



Finance Committee

**350 Main Street
Webster, MA 01570**

**Earl Gabor, Chairman
Sarah Sansom, Vice Chairman
Christine Jackel, Recording Secretary
Nick Adamopoulos
Laura Backus**

**Laurie Bysiewicz
Neil Dixon
Michael Finamore
Rick Neeser**

MINUTES
December 7, 2017

Present: Nick Adamopoulos, Laurie Bysiewicz, Neil Dixon, Earl Gabor and Sarah Sansom

Absent: Laura Backus and Mike Finamore

The meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order on Thursday, December 7, 2017 at 7:00 PM in then Board of Selectmen's Meeting Room in the Town Hall by Chairman Earl Gabor. He said the meeting is being recorded for rebroadcast at a later time. He stated the Town Administrator would be joining the meeting a little later, so asked we start with Old Business after approval of the minutes.

Minutes

Chairman Gabor asked for a motion to approve the minutes of November 9, 2017. Vice Chairman Sansom said she had two corrections: (1) Unappropriated free cash balance, second sentence should be FY18 and (2) Feedback on this year's ATFC meeting in October, 4th sentence should read bond authorizations (not issuances) are very old and still on the books and can be approved for removal. Motion made by Neil Dixon and seconded by Laurie Bysiewicz to approve the minutes of November 9, 2017 with changes noted. Vote was unanimous; motion carried.

Town Administrator's Report

Monthly Budget

The T/A said there were not really any new changes from last month and no transfers. All that were approved at October Town meeting have been made. Vice Chairman Sansom questioned 192 Public Buildings Maintenance as it didn't appear the transfer was made. The T/A said the \$1,000 is regular overtime for the custodian and he will check and confirm if the transfer was made.

Financial Calendar

The T/A commended the Assessor/Accountant offices for a great job in getting these done before Thanksgiving. Chairman Gabor said December has budget progress and performance evaluation for the T/A listed. He sent budget request forms to all Department Heads and all are due back Friday before MLK day. Charter calls for budget to be submitted by end of February and health insurance should be biggest change and T/A is waiting for the state numbers for plan rates to come out, but that may not be until the end of February or beginning of March. He could put together budget knowing it will change, so will do worst case scenario.

Recap

The T/A confirmed that the tax rate has been set and bills will be going out in a few weeks.

DOR Report – Status Update

The T/A said he expects the DOR report on Tuesday and BOS will hold a meeting probably on December 18th so will not have for the December 11th meeting.

Feedback from BOS on Draft Financial Policies

The T/A said he will hold off doing this until the January BOS meeting.

Audit Committee Update from BOS – Follow Up

The T/A said he remembers there being a liaison from the Finance Committee and he will solicit someone from the Board of Selectmen. FY17 audit financials completed, working on single audit and will be several weeks from now until Management Letter received.

Compost Facility Final Revenue and Expense Statement & Closing Date – Follow Up

The T/A said they are still expending so we need to wait.

Follow Up on Suggestion of Legal Counsel at Contract Negotiations

With regard to legal counsel doing negotiations and he contacted several but no one does it alone; they will sit with the administration but not do it separately. In the past, Mr. Dixon said he believes the School Committee has outsourced a firm in the past. The T/A said there is only one contract coming up, which is Dispatch

Auction Sale of Town Owned Property Report

The total price received from the auction of 34 East Main Street and 28 Mechanic Street was \$157,500. One bidder backed out and had to forfeit his deposit of \$5,000. Chairman Gabor asked if there were other properties that might come up in the future, and T/A said the Treasurer's office is constantly looking for other properties. The \$157,500 will come in by the end of this calendar year, will be certified next Fall and be free cash in FY19.

Chairman Gabor said we had put off discussion on FY19 capital plan and focus on the Fire and DPW until the T/A arrived and said he feels we should be involved from the outset. Mike Finamore, Nick Adamopoulos, the T/A and Chairman Gabor will work to develop capital plan. The T/A created a form and he will send to Chairman Gabor to review. The Chairman said he would like a handle on what equipment we select for Webster, and when bidding discussion begins, where the Town stands as several companies may provide bids. Image Q is used by most towns for police equipment. The T/A said there are many ways and some require three (3) bids and certain bidders have set prices. He said we do not have to use the state bidders list, but in some instances may save time as vendors are vetted and cost could be less.

Conflict of Interest Requirement

The T/A said every year everyone has to do it, no matter when it was last done, and must take the online ethics training and sign conflict of interest. Mr. Adamopoulos said he did his in 2017. The T/A said he will send out the link and it will be distributed to all members.

Chairman Gabor said prior to the T/A's arrival, we discussed checking with other surrounding town regarding fees, and that he would check with Oxford and Charlton and Ms. Bysiewicz with Dudley and Southbridge. The T/A said the four that are most similar to Webster are Northbridge, Millbury, Leicester and Oxford. The DOR has a spreadsheet and those were the communities most similar to us. Ms. Bysiewicz asked how we are similar; the T/A said there are 32 criteria population, median income, tax rate, etc. and when all added up, these were most comparable. Ms. Bysiewicz said she will do Northbridge and Millbury and Chairman Gabor will do Oxford and Leicester. Mr. Dixon asked if tenants moved out of 37 and 39 Negus Street and T/A said they have and all are empty. Regarding the water treatment plant project, he T/A said the engineers were waiting for the insurance certificate from the contractor and those were received today. They had a meeting the week before Christmas with the contractor, met with engineering to go over next steps, contract signed and expect ground breaking in March.

Old Business

Library Building Project Update

Mr. Dixon provided a handout of the total project budget. He noted on page 1 where there is a small "x" in the right margin, represents that the item is complete and no more money coming out of that, so easy to identify item closed. On page 2 project budget for 37 and 39 Negus Street, they have the designated \$1m from contingency from the total budget allocated to this. Both were still occupied at the time of the last meeting, and understand two families still occupying the property but have until December 1st to vacate the property. On page 3 all change proposals that have been approved or pending and there is an additional \$240,000 contingency from the main budget. Chairman Gabor asked about the revised site plan and if any further information. Contractor submits change orders and project manager approves or disapproves. On page 4 shows status of each item keeping track of \$240,000 contingency and amount taken from there, shows \$7,178 remaining contingency, so approximately \$67,146 left of the \$240,000. The construction company has an April 5th completion date. The project manager is not comfortable with the date and 20 workers/day; he feels it should be 30 workers. They base on how being invoiced, construction company only invoiced \$2m for their work, and the project manager feels they should be invoicing \$4m which will pay sub-contractors, etc.

The only penalty is if they cannot clear out the auditorium by the election, construction company responsible for that cost but they feel they will meet the date. Ms. Bysiewicz said she feels the Town needs more than assurances; an action plan is needed. Mr. Dixon said he feels the Town needs to be better in contract negotiations. The Library personnel say that will need one to two weeks to install the furniture once OK to occupy and another four to six weeks to move temporary library to the new one. This will interfere with the election and the town will incur expenses due to have elections in two places. Mr. Dixon said with only four months remaining there is a lot to be done. Brick work is up and all the glass windows will be in by December 20.

Water Treatment Plant Update

Chairman Gabor said Mr. Krause is leaving at the end of December. The position has been advertised, but no decision made but won't impact the project contract signing. Contract will be signed and 550 day window begins that day. Tighe and Bond have hired a project manager, Jeff Faulkner and Robert Our as contract manager. Once signed, final drawings submit to team and will pick up sometime in January. A new line between the treatment plant and the water tower will be put in concurrently with the treatment plant construction in the Spring of 2019. Mr. Dixon asked what trouble will Town be in without having station #3 filtered. Chairman Gabor said that if station three ever became a problem in the future, it would be very costly to tie station three in. However, the design of the plant is such that it can be enlarged to accommodate more filters, which would be in the contingency plan. For short term if well on Bigelow becomes a problem, two wells can provide what is needed.

Finance Committee Revised Mission Statement, Goals and Guidelines Review

Members of the Finance Committee had reviewed the Mission Statement, goals and Guidelines in November and changes were made. Chairman Gabor asked the committee to reconsider wording in Rule #1. After review of the revised document, it was the consensus of the committee to make the following changes under Rules #1 – All **written communication** regarding financial issues with Town government or Town Residents **will be copied to the Finance Committee e-mail repository subject to review by the Chairman**. The sentence **The Chairman will present the communication to the appropriate party, and request a written reply to be presented to the committee at the next meeting** was removed. Chairman Gabor said he recently attended a meeting regarding open meeting law and new laws put in by the Attorney General and covered topics like e-mail and social media. He explained how feelings/thoughts/ideas should not be communicated to others on the committee or other residents, and should not be done outside the Finance meetings. Chairman Gabor said if any members of the committee attend another town meeting, members should not sit together, not have conversations or text during the meeting. As a result, Chairman Gabor added Rule #2 - **All members of this committee must comply with Open Meeting laws during meetings and outside of meetings, including e-mail and social media**. Motion was made by Mr. Adamopoulos and seconded by Vice Chairman Sansom to approve the mission statement, goals and guidelines document with the changes as discussed. Vote was unanimous; motion carried. Chairman Gabor said there is nothing in place regarding new members coming on board, such as appointments by the Moderator or Board of Selectmen, should be given a copy of this prior to being sworn in as a member. Copies of the revised document will be provided to all members.

Creation of Gmail Account for all Members to Store All E-mails Referring to Fin Com Business

Chairman Gabor asked the finance committee e-mail be added to any communication made by members. He said any written communication between any committee member to the T/A or Department Heads should go into the e-mail depository and he will be able to review what is in the repository 2-3 times/week.

Before moving to New Business, Vice Chairman Sansom noted that with the resignation of Carole Marchand from the Finance Committee, that Ms. Marchand was a member of the Personnel Advisory Committee along with Vice Chairman Sansom. She said a draft is ready to go out to all department heads. The handbook is the next step. Mr. Dixon asked when the committee met. The Personnel Advisory Committee meets Tuesdays at 10:00 AM in the Irene Martel Conference Room, but due to Christmas the meeting will be on Wednesday December 27 at 12:30 PM. There needs to be another member on the committee. Motion was made by Chairman Gabor and seconded by Vice Chairman Sansom that Mr. Dixon be appointed to the Personnel Advisory Committee. Vote was unanimous; motion carried.

New Business

FY19 Capital Planning Focus on Fire & DPW Departments – Equipment Quotes

Chairman Gabor thought T/A Willardson would be present to discuss, but because he was not present, this may be moved to the next meeting as he needs to be part of the discussion.

New Conflict of Interest Requirement and New OML Requirements

Chairman Gabor said the Attorney General came out with new sections of the Open Meeting Law in October and going back to discussions; you can communicate details, numbers, etc. but you cannot express ideas, feelings, beliefs, opinion or solicit ideas from others. As mentioned, e-mail communication, can't be used for personal discussions. Members of public bodies must not engage in deliberation of other members of the public body, such as Facebook or Twitter violates open meeting law. OML discourages members texting during meetings. Nothing new regarding meeting notices. Regarding meeting minutes, states they must be sufficiently detailed so a member not present has an understanding of what transpired at the meeting, as well as listing documents discussed, which is now part of the Finance Committee minutes. Also with regard to minutes it states they should be made available in draft form if any person requests them 10 days after the meeting.

Comparison of Town Fees with Area Communities

Chairman Gabor said the T/A requested as he begins to prepare the budget, if the Finance Committee would do a comparison of fees of surrounding towns to Webster. He said we can use T/A's name when contacting them to see if they will provide a list of their fees. This would need to be done relatively soon so we could have information before year end. Chairman Gabor said he will create a spreadsheet and Ms. Bysiewicz volunteered to assist him, splitting the towns of Charlton, Dudley, Oxford and Southbridge. Ms. Bysiewicz said she would contact Dudley and Southbridge and Chairman Gabor will contact Oxford and Charlton.

New Town Department Heads Appointments

As mentioned earlier, several applicants for the Water Superintendent, but no decision made. Sewer Superintendent could handle things on a short-term basis if no one hired prior to hiring the new Superintendent. Carole Marchand has been appointed Recreation Director. An RFP has gone out for a marina and various entertainment and they will help the Town revenue stream. Winter Wonderland will be held December 8-9, Christmas Bazaar at Park Avenue this coming Saturday. Chairman Gabor said tax rates were set and approved by the Board of Selectmen and bills will be going out soon. Biggest change was commercial rate has been lowered and one step away from having a flat rate. Commercial rate went down about \$.25.

T/A Willardson joined the meeting at 7:50 PM. He said first round of interviews have been done for the Water Superintendent and Doran said he is willing to work with the Town if no one hired. Chairman Gabor asked the T/A to begin with the budget report. (back to T/A Report)

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be held on Thursday, January 4, 2018 at 7:00 PM in the Board of Selectmen's Meeting Room in the Town Hall.

Adjournment

Prior to adjourning, the Recording Secretary mentioned Stanley Lenky who was a member of the Finance Committee for many years, passed away the day after Thanksgiving; Chairman Gabor asked for a moment of silence.

A follow-up list of items to be followed up on for next meeting was created by Mr. Adamopoulos. They are: 1 - Edits made to mission goals, guidelines and this will be used as a tool for potential new members that are appointments of the Board of Selectmen and Moderator 2 - E-mail repository set up 3 - Contact surrounding towns regarding fees for comparison; T/A gave list to Chairman 4 - Confirm Budget classifications 5 - Financial Policies with Board of Selectmen 6 - Audit committee review with Board of Selectmen 7 - Compost facility 8 - Form for capital plan 9 - Conflict of Interest/Ethics

There being no further business, motion was made by Neil Dixon and seconded by Laurie Bysiewicz to adjourn at 8:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Jackel. Recording Secretary

Documents Reviewed:

- Monthly Budget
- Financial Calendar
- Finance Committee Mission Statement
- Library Project Budget
- Follow-up document