
Finance Committee Minutes 3/20/2017

Finance Committee Meeting, March 20, 2017

Meeting began at 6:30 p.m.

Members in Attendance: Don Clawson, Jon Sylbert and William Johnson

Also in Attendance: George Cain, Dennis Lynch, Shawn Tryon, Susan Bachelder, Mickey Jarvis, Mark Makuc, Terry Walker, Kenn Basler and Steve Weisz

The Committee read and approved the minutes from the February 27, 2017 and the March 17, 2017 meetings.

The Committee then began the working budget meeting.

The school budget has been moved to special articles as it does not pertain to the working budget.

The Committee discussed with Kenn line 422, Public Works and Facilities, Highway Operations. There is a surplus in that line and in Chapter 90 monies. Kenn proposes that the budget amount be \$170,000. There was a motion by Jon and seconded by William and the Committee voted to change the amount as requested.

The Committee discussed with Kenn line 433, Transfer Station Operations. Kenn proposes that the budget amount be changed to \$75,000. There was a motion by Jon and seconded by William and the Committee voted to change the amount as requested.

The Committee discussed with Shawn line 424, Public Lighting. National Grid contacted Shawn about a program to change the lighting to LED. Shawn is comfortable with the budget amount of \$3,100 and will respond to National Grid for more information about the LED lighting.

Dennis Lynch asked about the Grant Writer line item. This line item is not funded in this budget. The Committee will fund this line item with \$1.00 to keep the line item open.

The Committee discussed the 2% pay increase for town employees. The Committee supports this increase.

The Committee discussed with George Cain line 122, Town Administrator Salary and Expenses. He asks if this position will be funded whether or not there is a Town Administrator in place. Kenn responded that the Select Board supports this position and is planning to bring on a new Town Administrator.

George Cain asked the Committee about the various software budget lines for the departments. Don explained about the many different software programs that the departments working in town hall need to use for their offices. The fees are for the annual license renewals and all software packages are approved the State.

The Committee discussed line item 197, Broadband Services for the Town Hall and Library. Kenn responded that there will be a broadband contract within a month to six weeks. They are looking at two companies. The cost will be amended, if necessary, at town meeting.

The Committee discussed line item 196, Town Offices with George Cain. This amount is what is needed to run the Town Hall. Some of these items, for example, would be utilities, paper, toner, copier etc. Covers the general operation of the Town Hall.

The Committee discussed line item 244, Fire Inspector. The Fire Inspector position is now paid through a revolving fund. Shawn would like to discuss this with the Select Board at a later date.

The Committee discussed line item 911 with George Cain. Don explained that this line item is a pass along amount. It is the Town's share of the retirement benefit paid to our retired workers. We have no control over what this amount is. The Select Board will give a report to the Committee on past amounts paid and projected amounts to be paid.

Special Articles:

- Audit – Proposed \$18,000, discussed changing it to \$5,000. Leave it at \$18,000
- Southern Berkshire Regional Emergency Planning Committee, Town Assessment - \$500
- Bally Gally Repairs – Proposed \$1,500
- Rec. Reserve Septic Loan (4 pmts. Remain) - \$4,953

- The Committee discussed the Stabilization Fund. The Select Board wants to decrease this amount in the budget to \$75,000 from free cash. Don explained that the Stabilization Fund is used to help offset big capital projects, he proposes going back to \$150,000. Also discussed a general stabilization fund and a specific stabilization fund. There was discussion about the kinds of capital projects that might come up. Don explained that the town must fund this account every year to build it up and keep it stable.
- Bridges, Roads and Culverts Stabilization Fund Appropriation – Proposed \$30,000 from free cash.
- Reserve Overlay Surplus – Don explained what this is and that we must wait to find out what the actual amount will be when the new Accountant is hired.
- Retiree Group Health/Life Stabilization Fund Approp. – Proposed \$20,000.
- Retiree Group Health/Life Insurance (from stabilization acct) - \$10,000.
- Susan Bachelder a land owner in Monterey and a resident of Egremont spoke to the Committee about the Southern Berkshire Regional School District budget as it pertains to the Town of Egremont. Egremont tax payers raised funds to repair the Egremont Elementary School. Without informing the Town the District put the school program in hiatus, as they call it, for the next school year. She is asking Monterey to join Egremont in not supporting the 2017-2018 school budget as it is written. If two towns do not support the budget then the budget will not pass. Jon suggested that both towns send a letter informing the District that both towns will not support the budget. The other option is to vote down the budget on the town meeting floor. If 2 towns vote the budget down, even if the other three towns vote for the budget, the budget does not pass. A motion was made by Jon and seconded by William to send a letter to the District in support of Egremont.
- The Committee continued the discussion of the school budget, Capital and Operating and Transportation. There was a question asked if the District has done a survey of the bus routes. The District is currently doing such a survey. The Committee does not support the proposed budget at this time.
- School: Loans & Interest SBRSD Bond – This is the first year of the full bond payment, principle and interest. The amount paid last year was the loan interest only. This item is approved.
- Pickup Truck for the Highway Department. Don proposes paying the \$52,000 right from free cash and not burden the town with a loan.
- At this time a conversation continued regarding capital projects and what types of projects might come up over the next few years. The stabilization fund should cover 5% of the gross amount of the town, which is \$2,000,000 +. This fund must be funded every year to build it up.
- The Committee explained that Special Article monies do not roll over at the end of the year. Special accounts go into the general fund and then are available for free cash.
- Pave the Town Hall driveway – Proposed amount is \$40,000. Shawn has had two estimates for this project. The Town Highway Department does not have the equipment to complete this project. The proposed cost does not include drainage, Shawn is wanting to keep the cost reasonable. It was asked if this project could be complete using free cash.
- CPR Machine (Fire) – Proposed amount is \$16,058 – Shawn explained how this machine would work as opposed to doing CPR by hand. The machine works according to each individuals' needs. There is a 4 year maintenance agreement with this machine. Shawn will find out what the life expectancy of the machine.
- Compressor (Fire) – Proposed amount is \$24,000 – Shawn explained that the compressor fills the Scott Air Packs. The packs in use now are adequately filled with the current compressor, however, new packs are needed and the company recommends that a new compressor be purchased. Shawn will also find out the life expectancy of the new compressor.
- Broadband Consultant – Proposed amount was \$0.00 but the Committee recommends that \$10,000 be added to the budget because there will need to be legal advice for the broadband project. This should cover any legal advice needed.
- Lake Scientist – There are no funds proposed for this item.
- Lake Garfield Matching Grant – There are no funds proposed for this item.
- National Grid/Verizon Attachment Agreements – There are no funds proposed for this item.
- FY16 Bills – There are no funds proposed for this item.
- Fire Truck – There are no funds proposed for this item.
- Lake Garfield Weed Harvesting – Proposed amount is \$50,000 – Steve Weisz explained to the Committee that there is a working group looking at the milfoil growing in the lake and how to remediate it. There is a machine that will harvest the milfoil by suctioning it out of targeted areas of the lake. This machine removes the milfoil so that it can't regrow. William asked about how the success of this process will be measured. When the request comes again next year to fund this process again will there be targeted results of this work so that actual progress in the milfoil remediation can be measured. Milfoil grows only in shallow areas, not in water deeper than 9 feet deep. William asked if a nutrient load study had been done and if any grant monies can be found for this project. He is concerned about spending \$50,000 a year on this project without any measurable results. Steve will provide information on the questions asked. Jon feels that The Lake Buel district funds their weed harvesting that the Lake Garfield Committee should not come to the taxpayers to fund this project.

- Community Center – There are no funds proposed for this item
- Community Center Operations – Proposed amount is \$8,000. The Committee asks why this request is being funded. According to the MOU the Community Center is supposed to fund itself for the first year. In the second year the town will fund 50% and in the third year the town will fund the entire amount. The Community Center is to provide records to the town to prove how it is doing. The lease agreement was discussed and the original MOU will be provided. A motion was made and seconded to remove the \$8,000 from special articles.
- The Loan and Interest Payments are standard items of debt exclusion and are excluded from 21/2. These are payments that are made every year.
- The Committee discussed the wording for Special Articles. The wording should be presented by the Select Board and the Finance Committee can approve or disapprove these articles.
- The Committee discussed that both the Finance Committee and the Select Board are working on the financial excel document but only the Finance Committee should be working on this sheet at this time.

A motion was proposed and seconded to leave the weed harvesting special article off of the budget. The Committee voted yes to remove this line from special articles.

A motion was proposed and seconded to disapprove the Southern Berkshire Regional School District operating budget. The Committee voted yes to not support the school budget at this time.

A motion was proposed and seconded to have the Select Board send a letter in support of the Town of Egremont to the school district. The Committee voted yes to have this letter be sent.

A motion was proposed and seconded to add \$1.00 to the Grant Writers budget line. The Committee voted yes to add \$1.00 to the Grand Writers budget line, to keep this budget line open.

All other articles pass.

The Finance Committee thanks all parties for coming to the meeting and for their input.

Meeting ended at 8:30 p.m.