



Town of Stow FINANCE COMMITTEE

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Final

Minutes of the February 6, 2018

Finance Committee Meeting

Finance Committee Members Present: Rich Eckel (RE), Peter McManus (PMcM), Paul McLaughlin (PMcL), Julianne North (JN), Atli Thorarensen (AT)

Others present:

Linda Hathaway, Laura Greenough, G.H. Gledhill, Kathy Sferra, Courtney Frecha, Ingeborg Hegemann Clark, Jaquie Goring plus rest of commission, Brian Burke Mark Jones, Jean Vangsness

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

Review Minutes

Minutes of the January 23rd meeting were partially reviewed.

Mail/Correspondence:

None

Accounts Payable

None

Liaison reports:

Budget Discussions:

Linda Hathaway - Town Clerk

During Linda's meeting with TA Bill Wrigley, she recommended that the Assistant Clerk's salary be moved from Clerical Step 2 (she was actually at Clerical Max step) to step 3 Assistant Clerk.

In response to question about any changes in workload over last 2-3 years due to

compliance, Linda states laws changed 5 years ago, requiring annual ethics training, doesn't have a number for amount of increased time, but is growing. Public records requests are also increasing because of new law.

In response to question about salary budget being high compared to surrounding town of similar size, Linda believes her staff (2.25 FTE) is more seasoned (higher step levels), her office is open longer than those of other towns, staff in other towns is underpaid, and her office covers extra duties (ethics monitoring, website updates). She believes that her office is understaffed. In response to a question about using volunteers, Linda states there are 270 hours per year in tax workoff program, she has three/four out of the twenty people in the program. She uses volunteers for voter registration, filing, mailings, opening census forms, assisting with cemetery historical records.

Town Meeting and Election: requesting the same budget: \$3,500, which includes the annual town meeting and one Special Town meeting. A third special town meeting would require Reserve transfer from Fincom. State Election: (a 19% increase) request is up because of salary increases and increased number of voters (4800 at last state election, 5160 now). Expenses include \$1,200 for professional development, which may be reduced to \$400-\$500 as the staff doesn't have time to attend all of the conferences. Linda discussed her software requests which cover tracking software for ethics and open meeting requirements for boards/commissions.

Special Articles: Book binding is ongoing, just not a top priority. Assisted listening device, she intends to use this \$1,890 appropriation from 2012 ATM. Laserfiche appropriation from 2016 ATM for \$10,000 will hopefully be used this year and will help share information between departments and online. The \$3,500 appropriation at 2016 ATM for backup accuvote ballot tabulator will be returned to the general fund, as the \$15,000 appropriation from 2017 ATM was spent for newer machines with better software

Laura Greenough, Recreation Department Director

Salary: Laura is requesting a salary increase. In 17 years, she has not requested a budget increase except for salary. The recreation department has added an assistant, who is available in case of emergencies since she lives in town. This position is also responsible for marketing in addition to other duties. Laura met with Bill W to address the pay increase, and Bill supports an increase but feels it should come from the revolving account. The recreation commission voted and recommended the increase and that it be funded from revolving account for FY19 only. They would like a recommendation on the amount of the salary increase from Bill, so the Recreation Board can vote on it. The job has increased significantly - having created Camp Stow, upgraded many facilities (Pine Bluff,

Stow Community Park, etc). Similar positions in other towns with comparable programs pay more than Stow. Laura maxed out in steps in 2006, and has currently been receiving 2% incremental increase each year since 2006. The seasonal staff is paid 100% out of revolving funds and assistant is paid out of revolving fund and budget (50/50). Special Article: Request for a \$10,500 lawn mower has not been approved yet.

G.H. Gledhill - Cemetery Department

Cemetery department is responsible for 3 cemeteries, 15 acres. Today's demands see an increase in burials. There is no revolving fund, but a perpetual fund that is used for the upkeep and beautification of the cemeteries. Plots cost \$600 each. Burial cost goes to the general fund money. There are approximately 20-28 burials per year. \$350 goes back to the town from each burial, and \$300 to the subcontractor. Burials on Saturdays cost \$200 more. Plots are now reserved for Stow residents only. Starting in July, the cost will increase to \$800.

The cemetery department currently operates out of the old fire station, a space of about 2000 SF, which will be ok for now, but he feels it is not efficient to haul the equipment back and forth between Brookside and old fire station. They are requesting design funds for a new building (requesting \$50K), of 7200 SF, 90' x 80'. Anything bigger than that would have to comply with fire suppression and floor drain system regulations which are expensive. The new building will provide enough space for an office, break room, equipment storage and handicapped bathroom for the two cemetery employees. This would allow them to operate out of one facility, as well as store highway equipment in the future.

Kathy Sferra, Courtney Frecha, Ingeborg Hegeman-Clark - Conservation Commission

Concom is a 7 member volunteer board, supported by 2 staff members. Ms. Sferra provided extensive description of projects worked on this year.

Budget is level-funded this year, with a 2% COLA salary increase for both positions. Reduced Conservation Fund request from \$10,000 to \$5,000 per TA request. Request from Wetlands fund (\$4k) to help pay for asst salary will be increased to cover 2% cola. Wetlands Fund receives permit fees and can be used for administration of Wetlands Protection Act. Fees to cover Town Bylaws goes to General Fund.

Discussion of town comps ensued. Staff spent hundreds of hours on a comparison, which will be forwarded to us. According to staff, local towns such as Bolton, Boxborough, Harvard and Littleton are not good comps as they are understaffed, lacking the experience of our staff, do not manage conservation land, do not offer the level of service that Stow expects, do not negotiate land acquisitions nor apply for land grant applications, do not do

construction inspections and enforcement actions, ensure bylaws are implemented, and do not have the same respect of DEA as Stow. Concom staff put together a spreadsheet, including towns of Stow, Carlisle, Topsfield, Lincoln, Grafton, Norton, Sudbury, Boxborough and Bolton, comparing such items as population, budgeted salary, whether or not town has local bylaws and current Open Space & Rec Plan, CPA, hours open to the public.

Conservation Fund pays for land steward and land management. The fund is replenished in two ways: 1) income from leases and licenses for farmland in town (3) and from Community Garden plots, and sale of trails guides (which nobody has been buying lately). 2) appropriation from Town Meeting - asking for \$10,000, TA adjusted down to \$5000 this year. The state permit money that comes in (\$75/ permit, average 20 permits/year) goes into the wetlands fund. The local permit money goes into the general fund.

Question about lack of volunteer trail crew in Stow. Surrounding towns (Bolton, Boxborough, Acton) have established volunteer groups that maintain and build new trails, mark boundaries, manage invasive species, create and publish trail guides. Concom thinks it would take more of their time rather than free up time, as they would have to find volunteers, train them, create and manage projects, keep them engaged. They have had conversations with the Stow Conservation Trust trail crew, but doesn't want to organize a competing crew. They are happy to partner with the SCT crew for projects. The concom has a policy in place and mechanism by which a group of volunteers could come to them and propose a project, the process has not been used.

Question about time staff spends assisting other groups outside Conservation. Staff collaborates with groups impacting wetlands, for example Complete streets impact on wetlands, helped fill out permit applications 323 Great Rd park, because otherwise we would have to pay somebody to do it.

Question about Accounting for Conservation Fund and Wetlands Fund. Wetlands Fund has \$55k, Kathy will let us know how much is coming in revenue. Wetlands permit application fee (\$62.50) is paid to town and transferred to Wetlands Fund at end of year. Some funds are used towards Concom Asst salary, TA asked this year to pay for legal bills incurred for litigating fines for a resident who did not apply for required permits. Request for FY19 was dropped from \$10k to \$5k as cost for Carver Hill parking lot will not be incurred this year. Permit payments for local bylaw go to general fund (\$3322 in fy17). our share of state permits goes into Wetlands Fund.

Discussion of Kunelius property acquisition ensued.

Other business:

The next meeting will be February 20, 2018. Invited for budget discussions: Community Preservation Committee, Building Department, Planning Department, Council on Aging.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 PM. Motion: AT, Second: PMcM