

TOWN OF GILL

M A S S A C H U S E T T S



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SELECTBOARD/FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

June 12, 2009

Called to Order

Meeting was called to order at 3:02 p.m.

Present

Ann Banash, John Ward, Nancy Griswold, Selectboard members; Tracy Rogers, Town Administrator; Ernie Hastings, Tupper Brown, Claire Chang, Timmie Smith, Ronnie LaChance, Finance Committee members; Jenn Waldron, Gill Montague Regional School Committee member.

Absent

Joe Williams, Jim Poulsen, Chris Collins, Alden Booth, Finance Committee members.

Selectboard Meeting Reschedule

Citing scheduling conflicts with the Board's next regularly scheduled meeting on June 22, members agreed to reschedule the meeting for June 23 at 8:30 a.m. instead.

Gill Elementary School Teacher Reassignment

Jenn Waldron explained that Chip Wood has decided to move Gill's current first grade teacher, Susan Pelis, to Sheffield for the next school year. When School Committee member Sandy Brown tried to explain how the School Committee and/or Town would like more input on a change this significant, she was told it was within his authority to make the change without consulting the School Committee. Feeling a loss of local control over such decisions, the School Committee voted on June 9 to reinstate the parent advisory councils that are described in the regional district agreement. The Chair of the Committee has contacted the moderators in both towns to request that they appoint three members at large from their communities to serve on the councils.

The Selectboard agreed to send a letter to the incoming superintendent inviting him and the School Committee to the July 20 Board meeting to discuss community involvement.

Oil from Franklin County Technical School

Tracy stated that Hillcrest Elementary School has enough capacity to take the free oil offered from the Tech School. She asked for feedback on whether she should try to charge the school for the oil. Ernie stated that he had another possible alternative and will contact Tracy by Monday with details.

FY10 Budget

- COLA: The groups discussed whether to present the omnibus with a 1% COLA included. Members agreed that since the GMRSD teachers are receiving no COLA next year and many people in the community are losing their jobs, it seems more appropriate to present a 0% COLA and then apply a 1% increase retroactively after a special town meeting once the state and school figures are settled. The Selectboard will institute a spending freeze on non-essential items as of July 1 until a final budget is passed.
- Stipends: Timmie recommended breaking stipends out in detail, thinking that MGL Ch. 41, §108 deems that necessary. The Board asked Tracy to find out if it is necessary. If it is not, members stated a preference for leaving it lumped together the way it currently is.
- Treasurer's Expenses: The Board and Finance Committee agreed it made good sense to ensure there was enough money in the line to allow the Treasurer to sell parcels that are in tax title and get them back on the tax rolls. Given the Treasurer needed \$700 in funds transferred in during FY09, the group agreed to add \$1,000 total to the Treasurer's expense line for FY10. The Board requested a new budget detail sheet from the Treasurer.
- Legal Expenses: In order to put in a level-funded budget request, Ronnie cut \$800 in legal expenses out of her FY10 budget. The group agreed to put this money back in, but under the general legal expense line.
- IT Committee Expense: Tracy reported that all departments have computers that are in good shape. They are all less than three years old and most have a five-year warranty on them. The Committee should be able to reduce its request to \$500. The group agreed to make this reduction.
- Town Clerk: Tracy reported that every override election costs the Town \$1,000-\$1,500. Given the likelihood of an override election in FY10, the group agreed to increase the town clerk (or election line) by \$1,500.
- Agricultural Commission: The group agreed to put \$200 in the Ag Commission's expense line for future brochures, etc.
- Town Hall/RMB: Tracy requested an additional \$1,800 to continue paying for janitorial services in the two buildings. The group agreed.
- Highway: Tupper raised a concern that we are supplementing the Town's operating budget by using Chapter 90 funds for routine work.
- Council on Aging: With Montague deciding to replace the senior center director with a 17-hour position instead of 20, that should reduce our assessment. Tracy will contact Montague to see what that figure should be.
- Library: There was concern that by reducing the Dog Fund to \$100, it might lead to an inadvertent reduction in library funds by the remaining \$700. Tracy will look into this.

- Recreation: Tracy reported that she spoke to the Rec. Committee's treasurer on Wednesday and the chair on Thursday and told them their budget line would be zeroed out if a detailed budget was not presented by today. They have not submitted a budget. Ann stated that no other town department would receive funds without a detailed budget request. Nancy also reminded the group that the chair of the committee stated he could run the program entirely on fees if necessary. The group agreed to reduce the Rec. Committee's line item to \$0.
- Short-Term Interest: With the preliminary tax billing system in place, Ronnie did not need to obtain any short-term loans in FY09 and doesn't anticipate doing so in FY10. The group agreed to reduce that line item to \$0.
- Unemployment: The group agreed to leave the \$2,500 appropriation as is, but asked Ronnie to provide a history of the account's level over the last few years.
- Group Health & Life Ins.: Tracy explained that health insurance costs increased 7% this year, but that increase was offset by one employee taking his spouse's coverage elsewhere. Ernie pointed out that the 7% increase in costs for the employees' portion of coverage, without a COLA increase to offset it, means the employees will effectively take a reduction in pay next year.
- GMRSD Assessment: The group agreed to propose an assessment figure that is proportionate to what Montague approved at its June 6 town meeting, which equals \$1,363,273 for Gill.
- Stabilization: Tupper recommended adding \$5,000 to the stabilization account to try to get the Town back in the habit of putting money away. There was some discussion on the topic, but no resolution.
- Sandri Forest: Tupper reported that those present at the last Finance Committee meeting voted unanimously to support accepting the donation of the Sandri land for a town forest. The Committee determined there was not likely to be a substantial, if any, financial burden for the Town if the gift was accepted.

Adjourned

Meeting was adjourned at 5:38 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Tracy Rogers, Town Administrator.

John R. Ward, Selectboard Clerk