Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting of Monday December 9, 2013.

Present were: Chairman James Lang, Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson, Secretary Jeri Screnic, Mr. Anthony Kinahan, Ms. Cheryl Adams, Mr. Peter Fredericksen, Mr. Steve Currier, Ms. Maura Moroni, and Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes.

The meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. in the Selectmen’s Meeting Room in Town Hall. Also present at this time were David Gagne, Administrator and Ms. Mary Graf, Executive Director of the Council on Aging.

Ms. Graf presented a Request for Transfer Funding from the Finance Committee Reserve Fund for a new copier/printer/fax/scanner (multifunction device) for the Council on Aging. Administrator Gagne advised committee members that in the fiscal 2014 budget the purchase of the multifunction device had been approved. When the budgets were further decreased by the Board of Selectmen the multifunction device was then eliminated.

Ms. Graf presented the information regarding leasing versus an outright purchase. The purchase price was listed at $8,333. Both lease and purchase information included cost for service and supplies (toner). She further advised us that the present machine is over 9 years old and has in excess of 800,000 copies. Ms. Graf informed the committee that all the functions of the device are utilized. The Council on Aging prints its own newsletter saving outsourcing costs and uses the multifunction device for most printing saving toner use on the expensive desktop printers.

There were questions regarding leasing versus purchase and the advantages of each. Ms. Graf had most of the answers to questions by the committee, but could not answer several questions. These questions centered on the cost of a capital lease, including service costs and the cost of outsourcing the newsletter.

Vice-Chairman Anderson MOVED to table a vote for one month pending more information. Seconded by Ms. Adams and so voted unanimously.

Jeri Screnic then presented the committee with an update regarding the search for a part-time secretary to the finance committee including an overview of the process used by the selection subcommittee. Ms. Screnic advised that the sub committee recommended Adam Linn for the position at a rate of $15.00 per hour. Ms. Screnic MOVED to offer the position to Adam Linn at a rate of $15.00 per hour. Seconded by Mr. Currier and so voted by 6 members. Ms. Croes abstained.

Chairman Lang led a review of the sub-committee assignments for budget reviews (were emailed to members).

Mr. Fredericksen suggested a list of standard questions that should be asked of all departments, starting with, “tell us about your department; show us how it works; show us your wish list; show us your bills; detail budget gaps. Finance committee members were asked to bring or email a list of questions.

The stated goal of this process is to encourage a less adversarial process with better sharing of information and decreasing the time needed for the budget review process.
Chairman Lang advised that the sub-committee pairings were made with attention to the departments and who was visiting.

The Committee reviewed the minutes of October 21, 2013 that were previously accepted for review. Mr. Currier MOVED to approve the minutes. Seconded by Ms. Moroni and so voted unanimously.

The Committee reviewed the minutes of November 4, 2013. Vice-Chairman Anderson MOVED to accept the minutes for review. Seconded by Mr. Currier and so voted unanimously.

A discussion of the budget memorandum circulated to department heads was next along with an explanation of level service versus level funding.

Mr. Gagne advised the committee that he was forwarding the memorandum with attachments, and the Finance Committee sub-committees were one of the attachments. Budgets are due from departments by January 31. The West Bridgewater Schools budget is first reviewed and approved by the School Committee but we may have an opportunity to see it prior to School Committee approval. The School Committee meeting to approve the school budget is a public meeting and Finance Committee members may attend if desired.

Mr. Gagne advised that the budget review includes a review of the first 6 to 8 months of the current year budget, as well as the fiscal 2013 budget.

Mr. Fredericksen questioned why the town would use level service versus level funded. Mr. Gagne replied that it would depend on the current economic condition.

Ms. Moroni suggested that any tax increase not be put into the budget, but set aside and the budget funded from current tax revenues.

Mr. Gagne provided information on the explanation of “free cash” and that any “stabilization fund” use must be approved at Town Meeting. The goal is to increase our Stabilization funds in order to lower the town’s bond rating and allow the town to borrow money at lower interest rates and realize savings.

Mr. Gagne advised that the free cash is approximately $800,000. less the funds due to snow removal overages from fiscal 2013. Our plan could be to present a warrant to put this free cash into Stabilization funds.

Mr. Gagne advised that we could see an additional increase in $500,000 to $600,000 in free cash, but that trash removal costs will increase and this increase could even be double our present costs.

Vice-Chairman Anderson suggested that we advise departments that there should not be any increases of more than 5%. There was discussion about this suggestion.

Ms. Coree asked if committee members can contribute questions from which we can derive a list of “standard questions” for department heads in sub-committee meetings. Members were advised to bring or email questions for the next meeting.

At 8:30 p.m., Mr. Currier MOVED to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Ms. Scrienci and so voted unanimously.
Meeting Documents:

Copy of Town Administrator Memorandum to Department Heads, re: Fiscal 2015 budgets

Request for Transfer Funding from the Finance Committee Reserve Fund

Respectfully Submitted, Voted To Accept

[Signatures]