**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Town Hall ~ October 1, 2019**

**Sturbridge, MA**

**Call to Order:**

The Finance Committee Chair called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:30 pm. The following committee members were present: Kathy Neal (KN), Michael Hager (MH), Bruce Boyson (BB), Jared Burns (JB), Kevin Smith (KS), Joni Light (JL), Larry Morrison (LM) (arrived 6:32pm), James Waddick (JW)(arrived 6:45pm) and Karen Davis (KD)(arrived 6:50pm).

Guests: Jeff Bridges (JBr), Town Administrator

**Reserve Fund Transfers – Town Administrator (2)**

The first Reserve Fund Transfer is requested by Jeff Bridges to cover costs associated with an appraisal for the property of 501 Main Street. JBr explained that the town is interested in using it for a potential parking lot. The appraisal will include market data used to estimate the market value of the property. Cost of appraisal is $3,400.00.

MH asked why this location was chosen for a parking lot. JBr explained that parking is needed, but not necessarily at this location. The property is available, and the town is exploring options. KS asked where the funding will come from if the town is prepared to purchase the lot, and if CPA funds could be considered. JBr was unsure. KN explained that town meeting will likely have to vote on whether to purchase the property. JBr explained that the purchase price will stipulate that the current property owner will raze the buildings so that only the land is purchased. The town will not be responsible for the cost to raze structures. LM asked if there were any asbestos issues and if it would be considered as part of the structure removals. JBr said that all of this will be outlined as part of the purchase negotiation. LM further asked if traffic had been considered, and if the state would be consulted for safety signs and precautions. JBr confirmed that DOT is indeed reviewing plans.

MH moved the motion to transfer $3,400.00 from the Reserve Fund to the Town Administrator Purchase of Services Account (11232-52000); KS seconds. Motion accepted 6-2-0. (BB, JL opposed)

The second Reserve Fund Transfer, also requested by the town administrator, is the cover the costs associated with pre-employment physical and drug testing. KS asked if this needs to be updated as part of the town’s policies. JBr said this is a new policy being put into place and is in line with other municipalities. KS further asked about the marijuana testing as it is now legal for recreation in the state. JBr explained that if an applicant tested positive for marijuana, he/she would be allowed to retest in thirty days if they chose, at their expense. If second test was negative the position would be available for him/her. LM asked if a specific lab was required to do the drug testing, which JBr commented they would be asked to use the town preferred lab. MH asked what vacancies are anticipated at this moment. JBr noted that there are vacant dispatchers, senior center director, and the TA assistant. JL commented that dispatchers should be covered under the police budget as they have a line item that covers new hires. JW asked how they would handle medical marijuana cases. JBr said they would have to provide proof from the doctor that they use marijuana for medical reasons. BB asked to confirm if the candidate did not pass the first, but passed the second drug test, that the position would be available to him/her. JBr confirmed this as correct. KS asked if JBr had costs of the testing per person. JBr said the cost would be approximately $184 for drug testing, and a total of $550 in total for drug and medical testing per person.

MH moved the motion to transfer $5,000.00 from the Reserve Fund to the Town Administrator Purchase of Services Account (11232-52000); JW seconds. Motion accepted 6-2-1. (KS, JL opposed, KD abstained)

**Reserve Fund Transfer – Building Inspector**

The last Reserve Fund Transfer is for additional overtime costs in the amount of $426 for the Building Inspector. Twenty additional hours is needed to cover time spent loading inspections into their new software program. This would be straight overtime hours. MH asked if activities in the department could be better prioritized until they could get caught up with the upload. JBr explained that it is still the priority to deal with customers and it was difficult to clear adequate time in order to get the upload completed. JW confirmed that it was likely more efficient to get it done after hours without interruptions during the course of the day.

KS moved the motion to transfer $426.00 from the Reserve Fund to the Building Inspector Salaries and Wages Account (12411-51130); JL seconds. Motion accepted 8-1-0 (MH opposed)

KS asked the town administrator if the Personnel Study proposal was sent. He confirmed and would provide a copy to the committee.

Discussion moved to the budget process. LM asked if next year’s budget will allow for contingency. JBr said that they will adhere to the Uniform Massachusetts Accounting System (UMAS) along with most other municipalities in the Commonwealth. JBr explained that he’d like to have funding available in his budget that would allow for funding of costs such as the additional expense for the Personnel Study, rather than going through the RFT process.

**Meeting Minutes**

KS moved the motion to approve the July 11, 2019, meeting minutes as submitted. LM seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-3. (BB, KD, JB abstained)

**New Business**

MH asked if there would be a Special Town Meeting this fiscal year. JBr said they are planning to have one for at least three articles. One is the result of the Senior Center Study which could be to renovate the existing building, potentially build new on 70 Cedar Street parcel, or the Shephard parcel. MH asked if they ruled out 501 Main Street if the town purchases that property. JBr said that a “needs assessment” would be required to determine square footage, access, and other public safety issues. KS asked if the study included a proposal on what to do with the existing building if not to be used as the Senior Center. JBr said it was not specified in this study. JL and JW discussed the multiple building feasibility studies that have been done over the years without any action. JBr said he would review all feasibility studies since they predated his tenure. KD asked why a second assessment would be needed if it was already done and paid for by the town. JBr said that some of the studies had specific parameters that may or may not include the current needs. He will be specific in the study.

JW asked about the discussion on the proposed sewer line on old Route 15. JBr said it was on the next BOS agenda.

KS asked about the need to prioritize building projects as the FinCom has presented in the past. JBr explained that he has done that, with Senior Center being first; DPW being second; and the Public Safety building being third. KS continued with the previous list of 6 to 8 high value renovations, why the Senior Center is first, and would the remaining projects still be considered? JBr said that if he has asked for funding of a feasibility study and it was approved, then he intends to act upon it. If the town does not approve funding for a particular study, he will move on to the next.

JBr confirmed that free cash has not yet been certified.

**No Old Business and No Public Access**

JW moved the motion to adjourn. MH seconds. Motion accepted 9-0-0 and meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

/jml