

MEETING MINUTES-WEST NEWBURY  
FINANCE COMMITTEE

Date & Time: Tuesday March 19th 2019 7pm

Location : 1910 Building 1st Floor Hearing Room

Attendees: Gary L. Roberts Jr., Chairman, Forbes Durey, Brad Beaudoin, Nathan Kelly, Jessica Knezek, Laurie Zywiak, Angus Jennings

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Public Comment, Public comment is limited to 2 minutes per resident for items on the agenda. The chair may allow for more time depending on number of residents seeking to participate.

Vanessa Johnson-Hall with Greenbelt is present to answer any questions regarding CPC items with Greenbelt support.

3. Late File Items

none

4. Approval of minutes

3/12/19 Minutes approved 5-0 with clarification of the percentage change from the citizen's petition regarding CPC property tax assessment; it should read .5%

5. Review Town Manager proposed budget by department. Review non capital associated articles

Pentucket Regional School District, Business Manager Greg Lebreque present

16 West Newbury students attended Whittier as of fall 2018

Proposed budget increase for Pentucket school system is 2.1%, partially acknowledging that they are asking the member towns to make a significant capital investment in a new middle-school/high-school. There was the removal of 1 teaching position. It was noted that school enrollment is down 33% over 10 years. Special education costs are up \$800,000, as this is a cost that cannot be controlled because it is state mandated. This accounts for nearly 30% of the districts budget, up from 20% 10 years ago.

Assessment is up \$180K, however this is the smallest increase of the three towns. State funding is also down another 100K this year, with state funds going to the larger cities of the commonwealth.

Forbes asked about SRO funding and what mechanisms are in place to help ensure the costs are evenly distributed with regard to not only wages but all costs including benefits. Lebreque was that there is no formal agreement with Pentucket, historically \$26,000 has been given each year to the town as compensation. Forbes asked about the actually total cost is for the SRO position. Jennings did not have the exact figure, but said that the true cost is over \$100,000. Jennings also noted the new SRO has a higher salary then the previous one which also inflates this number.

Vote: 5:0 approve

Article: raise and appropriate \$321,800 to be placed in the special school stabilization fund. No discussion.

Vote 5:0 approve

New Middle School/High school debt authorization article

The Pentucket Regional School District projects that the average tax increase for West Newbury residents will be \$755(\$146M project cost) to fund the new high school/middle school.

Durey asked what costs are not reimbursed- the biggest is land development costs. One of the reasons for increased site development costs is placement of the proposed new building in a different location the the current building to minimize disruption of students during the transition from the old to the new building.

Vote 5:0 approve

CPC, Elisa Grammer, Vanessa Johnson-Hall present

Article: Historic sites survey, Phase II

This article seeks \$25,000 in CPC funding to continue the original historic survey completed last year, adding an additional 80+ buildings to the previous study. They will also be applying for a 50% matching state grant(which was awarded for the first phase).

Vote 4:0, approve, Knezek abstaining

Article: River Rd Conservation Acquisition

\$75,000 in CPC funds, Greenbelt funding \$140,000 + ~\$30,000 for closing costs. The hope is that this plot will allow a hiking trail loop and possibly a parking area. Durey

asked about yearly maintenance costs associated with this acquisition. Greenbelt manages and maintains the trails and there will be no additional costs to the town.

Vote 5:0 approved

Article: Brown Spring Farm

CPC funds \$200,000, Greenbelt funding ~\$230,000

These funds would allow purchasing of a conservation restriction for the Brown Spring farm. The property is being purchased by a private farmer who plans to farm vegetables and sell cut flowers on the land. The current house on the lot is uninhabitable and if it needs to be replaced must match the character of the original house. The restriction would also only allow one house structure. Durey asked about how the conservation restriction would affect the parking areas and farm stand safety improvements. It was stated that changes required to improve safety/meet zoning/building codes would be allowed.

Vote 4:1 approve, Beaudoin dissenting because he did not feel this was an equitable use of town funds, as one party, the farm buyer, would enjoy a disproportionate benefit from this article. He feels that such projects are better suited to organizations like Greenbelt, where its donors give, knowing the funds will be used for such purposes, whereas the tax payers of West Newbury are all required to pay the 3% CPC surcharge but may not necessarily agree with such uses of their money.

CPC Funding article.

This is the standard CPC article. Beaudoin asked that under “funding source” for this article, it state 3% property tax assessment or similar.

Vote 5:0 approve

Library Ramp article

CPC Funds \$17,000. This is a subset of a article originally proposed from the DPW director. It was asked that the funds for this project be requested from the CPC.

Vote 5:0 approve

#### Inspection

Jennings clarified the issue with the building inspectors requested pay increase. It has been approved and both parties are satisfied.

Vote 5:0 approve

#### Animal Control

The final proposed budget is \$24,050 but West Newbury is to supply a new vehicle for the animal control officer. The vehicle to be supplied is a recently retired West Newbury

police cruiser. Beaudoin asked if it was a good investment, paying to have the police cruiser retrofitted, at some cost, to be an animal control vehicle when the police dept. felt this vehicle was at the end of its useful life.

Vote 4:1 approve, Beaudoin dissenting

#### Debt Service

Debt service increase is 1%. This included the final payment for the Dunn Property.

Vote 5:0 approve

#### Town Manager, Finance Dept, Selectmen Office

Combined budgetary increase is 1.83%. Each individual dept is hard to compare with previous years due to personnel and expense line items shifting during the transition to the Town Manager. The Town Manager's budget did have an \$8,500 expense increase for a biyearly informational pamphlet the town manager would like to send to residents to enhance communication with his office and the townspeople.

Vote: 5:0 approve

#### Special Council

This is a new section proposed by the Town Manager. \$15,000 is proposed. Jennings says that independent council is helpful for personnel issues.

Vote 5:0 approve

#### Veteran's Services

Vote 5:0 approve

#### Recreation

The parks and rec commission agreed to waive fees for the West Newbury youth league, this has resulted on loss of \$2350 to the department. This department has a 16% decrease with \$2000 reduction of fees associated with mulching and action cove expenses.

Vote 5:0

#### Bandstand

Vote 5:0

#### Mill pond expense budget

Durey proposed reducing the budget to \$2100(from \$4,200 originally). Previous spending of this department has been around ~\$600, thus the board of selectmen recommended decreasing this budget.

Vote 5:0 approve.

#### Benefits

No discussion.

Vote 5:0 approve

Transfers out

The capital improvement committee recommended \$500,000 to be placed into stabilization as this is the yearly contribution required to maintain positive stabilization account balance based on the current 10-year stabilization table.

Vote 5:0 approve

Article 14: \$70,000 transfer to the pension liability fund. DLS recommends 10% contribution to this fund, which would be ~\$67,000.

Vote 5:0 approve.

Article 15: Amendment to mill pond management plan.

Previously approved changes to the mill pond management plan were not approved by voters, as required by the mill pond management plan. The proposed changes allow equal voting weight for all departments, committees and boards with interest in the mill pond.

Vote : 5:0 approve

Article 2: Revolving account authorization article

No Discussion

Vote 5:0

Vote 5:0 approve

Article #27: budgeting to fully pay expense of SRO

2:3 disapprove, Durey, Beaudoin, Roberts dissenting

Article #28: Dunn Property debt service

Vote 5:0

Article #31: Amendment of department revolving bylaw to include mill pond revolving account.

A balance of \$5237 for a Mill pond expense account was discovered. The creation of a revolving account would allow these funds to stay available for Mill Pond use.

Vote 5:0 approve

Article 12: Amendment of Pentucket Regional School District agreement adding language for emergency contingency planing.

Vote 5:0

Article #25. Zoning amendment relating to erosion and sedimentation.

Vote 5:0 approve

Article 26: Amendment to Town Council Bylaw.

This seeks to create agreement between the Selectmen's policy regarding town council and the town's council bylaw. The proposed bylaw would restrict requests for town council to the town manager or the chairman of the Board of Selectmen as set forth by the current policy drafted by the Board of selectmen.

Vote 5:0 approve

## 6. Communications

DPW article regarding building repairs and improvements as been reduced by \$17,000, originally ear marked for a handicap ramp for the library. These funds have been applied for through the CPC.

## 7. Adjournment