

**FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**APRIL 25, 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, Charlie Kaslow and Dan Alfred. Michelle Johnson was absent from the meeting.

Lina Arena-DeRosa was at the meeting to appeal for additional funding for the Council on Aging. Ken Szajda pointed out to her that the FinComm had requests from several depts. for job reclassifications, etc and had decided to wait until after looking at these for Fall Town Meeting. Charlie Kaslow wanted to explain information he had from Lina and began by making a MOTION to reconsider the Council on Aging budget because he had some information he wanted to discuss with FinComm members. Michelle Zeamer seconded the motion so they could discuss it. Ken Szajda clarified by saying that budget changes can be discussed without a motion. Charlie Kaslow continued by explaining that budgets numbers are determined by 4 elements: necessity of services, alternative services, potential funds and competing needs or priorities. He said that a lot funding for seniors' needs have been pushed down to the community level by federal and state cuts. Charlie Kaslow handed out an attached sheet with the metrics explaining how the tax dollars are being spent. Lina Arena-DeRosa said that a lot of what they do is to help seniors stay in their homes rather than the nursing home. They need more money and she could write grants for some of it -- but her time for this is limited because of all her other duties. She said that about \$60.00 per senior is what is being spent. Charlie Kaslow said the information is not new, but until he saw it graphically, he didn't realize the return from the money. The number of seniors in town has increased in large amounts, but funding has not. Lina Arena-DeRosa said that their social services are needed, but they can't keep up with it without more help. They need to hold classes in the evenings and utilize the building at later times. This takes more help. Dan Alfred commented that he sees the need and would support the position; but have told other depts. work will be done between now and Fall Town Meeting. He asked Lina what her feeling is about putting it off a couple of months. She said that she has done this before with Ken and feels that some depts. get more funding than others and the system needs to change. Dan Alfred asked why they are different from other departments that need additional money and Lina Arena-DeRosa said it's the growth. Charlie Kaslow asked how the Affordable Care Act has affected the Center – Lina stated that they need evidence based training in order to write and secure grants under new law. They will get licensed and be able to work with Bay Path, Tufts, etc. Charlie Kaslow said that what distinguishes the Council on Aging from other departments is that it delivers \$2.00 of service for \$1.00 of town funding. Charlie Kaslow also said that the FinComm has provided additional manpower to other departments that need additional help as well. Michelle Zeamer mentioned that the Board of Health is also looking for additional money because the cost of testings has gone up, etc and the Board provides services to the whole town and was told they will have to wait for fall. Michelle added that unfunded mandates are growing with the Board of Health and Lena said that her mandates are as well. Ken Szajda said that they don't have the exact figures yet, but do plan to keep some money aside for the fall. Ken Szajda then asked Lina if she would support the seniors paying the \$80.00 trash fee and she said absolutely not. Ken Szajda

said that over the last several years, budgets have been about survival and even though we still are not in a good situation, being able to look at setting some money aside for additions to budgets shows that we are in a slightly better place. Lina asked if there would there ever be a chance for restructuring and Ken said yes - you should be going through your Council. Lina said she was referring to the town restructuring and Ken Szajda said it has been looked at, but the town has not been in a position financially to make changes. Dan Alfred commented on the decrease in state aid. Lina Arena-DeRosa said that they provide a lot of services that they do not get recognized for. Michelle Zeamer commented that they should consider doing passports and Lina said she had looked into it, but they don't have the staff to do it. The Council on Aging sees appreciates the FinComm's position in waiting until Fall Meeting. Ken Szajda said that he wants to do it right and see what the need is for this new position for the next 5 years or so. The vote on the MOTION to reconsider the vote on the Council on Aging's FY14 budget was as follows: 1(C. Kaslow) - 3- 0. Motion was defeated.

Ken Szajda then went over the budget spreadsheet. The latest revision shows the schools at + \$250,000; \$ 281,252 would be the maximum they can go above guideline. The \$140,000 for the 2 warrant articles are included in there. Numbers in bold are updated figures for state aid. Dan Alfred commented on the capital. Ken Szajda said that the vehicles Highway is requesting are not all due for replacement so Ken does not see the need to increase capital this year. He believes there is additional leeway from capital spending from the past few years that can be used. Total amount of reserves are measurably above. As a general practice, the town has dealt with capital in the fall unless something required earlier action. The Highway is looking for one plow at Spring Town Meeting (\$130,000) and the Senior Center roof (\$100,000). Dan Alfred thought they FinComm may want to consider adding additional money to capital because it looks like things have been put off for a while. Ken Szajda pointed out that some of the capital money is for Water, etc. which makes the amount look larger than it is. He said that after Paul LeBeau had looked over capital over past few years and upcoming years, the \$550,000 for capital is a realistic level of funding. Ken Szajda does not see a need at this point to increase it at this time. Dan Alfred said that as long as Ken is comfortable with the amount, he is. Michelle Zeamer is okay with leaving it where it is. Charlie Kaslow suggested that the capital requests need to be looked at earlier than it has been in the past. Ken Szajda has no problem with that but pointed out that it is difficult to get a quorum in the summer. Charlie Kaslow said that he does not see the need to raise the capital budget at this time. After having the spreadsheet, they now need to do the one budget. Dan Alfred thinks the \$250,000 is too high if FinComm wants to have enough money left for other departments to receive for items presented during their reviews. Ken Szajda said he agrees, but if they have done their job well, that should be the lowest it goes. Ken Szajda said that once Beacon Hill is done, he thinks the numbers from the state will go up. The numbers on the spreadsheet will probably go down, leaving more money, that's why the modeling on the spreadsheet is conservative. Ken thinks they may end up with an additional \$100,000. Charlie Kaslow said that it is not up to the FinComm to try to send a message to anyone, but to make prudent decisions with what we know now. Ken Szajda said he is comfortable with the \$250,000 for the schools. Charlie Kaslow said that he has less confidence in Beacon Hill than Ken does. Michelle Zeamer said she feels confident in Ken's expertise. She doesn't want cuts made with the idea that it will be brought back -- she

supports the \$250,000. Charlie Kaslow said that he agrees with Dan Alfred and thinks they need more of a buffer. Charlie Kaslow and Dan Alfred are both comfortable at \$200,000. Ken Szajda asked if they could support \$225,000. All agreed that the Schools need to look at their employee contracts in the future. Dan Alfred said that he could support the \$225,000 compromise and Charlie Kaslow said he could as well. Michelle Zeamer said she was not happy about it, but she would as well. She did not want to see existing programs cut. Dan Alfred, seconded by Charlie Kaslow, made a MOTION to recommend a budget of \$29,389,466 for the School Dept. for FY14. Passed 4-0-0.

Ken Szajda asked Selectman Jay Leary if there was any additional information regarding Art. 21, which involves several towns pooling money to look into the impact of a Milford Casino. Jay Leary said that the towns had just met; Hopkinton and Holliston were looking for about \$100,000 each; it seemed that Medway was looking for a lesser amount and Ashland was undecided. They are looking to form a municipal agreement. Ken Szajda then asked if it had been decided who would be responsible for overseeing how the money was spent. Jay Leary responded the participating towns would hire a legal firm who would have access to the money which would be pooled in an escrow account. There are still many details to be worked out. Ken Szajda asked if there was any possibility of the agreement being set before May 6th and was told probably not. It would be a couple of weeks. Michelle Zeamer commented that Holliston has to do something no matter what, and it would be more cost effective to join forces with other towns. Charlie Kaslow asked if they were looking to hire a law firm that charged hourly and Paul LeBeau said not necessarily. This firm will also be handling traffic impact, environmental impact studies, etc. Charlie Kaslow asked if there was one person who would be dealing with the legal group on a day to day basis, as he didn't think it is effective to have a group perform that task. Charlie Kaslow's question to Paul Lebeau was not answered. Michelle Zeamer, seconded by Dan Alfred, made a MOTION to reconsider Art. 21. Passed 4-0-0. Michelle Zeamer, seconded by Dan Alfred, made a MOTION to recommend that the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$100,000 for the purposes stated in Art. 21. Passed 4-0-0.

FinComm then looked at the 2 capital requests that will be presented at May Town Meeting: the plow for Highway and the \$100,000 for the roof at the Senior Center. Charlie Kaslow asked that with Peter Tartakoff gathering the information for the roof, who would be administering the contract. Paul LeBeau said that in the past, the town has hired an engineer and that the Building Inspector would do the inspections. Dan Alfred, seconded by Michelle Zeamer, made a MOTION to reconsider Art. 16. Passed 4-0-0. Michelle Zeamer, seconded by Dan Alfred, made a MOTION to recommend that the town appropriate from the capital expenditure fund the sum of \$100,000 for replacement of the Senior Center roof and \$130,000 for purchase of a dump truck with plow for the Highway Dept. Passed 4-0-0.

FinComm then worked on the message for their report. Charlie Kaslow commented that he thought a 4th objective should be added to the 3 listed. Members agreed on "to encourage cost effective management while maintaining the quality and level of services the residents of Holliston expect." They also discussed how to explain when they meet and decided to leave it as "meet weekly during the budget season." Paul LeBeau said that the first "x" should be 7.2.

The total for the bottom of pg. 2 should be 5.6 million as of 3/31. Charlie Kaslow asked if the town had received all they should have from the Stone Company and Paul LeBeau said he would check. Dan Alfred asked if they should get the word out about an opening on the FinComm with Kathleen White's resignation. Ken Szajda suggested they follow the same process as used when filling the last slots. They need to proceed with an announcement letter once they have decided on a deadline for applications. Ken Szajda then asked if any FinComm members had thought about being available for "office hours" and if so, could they let him know when and where.

Bill Dowd had a couple of questions. After having talked about revolving funds in November, he went through the revolving accounts and looked at those in Art. 10. He noted that the "Response & Recovery" and the "Accident Fee" revolving accounts had "0" balances, but they weren't listed on the balance sheet. Ken Szajda asked Paul LeBeau to make note of that and list them each with "0" balances. Bill Dowd then said that there are 3 revolving accounts that do not show in Art. 10 - Emergency Management, Conservation and Conservation By-Laws. Paul LeBeau said that these are authorized by a different statute. Bill Dowd noted that both the Building Inspector's and Passports revolving accounts are over the "not to exceed" limits. Paul LeBeau said that the "not to exceed" refers to money spent not held in the account. Bill Dowd then commented on the fact that there is no information in the Finance report on retirement benefits etc. Ken Szajda said they did not have the information to put in and Bill Dowd said that he had not received the information but would get it together and perhaps the information could be put online for residents. A member of the audience then questioned how much revenue the town loses because of tax exempt property because of non-profits status. He wanted to know if the assessors check to be sure they are in fact non-profit. He was told that it is not up to the town to make that determination.

At 9:58 PM, Michelle Zeamer, seconded by Dan Alfred, made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting. Passed 4-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,  
Faith Antonioli, Secretary

Date Approved: May 14, 2013