

**FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES
FEBRUARY 14, 2012**

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, Tom Meehan, Michelle Zeamer, Pam Zicko, Mark Schultz and Kathleen White.

Pam Zicko, seconded by Tom Meehan, made a MOTION to approve the minutes of January 24, 2012. Passed 5-0-1(K. White abs.).

Margaret Fitzpatrick presented the budget for Youth & Family Services, which came in on guideline. Salaries went up 1% and the extra 1.5% for the budget went into the Professional Development line. The Court Diversion program worked with 35 clients in FY12. Each client performs 20 hrs. of community service, which translates into \$5600 worth of work, based on minimum wage. This dept. administers the HBA Community Fund which helps people in need of cash on a short term basis. Margaret said that she completed the Bully and Cyber bullying Training with the schools. Youth & Family has also had an intern to help with the case load and spending time at the Middle School. Margaret said that she and Chrissie still go to the High School. Pam Zicko asked the effect of no budget increases in the past 4 or 5 years. Ms. Fitzpatrick said that programming (speakers) has fallen off and at times it has been necessary to refer out. Youth & Family has no grants at this time. Mark Schultz asked Margaret how much the dept. would need to be as effective as she would like. She said she would need \$45,000 - \$50,000, which would allow her to hire another person.

Mike Cassidy presented the Emergency Management budget, which exceeded the guideline. The cost of the community notification system exceeds the guideline by a couple of hundred dollars. That is what makes up the Communications line. Ken Szajda commented that this is an example of spending over the appropriation. The remainder of the budget is near level funded.

Mike Cassidy then presented the Ambulance budget, which also exceeds the guideline. He explained that he will be back with a new budget at a later date because of many shifts the BOS are requesting. They want the budget to be more reflective of ambulance costs, not Fire Dept. The revenue stream comes from the revolving account. The margin for ambulance replacement is not as large as in the past. FinComm was reminded that money for part of the fire salaries had been shifted to Ambulance. The revolving account can't exceed 1% of the previous year's tax levy. This may present a problem in FY13. The dept. has a high collection rate from insurance for its ambulance runs. The BOS is asking for a rate increase for ambulance runs. Tom Meehan asked how Holliston compares with other communities and was told they are lower because rates are presently based on Medicare rates. Mike Cassidy said that a new ambulance costs about \$180,000. At this point, 40% of the Fire Chief's salary comes from the Ambulance budget; the BOS wants only 20% to come from Ambulance and shift the rest back to the Fire budget. The Deputy Fire Chief and the EMS Supervisor's salaries were originally a 50-50 split between Ambulance and Fire, but the stipends had all come out of Ambulance the past

few years. Pam Zicko asked about the increases in various areas of the budget. Professional Services is up because of training. EMT certifications are up. Mike said that it depends on their training – some are paramedics. Vehicle repairs are up – there was an issue with the heat in the back of the ambulance. Mike Cassidy said that the “53” lines are money for jobs that are sent out and the “54” lines are for jobs that the town purchases the parts and the town does the work. Revenues are not keeping up with the budget. Michelle Zeamer asked about charges if the ambulance goes to a scene, but there is no transport. She was told there is only a charge if they transport. Ken Szajda asked for the figures of runs vs. transports. Mike Cassidy said that the ambulance used to be dispatched to any vehicle accident, but he asked that the police have them dispatched only when necessary.

Mike Cassidy presented the Fire Dept. budget, which at this time meets the guideline. This budget will change, as will the Ambulance budget. Everything is level funded – but it does not accurately reflect the money it takes to run the dept. The fire fighters stipends have not kept up with the employees’ share of health benefits and they can’t close the gap. Ken Szajda reminded the Chief that they had tried to close the gap several years ago with the override that the Fire Dept. refused. Based on the costs of Harvard/Pilgrim HMO which the majority of fire fighters belong to, a family plan costs \$719.20 per month and the stipend is \$410.25 per month. Pam Zicko commented that the fire budget should reflect the costs of the dept. Mark Schultz asked Mike when he thought he could re-submit the budget and he said probably in a couple of weeks.

Paul LeBeau presented the Auxiliary Police budget. The budget came in at \$12,464, which is at guideline. The return to the Police Dept. in work time, etc. is \$90,000-\$100,000. The budget consists of Professional Development which is training and Supplies, which are uniforms, office supplies and expenses related to the cruiser.

Paul LeBeau presented the budget for the BOS, which came in within the guideline. There was a 1% increase for office staff. Property and liability insurance, the largest part of the budget, is \$402,057. This is for buildings, equipment, vehicles and public officials. The town receives a discount for paying the first 6 months in the beginning of the year and receives credits and discounts for training programs. Professional Services is the second largest part of the budget. It is about \$20,000 per year for the annual audit. General advice from Town Counsel and the Labor Council comes out of this line. Professional Development is at \$3000, with \$2750 for a town wide membership in the Mass Municipal Association. Ken Szajda asked if they could get \$1058 out of the budget for Paul’s salary increase. Mark Schultz asked about the increase in copier costs and Paul said paper is the only variable.

Mary Greendale asked to make a comment at the end of the meeting regarding the Fire Dept. not wanting to be included in the override. She said they had felt like pawns being used to get residents to vote for the override. Ken Szajda responded that FinComm wanted to include them in the override because they felt they should be on track with the stipend increase and that was the only way to make it happen given the economic climate.

At 9:35 PM, Pam Zicko, seconded by Mark Schultz, made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting. Passed 6-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Faith Antonioli, Secretary

Date Approved: March 13, 2012