past minutes and develop a game plan for future meetings. Mr. Bertino also noted there may be some minor changes to the budget during the last week in June.

The Committee meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Mahoney  
Recording Secretary