

West Tisbury Finance Committee Meeting
Phone in conference call
June 5, 2020

In Attendance: Doug Ruskin, Gary Montrowl, Clark Rattet and Greg Orcutt for part of the meeting

Also present: Bruce Stone, Skipper Manter, Omar Johnson (BOH), Ewell Hopkins

Doug filled in to Chair meeting for Greg and called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm

Minutes: There were none to approve.

New Business:

- **Revised Budgets and warrant articles.**

Copies of the revised budget had been distributed to members to go over. Doug asked Bruce if there were any other changes. Bruce said that items had already been approved by Fin Com and they only needed to vote on/discuss the few new items. There are 2 from the Personnel Board; the new positions for Cemetery Superintendent and Assistant BOH Agent. Omar was asked about the new BOH position. He said that the Administrative assistant has been released, but in light of the Covid-19 situation he needed someone who could do more than just administrative work to help him. John Powers had been hired as a temporary assistant at the beginning of the pandemic. Gary asked what each of them has been doing primarily. Omar says he has been dealing exclusively with Covid 19 and that John had been taking care of the other BOH regular duties such as septic permits, answering questions and coordinating meetings. He was asked how duties would be delegated after Covid? Omar said that the State had been adding more and more requirements for record keeping, inspections and meetings to attend that he had already been having a hard time keeping up with. He would like to be more involved with local agencies and groups that he has been invited to participate with. He thinks that there is more than enough work to go around for 2 people. This was an unexpected event and it shows that they need to be better prepared. He called it a wakeup call. He also feels that he will be more effective at his job if he can take better care of himself. As the only one able to deal with health department issues, he has been unable to take personal time or vacations. Doug pointed out that the need for more help was not a surprise; they knew it was coming and the Admin Assistant had really been just a stop-gap.

It was decided to vote on the 2 personnel budget lines separately, and then take the rest as a batch.

(Greg Orcutt left the meeting at 4:26pm before voting took place)

Gary made a motion to approve the revised BOH budget to include the new Assistant position. Clark Second. Roll call vote – all in favor.

The other was a new position for Cemetery Superintendent, needed as John Alley had passed away and had been doing the job without an official job description since forever.

There was no discussion

Clark made a motion to approve the revised Cemetery budget to include the new Cemetery Superintendent position. Gary Second. Roll call vote – all in favor.

Other budget items:

Bruce explained that the total budget is down about 2.9% after department cuts. He itemized some of the areas where cuts or changes had been made. Gary asked Bruce to pass on his thanks to everyone for the work they did to cut budgets. There was much discussion about where the committee felt cuts could have/ should have been made. Doug acknowledged planning concerns with all of the unknowns, but he thinks there are places where more cuts could be made. He referred to the Fire Dept salary line, where they end up returning \$25,000. every year and the Assessors \$30,000 legal line that they do not always use. He asked Bruce if he thought it was worth making noise about, Bruce says he has asked (the assessors) before if they would cut by half and they have resisted.

Gary asked about the tax levy if the budget stayed as is. Bruce says if revenue stays the same it would be just about level funded. If revenues drop it could be about a 1.8% increase, but he think that's a worst case scenario.

There was much discussion about if they should suggest cuts of legal expense lines for Assessors, ZBA and Planning board and put that money into the reserve fund instead. Gary supported the proposal. Skipper said that they have worked very hard to make cuts and narrow down and to keep ATM short and the discussion down. He feels that it is a bad idea to make changes without the department heads there and procedurally they should have been invited. He feels it would be better to do at the fall meeting, when there is likely to be better attendance for discussion. Gary said, with all due respect, that he disagrees. He feels that they are not talking about cutting personnel or equipment, just anticipated legal fees. They will still have access to the money, they will just have to go thru additional steps to get it, if needed. Doug felt that these are extraordinary times and it's just for this year, but he does understand Skippers points.

More discussion of the options they had: to defer the whole issue to fall meeting, to suggest cuts to the legal lines for the 3 departments in question, to suggest zeroing them out completely with the money going into the reserve fund. Skipper pointed out that you can't zero out, that legal expenses are part of doing business and they should not be doing this at this late date. Doug said that the Fin Com is here to represent the taxpayers interest and frankly, he doesn't care about politics.

Gary made a motion to recommend the Assessors department, the ZBA and the Planning Board all cut their legal lines to half. Clark Second. Roll call vote – all in favor.

School Budgets:

Clark says he is very disappointed that there have no changes made to the MVRHS budget. The others were frustrated too. Clark said he would like to see their budget reduced by a half million. Doug said they could suggest a number for reduction. Clark wanted to know how much of a cut would be needed to get level funding for the West Tisbury portion of the budget. There was much discussion about the amount of money that would need to be cut. Skipper said both school districts are hoping to make changes in the fall, not now. Doug said their options were to not recommend the school budget at all, let the issue be brought up on the floor at ATM and let them

explain it to the taxpayers, or to suggest a specific number or percentage of reduction they would like to see. Gary thinks they should not recommend. Clark wants to give specific reduction numbers. More discussion.

Gary made a motion to NOT recommend the MVRHS budget. Clark Second. Roll call vote – all in favor

Bruce pointed out that the Town report with budget in it will be going to print before they have another meeting and something needs to be in the column. Doug said they will call another meeting to discuss a number and Skipper said they should invite the school committee folks to meeting. In the mean time they will put TBD in the report.

All other budget lines:

No discussion.

Gary made a motion to recommend the remaining budget as proposed. Clark Second. Roll call vote – all in favor

- **Warrant articles:**

Bruce pointed out the that the warrant had previously been approved and some articles removed. The only new article was for the 2 new positions as discussed earlier. No further discussion.

Gary made a motion to recommend the remaining Warrant Articles as changed. Clark Second. Roll call vote – all in favor

New Business: None.

Correspondence:

A request from Rebecca Thompson regarding the MVRHS fields. She would like the Fin Com to discuss and give their opinion. As it was short notice they will not get into it tonight and will put on the agenda for the next meeting.

Other Business:

Discussion about membership. Jane is resigning but will wait until after she is voted back in to officially resign so that the Selectmen can then appoint someone to fill her place. Doug Finn has agreed to accept the appointment.

With no further items to discuss, Clark made the motion to adjourn. Gary seconded. Roll call vote – all in favor

Meeting adjourned at 5:41 pm

Approved 11/16/20

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Haynes
Administrative Assistant
6/8/20

