

**FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES  
MARCH 9, 2010**

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM in the Selectmen's Meeting Room of Town Hall. The following members were present: Ken Szajda, Jay Leary, Jim Crews, Tom Meehan, Gordon Johnson and Mark Schultz. Pam Zicko was absent from the meeting.

Jay Leary, seconded by Gordon Johnson, made a MOTION to approve the minutes of February 9, 2010. Passed 6-0-0.

Mary Bousquet presented the Treasurer/Collector's budget. She did the budget with both -2% and -3% guidelines. Both versions contain 3% raises; the -2% decreases the Assistant Treasurer's hours from 28 to 20 hrs. p/wk; the -3% reduces the hours from 28 to 18 hrs. p/wk. The Assistant Treasurer is the newest employee, that's why she would take the cut. This person may pick up a couple of more hours with the Town Accountant. Communications is down about \$13.00 and the outside billing is going out to bid. Tom Meehan asked Mary if she can achieve the savings and she said that she hopes so, but there is very little extra for the unforeseen. She said that she is looking into biweekly warrants and paying all town employees biweekly, as the schools do now. Jay Leary asked how much time is spent on payroll, etc. Mary said that 1 day per week is spent on accounts payable and more on payroll. Jay asked what the Assistant Treasurer's duties are and was told that she deals with employee benefits and retirees. Jay asked about the feasibility of sharing staff and looking into an outside company doing the payroll. Mary Bousquet said that it would be difficult to share staff, but she would look into an outside company doing payroll. This has been done in the past and didn't work out well. Ken Szajda asked about foreclosures in the legal line – it contains recording as well as legal. When the banks foreclose, it saves the town money.

Mary Bousquet then presented the budget for Debt Service. She has increased Purchase Services for postage, because she has to mail the disclosures for bond ratings. For FY10, she is over spent by \$100 in the General Interest line. This is money kept to pay interest on abatements that are given. Ken Szajda asked if it would be worth refinancing.

Mary then presented the budget for Employee Benefits. The money budgeted for workers comp and disability insurance is figured on a 3% cost of living increase. The new rates for health insurance are up about 6.4%. Tom Meehan asked if there are unfunded costs. Jim Crews asked why there is an additional \$100,000 in unemployment and Paul LeBeau said that it's his "best guess". Gordon Johnson asked about the jump in life insurance and was told that it was taken out of workers' comp. Jay Leary asked about the 6.4% jump in health insurance and how it compares with GIC – Mary doesn't know. Mark Schultz asked about the Medicare expense and was told that the number may be too high. Part B represents a penalty for 15 individuals who didn't join Medicare when they were supposed to. Jay Leary asked Mary Bousquet to check into that because he doesn't think there has to be a penalty paid if they had comparable coverage at that time.

Margaret Fitzpatrick presented the budget for Youth & Family Services. With a 2% reduction, the court diversion program will decrease by 3.5 hrs. p/wk; with a 3% reduction, the program

will be reduced by 4 hrs. p/wk. When asked the effect this has on the program, she said that it lowers the capacity. The employees in the dept. are not taking the 3% or longevity. Jim Crews asked about hours worked and Margaret said that she works 40 hrs. p/wk. There are 20 hrs. of court diversion and 10 hrs. of outreach by another employee. She lost 2 people at the end of June when a grant ended. The court diversion program uses youth to work hrs. of community service for town depts. and some events. This is a savings to the town as is saving the Police from sending an officer to court. Mark Schultz asked Margaret what she would like for her dept. if times were good; she said it would be another full time clinician. Jay Leary asked about charging for services but Margaret said that would involve another level of infrastructure and that would cost money. She said that they cannot charge through insurance. Ken Szajda asked about the phones and was told that they cost about \$100 p/month for 3 lines.

Paul LeBeau presented the BOS budget. For the -2% and the -3%, there are no cost of living adjustments in the personnel line. The stipend was cut in half for the Selectmen in both scenarios. Supplies and materials are the same in both and property and liability insurance has been level funded in both versions. The variation in the two scenarios is under professional services. This includes the audit and legal advice by town counsel. In the -3%, \$24,064 is budgeted. Paul LeBeau said that this is not a realistic number. In the -2% budget, \$28,064 is budgeted and is doable, although a bit of a risk. The BOS talked about dropping from the Mass Municipal Association, which is the \$2900 under Professional Development, but think this could affect insurance. 25% of the part time clerical's salary is allocated from Town Hall rental fees revolving account. They plan to increase it to 33% next year. Office supplies are down because of the scanning and printing capabilities of the copiers. They have been able to get rid of the printers in the office. They can convert documents into electronic files. Jay Leary asked Paul if he thought that anything needed to be removed from the Selectmen's budget (i.e. legal) but Paul said that the BOS are the "gatekeepers". Ken Szajda asked if some of the part time clerical in different departments of Town Hall could be coordinated into reducing the number of people, but increasing the hours.

Paul LeBeau presented the Animal Control budget. Holliston is paying the town of Ashland for the service. There is a possibility of a 3<sup>rd</sup> community joining. Paul said that the town is getting what it needs; our issues are being addressed.

The Finance Committee has reduced office supplies down to \$200; they are able to do this because the town meeting warrants are no longer sent out. The budget has gone down 86% over the past 4 years. The Reserve fund is cut by the amount necessary to get to the budget guideline.

At 9:40 PM, a MOTION was made by Jay Leary, seconded by Gordon Johnson, to go into Executive Session, and not return to open session, to discuss collective bargaining. A roll call vote was taken: Tom Meehan: yes; Jim Crews: yes; Gordon Johnson: yes; Jay Leary: yes; Mark Schultz: yes; and Ken Szajda: yes. Passed 6-0-0.

Respectfully submitted:  
Faith Antonioli, Secretary

Date Approved: March 23, 2010