

**West Newbury Finance Committee**  
**Minutes of the meeting**  
**Wednesday, July 12, 2017**

The Finance Committee meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. in the second floor hearing room of the 1910 Building with Chairman DeLena, Mr. Ellis, Ms. Grammer, Dr. Beaudoin and Mr. McGrath in attendance.

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

**Transfer Requests**

The Committee reviewed the following outstanding transfer requests:

- \$4K from Dispatch Salaries & Wages to Dispatch Overtime—to cover additional overtime costs
- \$11K from Police Salaries & Wages to Police Overtime—to cover additional overtime costs
- \$5K from Fire Dept Fire Drills to Fire Dept Fire Alarms—to cover additional fire calls
- \$6K from Fire Dept Fire Admin to Fire Dept Other Wages—to cover additional fire calls
- \$2.5K from Town Clerk Salary/Wages to Town Clerk Expenses—to cover additional costs of digitizing records

Ms. Grammer explained that the police department's form was outdated and the footnote limitations (some of which were not met by certain pending requests) no longer apply, according to Town Counsel/Clerk McCarron, because the recent statute giving municipalities greater flexibility has liberalized this transfer process.

Chairman DeLena noted that the digital imaging cost was a high percentage of the account, raising the question whether there is sufficient money for the job. *Chairman DeLena will contact Mike McCarron for clarification.*

*The Committee voted unanimously to approve the transfers. Ms. Grammer will provide copies to the BOS, Finance Dept and Town Clerk.*

**Updates on Current Town Issues**

Financing the new water tank. Ms. Grammer noted that the financing process for the \$1.7M Brake Hill water tank is underway, to lock in favorable interest rates. The financing will use the Town's credit capacity, but water customers will pay for the tank.

Potential Town sewer project for Town center. The Committee considered an email from the Planning Board indicating that a grant-funded study of a Town small package sewage system to revitalize Town center would be getting underway. A discussion of the surrounding issues ensued.

As to why this may be thought to be needed, Chairman DeLena observed that there may be two camps: one that sees the status quo as acceptable and another that would like to increase the tax base with commercial and retail businesses and decrease reliance on home property taxes. Mr. McGrath noted that it is not clear how greater tax revenues would result absent restructuring of

Town taxation mechanisms. The Town taxes businesses based on the same value-of-property appraisals that apply to residential parcels.

Mr. McGrath further reported that one way to finance a project that specifically benefits particular buildings is through a local improvement district that could float a bond. This would avoid burdening taxpayers with costs that afford them little or no benefit. Ms. Grammer noted that the Town is looking at substantial costs for a new school building.

The Planning Board asked that a member of the Finance Committee serve as a member of the working group that will guide the study process. *The Committee voted unanimously to appoint Dr. Beaudoin as the FinCom representative—provided that Town Counsel agrees that a FinCom member may participate in such a group (in view of the bylaw barring FinCom membership other than on specifically designated committees).*

Town Manager process. Mr. McGrath said that the legislature may approve the Town's proposal by August. Thought should be given to the plan for getting this in place—the timeline and potential new FY18 cost. It may be that some of this will need to be addressed in Fall Town Meeting. Mr. McGrath further noted that consideration should be given to a vehicle and an administrative assistant for the new Town Manager. Chairman DeLena said that the only cost he has seen is the salary of approximately \$140K.

Pentucket school building. Ms. Grammer gave an update of the effort to build a new high school (and middle school, combined but in separate wings). The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has committed to pay for a good portion of the school and is very involved in the process. Pentucket has an Owner's Project Manager (OPM) and now is in the process of working with MSBA to select a designer/architect shortly. The designer will then work with educators and other stakeholders to determine Pentucket's needs and design work will likely start this fall.

While West Newbury has a School Stabilization Fund with over \$450K so far, there has been substantial discussion in the School Building Committee about the need to garner the votes in *all* the town meetings to support this significant additional cost. *In response to a request from Mr. McGrath, Ms. Grammer will obtain a copy of the schools agreement among the three towns and will supply minutes from the Pentucket School Building Committee.*

Community center proposal. Mr. McGrath noted that it is not clear how the Community Center Committee has used appropriated funds so far, or plans for the future. No one knew how the Community Center Committee used a line item in the omnibus budget for ongoing funding. Ordinarily an ad hoc committee, which is not an ongoing standing Town function, requires an article at Town meeting. *The Committee generally agreed to pursue this question.*

## Meeting Minutes

*FinCom members voted to approve minutes of June 12, 2017, 4-0-0; Mr. McGrath, who was not present, abstaining.*

## Future FinCom Meeting & FinCom Business

*The Committee generally agreed that the Massachusetts FinCom Handbook should be put on our website, provided there is no copyright or other restriction that would bar this. Ms. Grammer will investigate and upload to the website if allowed.*

*The Committee voted unanimously to name Chairman DeLena to the Investment Advisory Committee and Dr. Beaudoin to the Capital Improvements Committee.*

Upcoming meeting: Monday, July 24, 2017 with the Selectmen

- 7:00 p.m.-with BOS

The Committee generally discussed items that should be discussed with the Selectmen. Some included

- Planning and items that would need to support the Town Manager initiative
- Fall meeting timelines and deadlines and deadline enforcement—ideally to avoid the bind FinCom was in at Spring meeting
- Improved audio in Town Meeting—*Mr. Ellis will undertake some research and communication with BOS about this, inasmuch as he has hearing issues and lip reads*

*It was generally agreed that Committee members will consider other points to be raised at the upcoming meeting and will email them directly to Chairman DeLena.*

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer  
Secretary

*Meeting materials:*

Transfer requests

Planning Board septic study information