

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes **February 12, 2008**

Present: Al DeVito - chair, Richard Knabel, Sharon Estrella, Ann Nelson.

Guests: Bruce Stone, Town Accountant; Richard Olsen, Highway Superintendent; Skipper Manter and Diane Powers, Selectmen; Bill Haynes, Paths by the Roads Committee; Beth Kramer, Librarian.

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m.

Highway Superintendent Budget #421:

No discussion.

Richard moved with a second by Ann for preliminary approval of the Highway Superintendent Budget #421. The motion passed 4-0.

Highway Department Budget#422

Up due to personnel. Restored seasonal position to 40 hrs./wk. This position has no benefits.

Ann moved with a second by Sharon to preliminarily approve the Highway Department Budget #422. The motion passed 4-0.

Snow & Ice Budget #423

This budget is level funded.

Richard moved with a second by Ann for preliminary approval of the Snow & Ice Budget #423. The motion passed 4-0.

Up-Island Council on Aging Budget #541:

Joyce stated that 25% of WT residents are over 60 (625 people). The CoA serves 300 WT people. The CoA Friends have been very helpful and supportive. They have contributed \$9,000 this year for programs and maintenance. Utilities and capital expenses are covered by grant monies.

Richard moved with a second by Sharon to preliminarily approve the Up-Island Council on Aging Budget #541. The motion passed 3-0-1 with Ann, a member of the CoA board, abstaining.

Budget Season Strategy:

Al announced a budget forum on Saturday, March 29, 10AM at the Howes House which will be broadcast on MVTN. The forum will have a panel including a parent of school-aged children, a young person without children and a senior citizen.

Discussion of an online survey centered on the effectiveness of the information gathered. Richard will talk to a statistician to find out how to get a valid pool of responses.

Al reported that OB FinCom chairman, Thad Harshberger, is quite concerned about the high school budget and would like to meet with the WT FinCom to talk it over. Richard commented, with the decreasing enrollment, he would like to know what the plan is for the future. It was noted that the UIRSD had responded to FinCom concerns by working hard to keep its budget to salary increases and little else.

At present, PR that is planned includes Al's OpEd in last week's MV Times, the online survey and the March 29 forum.

Budget Planning Process:

FinCom members have desired a clarification of the various duties of the Capital Improvements Planning Committee (CIPC), the Financial Management Team (FMT) and the FinCom and the process for determining the direction of the budget. He read the duties of each body. The CIPC is responsible for the care and replacement of town assets. The FMT sets expenditure guidelines for the budget. The FinCom reviews the budget and makes recommendations to the voters. Richard noted that the process could also include the Community Preservation committee (CPC). The process to procuring funding for a town project is confusing and cumbersome. In discussion about the FMT, Skipper Manter noted that in the past, the FMT worked for the BoS, the FinCom for the voters. He stated that it is probably time to take a look at the FMT by-law and the document that created it to be sure it is being used effectively.

Tax Rolls:

Al noted that the town has \$2 billion in taxable. Of that, \$486 million is tax exempt. He suggested non-profits be asked to pay 10% to help with the budget. They have the same access to town services (police, fire, ambulance) as taxpayers. Perhaps they would make a payment in lieu of taxes.

Paths by the Roadside Committee:

Bill Haynes of the Paths by the Roadside requested a transfer from reserve funds in the amount of \$5,000 to complete the path on the Edgartown Rd. Work had to be stopped due to weather. The amount requested will be used primarily for police detail. Mr. Haynes is asking for the transfer rather than a warrant article because he hopes to have the work completed before the town meeting. The reserve fund presently has \$18,000 available. Depleted it by \$5,000 at this point in the year made some members uncomfortable.

Al made a motion, seconded by Ann, to transfer \$5,000 from reserve funds to the Paths by the Roadside Committee to finish the path on Edgartown Rd. With a vote of 2-2, the motion was denied.

Library Warrant Article:

Librarian Beth Kramer came before the committee to inform them that she will have a warrant article for the Annual Town Meeting to increase the number of staff personnel during library hours. This is in response to concerns from the Board of Libraries commissioner regarding a lack of presence for safety reasons. The commissioner's concerns are in reaction to a recent child molestation incident in a New Bedford library. If the article does not pass, Beth is prepared to cut library hours by 8.3 hrs./wk.

The FinCom will discuss this at a future meeting.

The next meeting is Tuesday, February 26 at 4:30pm.

There being no other business, a motion for adjournment was made and seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 6:20pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Rogers, Administrative Clerk