**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Town Hall ~ April 3, 2018**

**Sturbridge, MA**

**Call to Order:**

The Finance Committee chair called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 7:00pm. The following committee members were present: Kathy Neal (KN), Michael Serio (MS), Joni Light (JL), James Waddick (JW), Mike Hager, and Larry Morrison (LM).

Absent: Jared Burns (JB), Karen Davis (KD), and Bruce Boyson (BB).

Guests: Becky Gendreau (BG), Greg Morse (GM).

**Review of Fiscal Year 2019 Conservation Commission Budget**

MH introduced BG and stated that she has been working for the Town for six months. The budget is level funded; staff is BG and a part time administration assistant who works 20 hours for Conservation (plus 5 hours paid from Wetlands budget).

BG reviewed the budget. She explained that the training expense is for her and the Conservation Commissioners. BG stated that the Conservation Properties Maintenance item provides for the care and custody of the approximately 2,000 acres that the Town is responsible for. The Removal of Outbuildings on Conservation Land funds will provide the funds necessary to demolish and remove six buildings that are considered to be hazardous on three properties. There was discussion regarding asking the CPC for funding. BG stated that was in process; however, the initial meeting had been rescheduled due to snow. KN stated that it was a warrant article and it was determined that the deadline for warrant articles is the end of April-before the rescheduled meeting. MH suggested that the CPC funds had paid for the properties and that CPC should provide for the upkeep and preservation of the properties. JL asked what the outbuildings are. BG explained that there is an old shed on the Plimpton property, a small cabin on Heinz Farm, and multiple buildings on the Leadmine Property. JL asked if the buildings pose a problem. BG said that they are all adjacent to trails; MH stated that they are nuisances that should be removed.

BG explained that the Adobe software is a license for the administrative assistant to make the office more efficient. KN asked how far along are the new regulations. BG stated that public hearings are the next step. JW asked if they are on the warrant. KN explained that only bylaws appear on the warrant, not regulations. BG stated that the supporting regulations for wetland bylaws have been revised and the remaining text is easier to understand.

**Review of Fiscal Year 2019 DPW, Roads, Snow & Ice**

GM distributed a handout on the road programs with the CMRCP-Worcester County Project area. He explained the bar chart and indicated that Sturbridge is either ranked 31 or 32 out of the 40 towns. MH asked if the CMRCP grades on its own scale and does it look at Town roads using a detailed analysis and consistent scales. GM stated that it is the average of road conditions across Worcester County. MH asked if it is based on dollars expended. GM stated that it is based on road conditions. JW asked if it is reporting on town roads or all roads in town. GM explained that it is only based on town roads. KN asked what OCI is. GM stated that it is Overall Condition Index. He explained that he maintains an in-house list based on daily usage and considers small or side roads repairs before they get too bad. MH asked how the two lists compare. GM stated that the CMRCP list and his list are close; some of roads are ranked higher on one list over the other. GM stated that increasing the Town’s listing would cost approximately $2.5 million.

JL commented on the recent news about roads in Boston – potholes, cost of tires and property damage. She asked GM what he foresees. GM explained the procedure for someone to file a claim for damage caused by roads and that liability is determined by whether the defect of the road was known to the Town. JL asked if such claims were paid by the Town or by insurance. GM stated that it was strictly insurance. MS asked if there was any reason not to fasten down manhole covers. GM stated that there is a new push by the state to lock manholes. He explained that the new snowplows have adjustable feet that keep better contact on the roads which will increase manhole cover incidents.

JW asked if there was a change in staffing resulting in a variation in salaries and wages. GM said that veteran people left and the new employees would be at a lower rate. JL asked if GM removed one of the positions. GM stated that Leon Gaumond had removed one. He stated that the storm water management takes time and staff. There was discussion between MH and GM as to alternate ways to take the readings, plot on the map and verify the readings. GM stated that the organized areas in town are completed.

MH asked about the Conservation Commission mowing budget being moved to the DPW budget. GM explained that Heinz farm was originally mowed to prevent an invasive species from overtaking the area. For the first few years it was covered by a grant; after that, it was included in the Conservation Commission budget. Now there is a hayfield that also needs to be mown. MH asked if there were other options such as finding someone to hay the field. GM explained that it was complicated; the Town equipment fits on the access but haying equipment would not. The right to access the field is through a private landowner and there would need to be an agreement between the landowner and the person contracted to do the haying.

JL asked if an extra person would be beneficial to help with the extra work. GM said yes. MH stated that the department has been shorthanded for a while; he suggested hiring three employees this year and one more next year.

JL asked about the vehicle maintenance increasing. GM said that the number of Town vehicles keeps increasing. MH asked if the road budget is a warrant article again this year and what the amount is. GM stated that some is Chapter 90 and some is the Town’s. JL asked if there are any other articles. GM stated that road reconstruction and maintenance are combined now. KN confirmed that they are combined.

MH asked it the water and sewer budget was increasing due to increasing problems with the grinder pumps. GM stated that there was an expected 10% annual failure rate; pumps wear out based on use. His department sees a failure rate of 16-17%. KN asked if everyone has a pump. GM stated no; those around lakes or on ledge are more likely to have pumps. KN asked who pays for repairs. GM stated the Town from the pump up. MH asked homeowners are responsible for repairs caused by their doing something to damage the pumps. GM stated that everyone gets a free pass, but if you keep making mistakes, you will pay. He said to be cognizant of what you put in the sewer line and the pumps work well. But they do wear out over time. JL asked who pays to replace the pump. GM stated if the pump is worn out, the Town replaces the pump. It is in the budget. MH asked if the DPW rebuilds pumps. GM stated yes. MH asked if there is enough in the budget for parts. GM said there is and that the department shops among vendors for the best part prices.

GM stated that flow to the sewer plant is low. MS asked if people are conserving water. GM said that people are conserving and that upgrades through the system significantly lower the flow. JL asked if more people on the system lead to its being less expensive to run. GM stated that it is explained that way. But debt is involved in expansion; the more work that you do, the more it costs; more customers does not equal less cost. He said that the best customer to add into the system is one where the sewer already is in place.

JW asked about snow and ice supplies. GM states that they are well below budget. JW and GM discussed GM’s concerns about centralizing electricity. The DPW has 19 meters and GM is concerned about catching mistakes or errors. JL appreciated GM’s concerns.

**Line Item Budget Review**

The following line items were reviewed for Conservation Commission. The motion was moved to recommend by MH.

**Line: Account: Conservation Commission**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 36 | 11712-52000 | Purchase of Services | $6,068.00 | MH, JL seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-0. |
| 37 | 11712-54000 | Supplies | $1,600.00 | MH, JL seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-0. |
| 38 | 11712-57000 | Other Charges | $600.00 | MH, JL seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-0. |
|  |  | Total Expenses | $8,268.00 |  |

The following line items were reviewed for the Zoning Board of Appeals. The motion was moved to recommend by MH.

**Line: Account: Zoning Board of Appeals**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 44 | 11762-52000 | Purchase of Services | $500.00 | MH; JL seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0. |
| 45 | 11762-54000 | Supplies | $350.00 | MH; JL seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0. |
| 46 | 11762-57000 | Other Charges | $90.00 | MH; JL seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0. |
|  |  | Total Expenses | $940.00 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | **Zoning Board of Appeals Total** | $940.00 |  |

The following line items were reviewed for Department of Public Works. The motion was moved to recommend by JW.

**Line: Account: Department of Public Works**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 93 | 14102-52000 | Purchase of Services | $65,639.00 | JW: JL seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-0. |
| 94 | 14102-54000 | Supplies | $81,140.00 | JW: JL seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-0. |
| 95 | 14102-57000 | Other Charges | $1,430.00 | JW: JL seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-0. |
|  |  | Total Expenses | $148,209.00 |  |

The following line item was reviewed for Town Road Maintenance. The motion was moved to recommend by JW.

**Line: Account: Town Road Maintenance**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 96 | 14212-52410 | Private Road Maintenance | $6,000.00 | JW: JL seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-0. |
|  |  | Total Expenses | $6,000.00 |  |

The following line items were reviewed for Snow & Ice Removal. The motion was moved to recommend by JW.

**Line: Account: Snow & Ice Removal**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 98 | 14232-52000 | Purchase of Services | $70,000.00 | JW: JL seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-0. |
| 99 | 14232-54000 | Supplies | $100,000.00 |  |
|  |  | Total Expenses | $170,000.00 |  |

There was discussion regarding an apparent formatting issue with the excel file for the Finance Committee Handbook. JL said that she would check the formulas before the document is printed.

JL asked about the Historical Commission’s coming before the Finance Committee. After some discussion, KN stated that she would call for an explanation of the warrant amount.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

JL moved the motion to accept the minutes from March 27, 2018, as amended. MH seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-0.

JL moved the motion to accept the minutes from March 29, 2018, as amended. MH seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-0.

**No New Business**

**No Old Business**

**No Public Access**

JW moved the motion to adjourn. MH seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-0 and meeting adjourned at 8:46pm.

/jme