Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting of Monday November 4, 2013.

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

The meeting convened at 7:01 p.m. in the Selectmen’s Meeting Room in Town Hall. Also present at this time were David Gagne, Administrator and Mr. Adam Linn, candidate for the position of Part-time Secretary to the Finance Committee.

Mr. Linn was questioned by committee members regarding his interest and qualifications for the position of Part-time Secretary to the Finance Committee. Mr. Linn holds a full-time position in Boston as an Administrative Assistant to the National Association of Social Workers. He has held this position since 2000. Mr. Linn’s resume was part of the meeting documents. Mr. Linn stated that his full time job hours are reliable, and that he would be able to attend meetings as he generally arrives home by 6PM, barring any unexpected train incidents. Mr. Linn is a West Bridgewater resident. He has no prior experience in a role taking meeting minutes. Mr. Linn has his own laptop and would be able to bring this to meetings. He had no questions for the committee and left the room at 7:12PM.

Suzanne Perry entered the room at 7:13PM. She is the second candidate for the position of Part-time Secretary to the Finance Committee. Ms. Perry’s resume was part of the meeting documents. Ms. Perry holds a part-time position at Wright’s Nursery and Garden Center and a part-time temporary position as confidential secretary to the Town of West Bridgewater. In her position at Wright’s Nursery, she did not anticipate any conflicts as the business opens in April and is open the full year. It is open Thanksgiving and Christmas. She stated that she has the leeway to prioritize the position as the Secretary to the Finance Committee over her position at Wright’s nursery. She has no prior experience recording minutes, but is currently working for the Board of Selectmen (filling in for Mallory Aronstein while on maternity leave) and has volunteered to observe Jackie Lee (assistant confidential secretary to the Board of Selectman) in taking minutes during the Board meetings. Ms. Perry had no questions and left the room at 7:22PM.

There was a discussion of the evaluation process that the Finance Committee would use to evaluate candidates for the position of Part-time Secretary to the Finance Committee. Chairman Lang asked David Gagne if the evaluation process would meet the criteria for an executive session. Mr. Gagne stated that it would not. After many suggestions from committee member on how to evaluate the candidates, it was decided that a subcommittee of Steve Currier, Anthony Kinahan and Jeri Screnci would proceed to the next step with the candidates.

The subcommittee will obtain 2 copies of the video of the November 4 meeting. The subcommittee will give each candidate a copy of the video to transcribe the minutes. The subcommittee will review each candidate’s transcript and report back to the entire Finance Committee.
The Committee reviewed the minutes of September 25, 2013. Spelling corrections in names were notes. Mr. Currier MOVED to approve the minutes. Seconded by Ms. Anderson and so voted unanimously.

The Committee then discussed “Finance Committee topics to Consider,” dated October 19, 2013.

- Review of W-2’s. There was a discussion that this is not done due to issues of publication and the names of the employees of the town in the list. Citizens had asked for this at prior town meetings. Steve Currier questioned what items go into the Town Meeting book. David Gagne read from the bylaws stating that the Finance Committee is responsible for making recommendations to Town Meeting on the annual budget and warrant articles. Citizen requests for specific salary information should be directed to the Treasurer, John Duggan.

- Chairman Lang suggested addressing more items from the above list: changing the payroll schedule. Chairman Lang forwarded the request to John Duggan. It was stated by Chairman Lang that according to John Duggan there would be some savings.

David Gagne noted that the Department of Revenue (DOR) has a web site where lists can be created using varying criteria to compare the performance of towns. Mr. Gagne created a list of nine similar communities for contract comparison purposes. A copy of the list of communities was distributed to members.

David Gagne discussed what makes West Bridgewater unique such as roadways and bordering communities. Mention was made of Raynham, East Bridgewater and Easton has having some similarities to West Bridgewater.

David Gagne mentioned the Massachusetts Municipal Personnel Association- MMPA which is a professional managers association that also keeps data regarding communities. However, this organization is self-reporting and West Bridgewater has not reported any data to this organization to date.

David Gagne will attempt to compare some West Bridgewater contracts such as the Police and Fire Departments, with other similar communities.

Chairman Lang referred to a memorandum drafted to Board of Selectmen, School Committee and all Department Heads. There was a discussion of which departments to include in the organization of “sub-committees” of the Finance Committee. These sub-committees will meet with department heads for budget review in advance of the Finance Committee budget reviews. The goal is to better understand the workings of various departments, and be better able to realistically judge budget needs of departments.

In response to this, David Gagne created a list of every single budget that is a part of town meeting review. He suggested that we may not want to meet with all
departments. There was much discussion of which departments should be included and when Finance Committee members would be able to meet with the department heads.

There was additional discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of sub-committees and the potential time savings. David Gagne gave suggestions on how to work with the various department heads to save time.

Chairman Lang made suggestions regarding how this could work to our advantage as a committee. Meredith Anderson questioned the process of organizing into sub-committees. She felt that this would not allow the Finance Committee to conduct a line by line review of budgets. David Gagne pointed out that last year the Finance Committee made additional cuts to an already balanced budget.

A long discussion of the pros and cons of subcommittees ensued. David Gagne offered further explanation of the list of departments. Chairman Lang suggested adding fiscal '13 budget amounts to the list of departments. Jim Lang also asked David Gagne about the wording of the memorandum to the Department Heads. David Gagne suggested adding section 1 from his list of departments to the memorandum.

Meredith Anderson asked it would be perceived as a conflict if she served on the sub-committee of the Forestry, Highway or Water Departments because her husband is employed by the town. It was agreed that Finance Committee members with immediate family employed in a town department should probably not serve on that department sub-committee.

There was then a discussion of how to divide up the departments into sub-committees. Those with interest in a particular department should email Chairman Lang. Conflicts should also be emailed to Chairman Lang along with scheduling restrictions.

There was a discussion of Southeast Regional Voc budget for fiscal 2013 as the town has been advised that its obligation to the Southeast Voc budget was underfunded by $42,000.

There was discussion by David Gagne on the role of the Finance Committee. New members were given a copy of the Finance Committee handbook on CD. David Gagne told members about the history of the role of the Finance Committee. At one time, prior to Prop 2 ½, employees in Towns and Cities were customarily paid according to a Wage and Classification scale that was approved at Town Meeting. The Finance Committee would make recommendations on this compensation schedule to Town Meeting. In the past Finance Committees approved all expenses and determined salaries. The prevailing atmosphere was poor salaries and good benefits. Proposition 2 ½ changed this by forcing personnel cuts. Employees unionized in response. MA General Laws empowers the Board of Selectmen to negotiate CBA agreements. This diminished the need for a wage and classification schedule which in turn lessened the Finance Committee's ability to weigh in on individual employee compensation. This results in the Finance Committee having more clout in its recommendations to Town Meeting in reference to expansion of departments versus existing pay of employees. The role of the Finance Committee now is budget, and the committee has an important role in expansion of
Finance Committee priorities with stabilization are: Education stabilization fund, general stabilization fund and last the Finance Committee stabilization fund.

Finance Committee responsibilities are to review, analyze and recommend to the Town Meeting.

David Gagne advised that the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) is negotiated by the Board of Selectmen. According to a letter from Town Counsel, the Finance Committee will not be a part of CBA discussions because by statute only the Board of Selectmen can negotiate contracts. The Finance Committee may not participate in negotiations or contracts. Therefore, comments made at various times by Board of Selectmen members regarding including Finance Committee members in these negotiations was incorrect and Finance Committee may not participate in these negotiations.

The Committee reviewed the minutes of October 21, 2013. Ms. Anderson MOVED to accept the minutes for review. Seconded by Mr. Currier and so voted unanimously.

There was a discussion of follow-up items regarding sub-committees and secretary candidates as itemized above.

It was determined that the next meeting will take place on December 9, 2013.

At 8:55 p.m., Ms. Anderson MOVED to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Ms. Screnici and so voted unanimously.

Jeri R. Screnici, Secretary