April 14, 2014

Town of West Bridgewater

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting

The meeting convened at 7:01 P.M. in the Selectmen’s Meeting Room in the West Bridgewater Town Hall.

Committee Members Present: Chairman James Lang, Ms. Jeri Scrceni, Mr. Anthony Kinahan, Ms. Cheryl Adams, Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes, and Mr. Steve Currier.

Absent were Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson, Mr. Peter Fredericksen and Ms. Maura Moroni.

Non Committee Members also present: Mr. Chris Iannitelli (Forestry Department), Mr. David Gagne (Administration) and J.P. Waller (Secretary).

Mr. Steve Currier motioned to approve the proposal allowing Chairman James Lang to approve and sign J.P. Waller’s paystubs going forward. Ms. Jeri Scrceni seconded and the Committee voted unanimously in favor of this motion.

Ms. Jeri Scrceni then motioned to approve the February 10, 2014 meeting minutes, attached meeting document. Mr. Anthony Kinahan seconded and the Committee voted unanimously in favor of this motion.

Mr. Chris Iannitelli from the Town Forestry Department entered the meeting at 7:03PM.

Mr. Chris Iannitelli presented a Request for Transfer Funding from the Finance Committee’s Reserve Fund to the Forestry Department for Vehicle Repairs, attached meeting document. He explained the repairs needed and gave a brief explanation of the sandblasting process. He explained how the winter storms cause this issue and that in the past they have performed this repair to prolong the life of the other department vehicles with success. Chairman James Lang noted that over the past years Mr. Chris Iannitelli has been very careful with the town funds. Mr. Steve Currier inquired why we were making repairs now instead of in the winter time; Mr. Chris Iannitelli explained that the highway department needs the truck in the winter to prevent hiring private contractors at a higher cost so the vehicle couldn't be spared. Mr. Steve Currier also inquired what the impact would be if we waited until the next fiscal budget year to make the repairs.  Mr. Chris Iannitelli explained that if the rot got progressively worse the repairs would be more expensive and that doing it sooner rather than later would be cost effective. Mr. Chris Iannitelli also provided a quote from the mechanic, attached meeting document, for a secondary issue with this vehicle related to exhaust repairs. Ms. Jeri Scrceni motioned to approve the Request for Transfer Funding from the Finance Committee’s Reserve Fund to the Forestry Department in the amount of $4200, Mr. Anthony Kinahan seconded and the Committee voted unanimously in favor of this motion.
Mr. Chris Iannitelli exited the meeting.

Mr. David Gagne entered the meeting at 7:10PM.

The next topic up for discussion was a Request for Transfer Funding from the Finance Committee’s Reserve Fund to the Insurance Department, attached meeting document, to pay the 4th Quarter General Liability Insurance bill, attached meeting document. Mr. David Gagne explained that last year the insurance budget wasn’t estimated correctly and provided the Town Expense Ledger, attached meeting document, which highlights this shortcoming. Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes inquired if this would be the final amount for the year or if there would be additional bills due. Mr. David Gagne answered that he believed this was the last installment payment for the year but there were various deductibles that could be needed if a claim were to be made. Mr. Steve Currier recalled that this same budget projection shortcoming happened last year but the amount was much higher and Ms. Jeri Screnci also remembered this and agreed. Mr. Steve Currier motioned to approve the Request for Transfer Funding from the Finance Committee’s Reserve Fund to the Insurance Department in the amount of $6000, Ms. Cheryl Adams seconded and the Committee voted unanimously in favor of this motion.

Mr. Steve Currier then motioned to accept for review the minutes of the March 10, 2014 meeting, attached meeting document. Ms. Cheryl Adams seconded and the Committee voted unanimously in favor of this motion.

Chairman James Lang then started a discussion regarding the scheduling of the next Finance Committee meetings for budget reviews and approvals. Chairman James Lang proposed the following dates: Wednesday April 23rd, Monday April 28th and Wednesday April 30th and the rest of the Committee agreed upon these dates.

Mr. Steve Currier then provided the Committee with an update from the library subcommittee. He informed the Committee that he was alarmed that Library budget was proposing a 23% increase. Mr. Steve Currier brought up that one of the line items included is sick leave buyback for one of the library employees and how the Finance Committee has opposed this practice in the past. Mr. Steve Currier explained that last year this line item was cut but that the library funded it with cuts to the book budget and that he questions whether or not the book budget is that critical if changes could be made like that. He mentioned that in the past the department has stated the book budget must be 19% of the budget to receive funding from the state. Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes mentioned that it might have to do with accreditation and not state grants. Mr. Steve Currier is going to ask the library department again about the details around that clause. He said that he would like representation from the library department to come in to present this budget; Chairman James Lang mentioned we will see what the Selectmen do first because it might be a non-issue if the Selectmen make cuts. Ms. Jeri Screnci explained that the sick leave buyback program counts as salary which then compounds onto the employee’s pension after they retire which can affect the town for decades.

The Committee then went into a discussion about the merits of the subcommittee meetings versus the larger open meetings. Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes mentioned that she preferred the open meeting forum, Chairman James Lang said that he has been seeing positive feedback from the smaller subcommittee.
Chairman James Lang and Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes both shared thoughts on how in previous years there wasn’t as much questioning of department requests. Ms. Jeri Screnci shared that last year she felt that is was very difficult with the open forum because she was unfamiliar with the departments’ needs and that she prefers the smaller meetings because she now understands the departments’ needs better and can now share those thoughts with larger Committee. Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes mentioned that she prefers a less personal approach and prefers a numbers only approach. Chairman James Lang mentioned that he prefers knowing what the departments need because it gives you a better idea of where you can make cuts, Ms. Jeri Screnci agreed with that. Mr. Steve Currier commented that he likes the smaller subcommittee meeting approach for informational purposes, but that at certain dollar amounts the department heads need to be present because the budgets are so large. Ms. Cheryl Adams proposed taking the best of both worlds, so that more difficult or controversial budgets should be discussed at larger open forum meeting, everyone seemed to agree on this that some budgets need to be presented to the entire Committee. Chairman James Lang explained that this is where the sub committee’s stronger knowledge of the specific departments will come in handy in explaining to the larger Committee who is seeing the budget for the first time.

Mr. Steve Currier then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes seconded and the Committee approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:54 PM and the next meeting is scheduled for April 23, 2014 at 7 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

Jeri Screnci, Secretary

Meeting Documents:

1. Copy of February 10, 2014 meeting minutes.
2. Copy of March 10, 2014 meeting minutes.
3. Copy of Request for Funds Transfer for Forestry Departments Truck Repairs
4. Copy of pricing quotes for Forest Department Truck Repairs
5. Copy of Request for Funds Transfer for General Liability Insurance payment.
6. Copy of Bill for General Liability Insurance and budget projection line item.