

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

May 20, 2008

Present: Al DeVito - chair, Sharon Estrella, Brian Athearn and Ann Nelson.

Guests: Bruce Stone, Town Accountant; Skipper Manter, Selectman; Dan Pace and Greg Orcutt, FinCom position applicants.

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

Interview of candidates for open FinCom position

Ann posed the first question, asking the candidates if they were familiar with the school budget.

Mr. Pace said he was very familiar with the school budget process, noting his wife has served as a school principal and superintendent in New Jersey and as principal of the West Tisbury School. He explained his professional role in corporate budgeting where he led clinical research trials in the U.S., Canada and Europe. He negotiated budgets for proposed programs which required an in-depth understanding of the individual budgets making up the whole. He presently serves on the MV Health Council and his residence association.

Mr. Orcutt acknowledged he knew little of the school budget process. He has a BA in broadcasting where he has done extensive work in marketing. He is the director of WMVY.

Brian asked the candidates to address the growth in West Tisbury as it financially impacts voters.

Mr. Pace is concerned with the 43% growth over six years. With fixed costs making up 84% of the budget, he would like to see better control. He commended the FinCom on the public forum and feels the FinCom needs to have more impact before the town meeting.

Mr. Orcutt agreed with the points made by Mr. Pace, adding the need for better education of voters to help them recognize the long-term effects of the budget on the tax levy. Mr. Orcutt has had a professional career in marketing and is confident he could get the word out.

When asked if they would be interested in running for the FinCom when the position becomes open for election, both candidates said they would.

The candidates were apprised of the long hours involved in reviewing budgets and attending meetings including those of other committees as well as FinCom meetings. Both felt they had the time to devote to the job of being a FinCom member.

Al asked how they each would help the FinCom do a better job.

Mr. Pace responded that the forum was a good start. The FinCom needs to be political. Offer rides to voters who can't get to the town meeting. Need more PR. He feels he can present the school budget in a way people can understand. Mr. Pace stated the school budget is out of control and that message has to be continually spoken.

Mr. Orcutt believes most people don't know what the FinCom does. Marketing is a key element. He has over 30 years' experience in marketing. He would plot out a marketing plan to get information to the voters.

In response to a question asking to explain the major responsibility of the FinCom, Mr. Orcutt stated it is to present a plan to the town that provides information for not only the year at hand, but extending to the years ahead. Mr. Pace, to present a budget to the voters that can show them that the costs are real and can not be pared down any further.

Mr. Orcutt was not sure what prop 21/2 process is. Mr. Pace explained it meant the budget could not increase by more than 21/2% without the voters voting for it.

Al stated that the UIRSD has been an issue and wondered if the candidates have an opinion on this topic.

Mr. Pace feels it is not a wise path to follow.

Mr. Orcutt agreed with Mr. Pace and added he was not sure that costs are equitably allocated.

Al informed the candidates of the present budget process: the Financial Management Team sends letters to all departments and boards; the individual budgets come in at the end of the year; they are then reviewed by the FinCom. Al noted that there were seldom any significant changes to the budget, but the Board of Selectmen and the FinCom were trying to change the process and give more direction. "How would they you change the process?"

Mr. Orcutt: Start with revenue projections based on last year's figures.

Mr. Pace: Know what activities would take place, how many hours needed to complete. Determine what grade level personnel would be needed to do the job. Start at \$0 and build the budget.

Finally, Al asked if it was a good idea to do a survey to find out what the voters want.

Mr. Pace feels it is a bad idea. Most people don't answer and the questions asked slant the information. It is worthless in determining what the direction should be. The direction should be set, and let people react.

Mr. Orcutt also feels surveys are not a good tool, though there needs to be something to go by. He recommends more open meetings like the March forum at which the FinCom would present the best info it has.

Following the interview, skipper outlined the procedure for the vote at the next meeting. Both the BoS and the FinCom will vote.

The next meeting is Tuesday, May 27, 4:00pm.

There being no other business, a motion for adjournment was made and seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 5:55pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nancy Rogers, Administrative Clerk