

FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

JANUARY 31, 2013

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, Michelle Zeamer, Michelle Johnson, Charlie Kaslow and Dan Alfred. Kathleen White was absent from the meeting.

Michelle Zeamer, seconded by Michelle Johnson, made a MOTION to approve the minutes of the December 18, 2012 meeting. Passed 5-0-0.

The Board of Assessors presented their FY 14 budget. They prepared a level funded budget and a +1.5% budget, which was presented. Cathy Pierce presented, explaining that the +1.5% was the same as the level funded except they increased professional services and the wage increases. With the level funded budget, in order to meet the staff wage increases, they had to decrease the existing professional services line. This decrease will mean fewer home inspections and lower new growth. Michelle Zeamer asked if it is a state mandate to inspect all buildings every 9 years and if so, will less field inspection make them not in compliance. Cathy Pierce said that although it is not called a mandate, the state can make certification more difficult for the town. Michelle also asked if they catch a lot of decks, etc. in the home inspections and Cathy said that they find things like finished basements, attics and central air conditioning. Charlie Kaslow asked about the history of professional services and was told that it varies. It has been bumped up and down. This line is used to pay for software used by the Assessors and the subscription to MLS. These total \$2500, which is a fixed cost. The rest of the money goes to reciprocal inspections. Dan Alfred asked if longevity is a onetime payment, but was told it is yearly. He asked if revenue rises with the inspections and was told that there seems to be a correlation – new growth dips with the loss of inspectional services. Ken Szajda commented that professional services should be about \$8000 to maintain the 9 year cycle of inspections. They would need about \$7000 more to keep with the 9 year cycle. FY14 amount is a little low for that. Communications has been reduced with the new phone systems and if the guideline is lowered below the +1.5% that is one line that Cathy Peirce thought could be reduced. While talking about the office supply budget, John Cronin asked Ken Szajda if all departments print their budgets on recycled paper and Ken responded "no". Charlie Kaslow then asked what the risks are in the budget. John Cronin responded that data accuracy is a risk. Sometimes the data doesn't carry over from year to year. The Assessors are looking into possibly purchasing a new system (not the CAMA) in the future. There is also risk with the valuation because of the changing market. John Cronin also commented that the GIS system and its' mapping could be very helpful to the Assessors. Charlie Kaslow asked if the Assessors had looked into electronic data entry from the field. Charlie Kaslow commented that currently the manual input activity is redundant and represents both inefficiency in process as well as opportunity for transcription errors. Cathy Pierce said that they were looking into it and had talked to Sprint. At this point, the work entered in the field would have to be downloaded and then copied; there is no working platform for it at this time. Ken Szajda commented that any changes they are looking at should encompass the big picture for operating in the 21st century.

Leslie McDonnell, Library Director and Bill Heuer, a Library Trustee, attended the meeting to present the FY14 budget. Ken Szajda asked Leslie to explain the legal funding requirements that the Library must meet to keep its' certification. 1- The library must be open a certain amount of hours. 2- At least 16% of the budget must be

spent on new materials. 3- The last 3 years of appropriations must have been over a 2 ½ % increase. A waiver can be applied for if this requirement is not met and Holliston has had this waived the past 4 or 5 years. The town needs to show that the budget restraints are applied to all departments, not just the library. Holliston receives \$13,000 in state aid and uses it for salaries. For FY14, Mrs. McDonnell is recommending the same number of staff and the same hours of operation. She is the only full time staff member. The professional staff are 24 or 20 hours; the paraprofessionals do not have their Masters and work 25 hrs. a week. All are at the top step except the Children's Librarian, and receive no step raises. The aides are all part timers. Those eligible receive longevity, which is not dependent on the hours worked. In operations, custodial services are up; but she purchased supplies for this year in last year's budget. Energy and utilities is down \$2000 for FY14. NStar's installation of new light fixtures has brought about this savings. Communications is also down. The membership to Minuteman is down \$200; postage is also down because more and more is being done electronically. Professional Development is raised \$100.00. Buildings & Grounds is the same as FY13 and includes \$3044 budgeted for repairs (unexpected). Office Supplies are \$3200 and this is for materials to process and distribute to the public. If she had to go to a level funded budget, Mrs. McDonnell would go back into the Saturday work rotation and reduce the professional staff lines by reducing hours and reduce the Head of Circulation from 25hrs. to 24hrs. She would also reduce Buildings & Grounds by cutting out the waxing of floors and move cleaning the fire system from April, 2014 to July, 2014, putting it into the FY15 budget. She would also lower books and office supplies. Michelle Zeamer asked about uses for the money from Friends of the Library, Amazon, etc. Mrs. McDonnell said she uses the money for furniture, the web site, special programs.

Craig Denman presented the FY14 budget for the auxiliary police, which came in at the guideline. The auxiliary police, in 2012, put in more than 2,270 hours of volunteer time, which translates into about \$98,000. Michelle Zeamer asked what type of volunteering they do and was told they donate services at Celebrate Holliston, road races, etc. Ken Szajda asked about the 4 new members and if there is money for training. Sgt. Denman said that one new member had paid for one academy on his own. In order to pay for training for the 4 new members, it will be staggered over the next couple of years. The Professional Development line is used for academy training and instructors to come in to do in-service for members.

The Veteran Services agent, John Givner, presented the FY14 budget. Paul LeBeau commented at the beginning that much of this a budget that is governed by laws. Holliston had for many years shared an agent that had been grandfathered in; but when he retired Holliston was required to follow new rules and formed a district with Ashland, Hopkinton and Medway, which is a cost savings. Holliston must pay for certain services and the budget is based on run rates. Holliston's assessment is based on the population and pays a percentage to the district - \$23,706. Mr. Givner pointed out that the town is reimbursed \$.50 for every \$1.00 through the Cherry Sheet, but that there is a 2 year lag time. Money spent in FY12 will be reimbursed in FY14. As compared to the other towns in the district, Mr. Givner said that Holliston has the largest veteran base but the lowest demands. The largest amount of money goes to the oldest veterans and widows. Paul LeBeau discussed the strong outreach and visibility that Mr. Givner is responsible for. The traffic in the office with veterans coming in to meet with Mr. Givner has increased and this is a sign of success. Mr. Givner said that he is trying to access many state programs for veterans and to get money from alternative sources. Michelle Zeamer said that it is a wonderful service being provided to veterans.

Paul LeBeau presented the Solid Waste budget for FY14. He said that there are several elements to this budget: disposal of trash in Millbury; the curbside pick-up, including trash (\$363,000); recycling (\$314,000) and bulk (\$15,000); hazardous waste day in July (\$1200); leaf collection 2 weeks per year; providing dumpsters at several community events; drop site at Marshall Street (all but the personnel paid from solid waste budget); the tipping fee (\$303,000 - this is at \$74.01 a ton. This is year 6 of a 20 year agreement. The contract with Allied Waste runs out June 30, 2013. It is going out to bid soon and will be due back in March. There are 4600 houses and businesses serviced. Paul LeBeau said they may look into the possibility of trash being picked up bi-weekly and recycling every week.

Paul LeBeau presented the Street Lighting budget. There are 920 street lights, 3 full traffic signals, 4 crosswalk lights and 2 flashing school zone lights. It is level funded. Paul said that they receive lots of complaints and they are passed on to NStar from the Selectmen. Dan Alfred asked if there was any talk about going to LED lights. Paul LeBeau said he didn't know but the prices are coming down. Ken Szajda said that there are technological advances being made and they should probably wait 2 or 3 years. Charlie Kaslow asked if they use LED for the traffic lights and was told yes. Michelle Zeamer asked about using solar collectors as she has seen them on some school signs in surrounding towns.

Charlie Kaslow said that Mr. Dowd has questions about the EMT pay rate changes. He had asked Paul LeBeau how this change came about. There didn't seem to be any formal action taken by any board yet they received a raise. He wanted to know if there are any governmental controls regulating this. Charlie Kaslow asked what the procedural process is on salary actions or rate changes. Paul LeBeau replied that the chart covers many town employees. The issue with the budget guideline is given to all depts. The town has agreements with dept. heads and they follow the general guideline. They take cues from the Police settlement. The exceptions are highlighted in the budget with classification changes. The pay is determined by the governing board.

At 10:20 PM, Charlie Kaslow, seconded by Michelle Zeamer, made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting. Passed 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Date Approved: April 18, 2013

Faith Antonioli, Secretary