

FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES
NOVEMBER 27, 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, Charlie Kaslow, Michelle Johnson, Dan Alfred and Michelle Zeamer. Kathleen White and Anita Ballesteros were absent from the meeting.

The Planning Board had a request for a Reserve Fund Transfer and FinComm asked for clarification from Karen Sherman. She said it involved extra litigation in a matter of jurisdiction involving the ZBA and Planning Board. It is to pay a bill for legal counsel and the matter has been resolved.

George Johnson, from the Open Space Committee, explained the request for money from the Open Space Fund. They need to put a conservation restriction on the land off Adams Street purchased from NStar. They want to access \$14,000 from the Open Space Fund for the following: \$10,000 for the Endowment Fund for the Trustees of the Reservation, \$2,000 for data research. \$1,000 for attorney fees and \$1,000 for filing fees. Dan Alfred, seconded by Michelle Zeamer, made a MOTION to authorize an amount not to exceed \$14,000 from the Open Space Fund for the purpose of attaining the conservation restriction on the NStar land acquired in 2007. Passed 4-0-1(C. Kaslow abs). George Johnson added that the Open Space Committee may have to do a conservation restriction on the Fairbanks property on Adams Street, because although a restriction was written, it was never filed.

Charlie Kaslow questioned if the Planning Board has a line for legal in their budget and if so, has it been expended. Ken Szajda explained that they do have a line and it covers routine legal work, but this was extraordinary. Charlie Kaslow, seconded by Michelle Johnson, made a MOTION to transfer \$3336.50 from the Reserve Fund to the Planning Board (org.#01172), Professional Serv. (obj.#52190). This is to cover the cost of an extraordinary legal expense necessitated to defend the Planning Board members and Town from suit by an applicant over denial of the Planning Board to approve non-conforming frontage following issuance of a variance for same frontage granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Passed 4-0-1(M. Zeamer abs). The Committee felt that there needs to be better communication between the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Planning, in the wake of this case, to offer an opportunity to avoid this situation in the future.

FinComm then discussed setting up a meeting with the Selectmen regarding the Stone Report on Compensation and Benefits. Charlie Kaslow said that he did not see the value of a meeting until they have the finished work product and he then questioned why they had been paid \$18,000 if the report is not complete and who authorized the payment. Charlie's question in this regard was not answered. There is a bill from Stone for \$12,000, but the town needs to know what has not been done that was in the original RFP before any additional payments can be made. Paul LeBeau said that there are no job descriptions or compensation information for the Water and Highway operators because they have filed to unionize and are waiting on a ruling.

Charlie Kaslow requested from Paul LeBeau a copy of the communication with Stone Consulting that modified the requirements of the RFP. The FinComm went through the spreadsheet with the list of requirements on the RFP to identify what info is still missing. Ken Szajda commented that there is no comparative data on collective bargaining positions. FinComm members would like more info on specific health benefits for town employees, not just comparables with other towns. There is no private sector data and some FinComm members thought it should be there and others didn't think it would be useful and it was specifically required by the RFP. Some members also felt there was data missing for union employees but Ken felt they had been included in the benefits evaluation. All were in agreement that the Stone Company did not do an analysis with regards to long range planning. Some questioned whether the town was given a meaningful analysis of the financial impact of the recommendations. Stone did give a dollar amount for the cost of implementation. There were no recommendations in the report for cost reduction or long term benefit costs. This could be due to the fact that West Suburban didn't provide much of the data requested. The issue was raised questioning whether we are we getting the best value as a town with West Suburban.

FinComm then moved on to discuss a budget blueprint and to decide if that's what the committee wants to follow, which is based on a budget guideline increase of 1.5% for each of the next 3 years. This blueprint was built on a 0 increase in state aid. The +1.5% would not be an absolute, but a figure to use as budget builder. Charlie Kaslow is concerned with possible cuts in local aid. He questioned if December wasn't too soon to set the guideline for FY14. Paul LeBeau said that looking at revenue, there are positives with free cash, new growth and the tax levy.

Michelle Zeamer, seconded by Dan Alfred, made a MOTION to approve the minutes of October 23, 2012. Passed 5-0-0.

Michelle Zeamer, seconded by Charlie Kaslow, made a MOTION to approve payment of a bill submitted by Faith Antonioli, totaling 3.75 hours for the meeting of October 23, 2012. Passed 5-0-0.

At 9:43 PM, Michelle Zeamer, seconded by Dan Alfred, made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting. Passed 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Faith Antonioli, Secretary

Date Approved: January 8, 2013