May 5, 2014

Town of West Bridgewater

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting

The meeting convened at 7:00 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, Mr. Anthony Kinahan, Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes (exited at 8:52PM), Mr. Peter Fredericksen, Ms. Cheryl Adams, and Mr. Steve Currier.

Absent was Ms. Maura Moronl.

Non Committee Members also present: Ms. Nancy Morrison (Town Clerk), Mr. Steve McCarthy (Board of Assessors), Mr. John Donahue (Board of Assessors), Mr. Gerald Steison (Board of Assessors), Ms. Beth Smith (Library Director), Mr. Rick Krugger (Water Department), Mr. David Gagne (Administration) and J.P. Waller (Secretary).

The meeting started with an update from Mr. David Gagne regarding a water leak in the High School. The leak affected the power system so Town employees didn’t have access to email or the internet in case anyone contacted a Town employee and didn’t get a response. He also let the Committee know that there will be an insurance deductible due to the claim that will submitted for the damage.

There was then a presentation from Ms. Nancy Morrison regarding amendments the Town Clerk budget. Ms. Nancy Morrison went through her job description and her duties under Massachusetts General Law. She also listed the extra duties her office performs that usually do not fall under the Town Clerk office in other towns. She also stated that other department heads received a higher percentage last year than she did and that in the past she wasn’t eligible for sick leave buyback because she is an elected official. She highlighted several points that make her different from other elected official such as being full time. She asked the Committee to reconsider their vote of a 2% salary increase. Ms. Cheryl Adams shared that she respects everything Ms. Nancy Morrison does for the town. Mr. Steve Currier agreed with this statement and added that to him it’s not a question of respect but a question of position of the economy. Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson shared that it is a matter of principle to her and with other elected officials receiving 2%. She also stated that she didn’t feel comfortable reviewing and being responsible for Ms. Nancy Morrison’s salary. Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson asked if Ms. Nancy Morrison’s reviews and salary increases could be handled a different way; Mr. David Gagne stated that currently there is no other way to handle these matters because Ms. Nancy Morrison is elected directly by the Town and not an appointed official. This was followed by an open discussion about making the Town Clerk position appointed rather than elected. Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes asked if Ms. Nancy Morrison has ever run opposed; Ms. Nancy Morrison answered the first time she ran was opposed and stated the election results. Ms. Jeri Screnci pointed out that she thought the Committee should weigh the fact that Ms. Nancy Morrison received 1% less than other department heads last year and Ms.
Nancy Morrison’s additional duties with regards to the peer review for her position. Mr. Steve Currier asked if any of the other additional duties were new this year; Ms. Nancy Morrison stated they were not and that she had been doing them all along. Ms. Nancy Morrison added that sometimes the State will assign new duties to the Town Clerk such as the Open Meeting Law and Ethics Testing. Ms. Jeri Scrceni made a motion to approve a 3% salary increase for the elected official. Mr. Steve Currier seconded and the motion passed 4 to 2 (Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson and Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes opposed). Mr. Steve Currier made a motion to amend the Town Clerk budget to reflect a 3% raise for the elected official. Ms. Cheryl Adams seconded and the motion passed 4 to 2 (Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson and Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes opposed).

There was then a presentation from Mr. Steve McCarthy, Mr. John Donahue and Mr. Gerald Stetson regarding amendments to the Board of Assessors budget. Mr. Steve McCarthy first thanked the subcommittee for visiting them to see how the board operates; he stated that in all his years of service in several towns that has only happened once before. Mr. Steve McCarthy stated the board saves the Town a considerable amount of money with their operations and his background. He highlighted several recent assessment cases regarding Town businesses where he has saved the Town money. Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes asked if the KinderCare case Mr. Steve McCarthy mentioned had to do with outdoor playground equipment; Mr. Steve McCarthy stated no it was with regards to the overall assessment and explained this case to the Committee. Chairman James Lang asked how many elected officials there are on the board; Mr. Steve McCarthy answered 3. Mr. Steve Currier asked if Mr. Steve McCarthy received health insurance from being on the board; Mr. Steve McCarthy answered no. Mr. Steve Currier shared that when he ran for the board he thought it was an unpaid position and that he didn’t think the position should be paid; Mr. Steve McCarthy stated that he has been involved in several court cases with Assessors from other Towns and he believes that you find better assessors in towns where the position is paid. Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes stated that the board is the only department that is revenue generating for the Town. Mr. Steve Currier shared his thoughts that the board’s purpose isn’t to bring in revenue for the Town; their purpose should be making sure everything is done right and all the rules are being followed. Ms. Jeri Scrceni also clarified that other departments generate revenue for the Town and she listed several. Mr. John Donahue shared his thoughts that it is all about the money, the Town’s money, and that there hasn’t been a raise for the Board of Assessors in over 10 years. Mr. John Donahue stated it is the Assessor’s duty to find full and fair cash value for all properties in Town and be able to defend it if necessary. Mr. Steve Currier made a motion to leave the budget as previously approved at $166,295. Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson seconded and the motion passed 5 to 1 (Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes opposed).

Mr. Peter Fredericksen entered the meeting at 7:37PM.

There was then a presentation from Ms. Beth Smith regarding amendments to the Library Department budget. Ms. Beth Smith stated the contract she previously signed indicated at 3.5% increase for the appointed official. She then went on to the Office Supply line item and brought up that a contract with DupliTron to service the printers that needs to be funded. She then asked the book line item to be raised to $50,000 to help reach 19% of total budget to qualify for additional state funding. Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes asked which organization mandated the 19% rule; Ms. Beth Smith answered the
Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners and she stated they would receive an additional $8,000 in aid. Mr. Steve Currier asked if the contract previously brought up with regards to the Office Supply line item was new this year; Ms. Beth Smith answered it is not a new contract. Mr. Steve Currier then brought up that the appointed official salary from last year included sick leave buyback even though that wasn't approved by the Committee last year; Ms. Beth Smith answered it was approved by the Library Trustees. Mr. Steve Currier questioned the allowing of sick leave buyback into salary because of the pension implications and explained his reasoning for the 2% increase. Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes brought up that the Library Director can always request increases directly from the Library Trustees and inquired what the Committee can do about that; Chairman James Lang answered the Committee can still make recommendations and the department can bring it up at Town Meeting if they need additional funds. Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes then asked about the department's revolving accounts and Friends of the Library account; Ms. Beth Smith listed several items these funds are used for. Ms. Beth Smith provided a document she put together highlighting all the different accounts, their uses and their amounts; Mr. Steve Currier commended Ms. Beth Smith for her ability to manage the money from all the different sources and make it work. Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes asked if the cash values in the document Ms. Beth Smith provided were budgeted or actual amounts; Ms. Beth Smith answered these are actual amounts and went through the interest amounts. Ms. Jeri Screnci made a motion to approve the budget at the previous approved amount of $401,348. Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson seconded the motion passed unanimously with the exception of Mr. Peter Fredericksen who abstained.

There was then a presentation from Mr. Rick Krugger from the Water Department. Mr. Rick Krugger stated that he watched the previous meeting on cable TV and wanted to clarify some of the inaccuracies he heard. He started with salary increases; he stated there was no increase reflected in his proposed budget because these amounts were already the current year's salaries. He stated that they are always 1 year behind in budget amounts, because they have to wait to the unions settle to know the increases. He also highlighted the numbers from 2011, 2012, 2013 where there wasn't any salary increases and the amounts listed in the budget were already approved contracts; Mr. David Gagne clarified how this process works and confirmed the numbers in budget are the current salaries. Mr. Steve Currier asked how the increase was funded in previous years since it happened after approval; Mr. Rick Krugger answered from the bottom line. Mr. Rick Krugger then clarified statements he heard during the last meeting about his request for a Prius; he explained that he spent his own money on a Prius and when he asked for mileage reimbursement he was asked to generate maps every day to get reimbursed. He explained that he viewed this as a waste of resources and explained how he came up with the flat $5,000 automobile reimbursement instead. He then clarified statements he heard during the last meeting about the hydrant flushing incident; he explained the process and how the older hydrants weren't outputting enough water. He explained the older hydrants are still there because they are on an older water main line and his staff discovered they weren't working correctly and the actions they took to correct this. Mr. Steve Currier asked why there was 8.7% increase year over year in the department budget; Mr. Rick Krugger answered that there was an additional employee. Mr. Steve Currier then asked why increasing the staff wouldn't decrease the overtime line item; Mr. Rick Krugger explained how the scheduling works and stated every weekend there is overtime because they must be staffed 7 days a week and also that when base salaries increase the overtime amount increase as well.
He also stated overtime is based on calls received not scheduled overtime. Vice Chairman Meredith Anderson asked a question about adjusting the schedule so that it is not using overtime hours on the weekend; Mr. David Gagne stated this is union contract issue and the Water Commissioners would need to make that request during negotiations. Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes questioned the merits of removing funds from other line items when the amendments were originally made because it was thought to be new salary increases; Mr. Steve Currier shared his thoughts that this was still valid because the 8.7% year over year increase is still higher than what the Committee is seeing in other departments. Mr. David Gagne then explained how any surplus to the water department budget is handled at the end of the year. Mr. Steve Currier made a motion to approve this budget at the previously approved budget of $1,554,871 by reducing overtime line item. Ms. Jeri Screnci made a statement that she thinks the Water Department has more updated technology and facilities than other departments, she then seconded the motion. Mr. Rick Krugger answered that he built a lot of the water department building himself and saved the Town a considerable amount of money. He also brought up that he kept the GIS system running for the Town so that other departments could eventually benefit from it. Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes stated she is against this motion and thinks the budget should be approved at Board of Selectmen approved amount. Motion passed to 4 to 3 (Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes, Ms. Cheryl Adams and Mr. Peter Fredericksen opposed).

Ms. Jennifer Clark-Croes exited the meeting at 8:52PM.

There was then an open discussion about the pictures for the Finance Committee Handbook. Mr. Steve Currier made a motion to put a color picture on the front and no picture on the back to keep the cost the same, Mr. Peter Fredericksen seconded and the Committee voted unanimously in favor of this motion.

Mr. David Gagne gave an update on the schedule for voting on the Warrant Articles and that it is dependent on the Computer Systems being backed up but it is schedule for the Committee to vote on them Thursday night. Mr. David Gagne stated he will email Chairman James Lang tomorrow about the status of the Warrant Articles to confirm the meeting will occur.

Ms. Jeri Screnci made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Cheryl Adams seconded and the Committee voted unanimously in favor of this motion.

The meeting adjourned at 8:58PM and the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 8th, 2014 at 7 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

J.P. Waller, Secretary
Jeri Screni, Finance Committee Signatory

Meeting Documents: None