February 10, 2014

Town of West Bridgewater

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting

The meeting convened at 7:04 P.M. in the Selectmen’s Meeting Room in the West Bridgewater Town Hall.

Committee Members Present: Chairman James Lang, Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson, Ms. Jeri Screnci, Ms. Maura Moroni, Mr. Peter Fredericksen, Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes, Mr. Anthony Kinahan, and Ms. Cheryl Adams. Absent was Mr. Steve Currier.

Non Committee Members also present were Mr. David Gagne, Town Administrator and J.P. Waller, Secretary.

Ms. Cheryl Adams motioned to approve the December 9, 2013 meeting minutes provided to the committee at the January 13, 2014 meeting. Mr. Peter Fredericksen seconded and the Committee voted unanimously in favor of this motion.

Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson then motioned to accept the January 13, 2014 meeting minutes for review with the amendment of Mr. Peter Fredericksen name misspelling. Ms. Jeri Screnci seconded and the Committee voted unanimously in favor of this motion.

The committee then began discussing the Capital Budget Process. Chairman James Lang explained how this process has worked in the past and provided some example requests that have come in from various departments. Mr. David Gagne also shared his thoughts on the process and his involvement with it this year. From there a discussion about leasing options and the various departments’ possibilities with regards to leasing over purchasing arose. The committee agreed that they should help the departments with these decisions and that all options should be reviewed and weighed into decisions. Mr. David Gagne provided an example about the town’s hauling contract with Waste Management for this year and how they reviewed all the options to get what was best for the town.

The conversation then moved to a discussion over what items are covered in the Capital Budget Process and Chairman James Lang explained how these are generally larger expenditure purchases not included in the departments normal budgets. There was a discussion over how the process worked step by step; Mr. David Gagne explained that the Capital Budget Committee reviews all the submissions, then meets to discuss them, asks follow up questions to the departments and then votes on the items before they reach the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee. Ms. Maura Moroni motioned to appoint Chairman James Lang, Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson and Ms. Jeri Screnci as the appointed Finance committee members on the Capital Budget Committee, Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes seconded and the Committee voted unanimously in favor of this motion.
The next item discussed by the committee was the finalized budget questions for the sub-committees. Chairman James Lang explained that he did not have time to type these up before the meeting. It was decided that Chairman James Lang would email these to J.P. Walker and he would type them up and send them out for discussion.

The committee then began discussing union contracts and suggestions the finance committee can make to the selectman before they negotiate these contracts going forward. All 4 union contracts are up this year for negotiation. Some of the items discussed were,

1. Merit based increases and annual performance evaluations.
2. Physical and mental fitness testing for positions that require it to prevent the town from workers compensation liability and lawsuits.
3. Grandfathering certain allowances that are in place now and capping them for the future.
5. Negotiating vacation and sick time caps.

Mr. David Gagne voiced his concerns with the union contracts and the various measures the town can take going forward. Mr. David Gagne provided some of the historical reasons behind certain contact stipulations and how they came about. One example provided by Mr. David Gagne was that there is in fact a state law requiring follow up fitness exams for certain positions but it is not funded or enforced by the State. Mr. Peter Fredericksen inquired about the town’s liability with regards to civilians from not following this law and Mr. David Gagne explained that the town is not liable because the law is unenforced. Mr. Peter Fredericksen asked Mr. David Gagne about how negotiating with unions generally work and how flexible they are about changes. Mr. David Gagne explained that it depends on the specific union and certain issues matter more to different unions and it usually comes down to compromising on a per topic basis. Mr. David Gagne stated that the unions cannot legally strike, but Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson explained that if the negotiations drag on it will go to mediation and arbitration which will be very costly to the town. The Committee then discussed residency restrictions for town employment and the pros and cons. Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson then brought up recent ethical violations and fines that were public information and if the town was able to take action in cases like this against the union employees. Mr. David Gagne stated that he didn’t know the specifics of this case but that he would look into it. This conversation ended with Chairman James Lang stating that he would draft a letter of suggestions from The Committee to the Selectman regarding union contract negotiations.

The next topic discussed was an update on the department budget submissions. Mr. David Gagne updated The Committee that most are done but some departments are still working on theirs for submissions. Mr. David Gagne stated that once all were submitted he would review them for filing errors and put them all together for submission to the committee all at once. Mr. David Gagne is hoping to have all this done in the next 2 weeks by February 24, 2014.

Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Jennifer Clark-Cross seconded and The Committee approved unanimously.
The meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM and the next meeting is scheduled for March 10, 2014 at 7 PM.

Approved by: [Signature]

Respectfully submitted, Jeri Scrench, Secretary

Meeting Documents:

1. Copy of January 13, 2014 meeting minutes.