

# TOWN OF GILL

MASSACHUSETTS



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## SELECTBOARD & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

May 29, 2012

Call to Order: The joint meeting of the Selectboard and Finance Committee was called to order at 4:02pm.

Present: Randy Crochier, Ann Banash and John Ward, Selectboard members; Ray Purington, Admin. Assistant; Jacob Rau, Timmie Smith, Claire Chang, Ronnie LaChance, Alden Booth (4:08pm), Jim Poulsen (4:08pm), Finance Committee members; David Hastings.

FY13 Police Department Budget: Police Chief David Hastings explained his level-funded budget request for FY13. He noted that his maintenance line is up for FY13, as he expects to spend more on vehicle repairs, especially if the '04 Ford Explorer isn't replaced this year. He said the PD would like to purchase in-car computers for each of the three cruisers. It costs \$3,252 for each computer and monitor set, and this price is so low only because of Sergeant Redmond's knowledge and expertise. It was asked that the Sergeant attend a 5pm meeting on June 7<sup>th</sup> in order to further explain the proposed equipment.

FY12 spending on part-time officers is roughly \$11,000 through the mid-May pay period. There is money available to spend on part-time coverage right now because of cautious spending in the winter, but unfortunately there aren't officers available to work the shifts. All of Gill's part-time officers have full time jobs in other departments. The Chief was asked to provide crime statistics for FY12 (like what appears in Annual Reports). It was also suggested that next year's budget include more detailed expense reporting.

Tupper Brown joined the Finance Committee meeting at 4:40pm.

The Chief encouraged everyone to email him budget questions and he will answer them. The Chief left the meeting.

FY13 Highway Department and Related Budgets: Highway Superintendent Mick LaClaire joined the meeting at 4:45pm. For his Tree & Forestry budget, he has requested an increase of \$3,700 over the current \$3,000. Although the Highway Department is able to do a lot of tree work with the 3-town shared bucket truck, there are many tall trees, and trees near wires that are dead or dying. A tree company charges \$1,200-1,400 per day.

Mick's requested budget for the Highway Department is up \$20,721 over last year. He attributed that increase to skyrocketing costs for contracted/hired services, as well as increased costs for materials. Level-funded budgets are putting roadwork further and further behind; the same money buys less and less work. He noted that until 2008 the cost of materials for oil & stone on the roads was included in the Highway budget. It was cut that year and shifted to come from Chapter 90 funds. Where we had once been doing 3 miles of oil & stone per year, it is now down to 1.5 miles. Although no roads have been missed in the cycle of road maintenance, Mick feels that without a budget increase we will start to fall behind, and then road repairs will get even more expensive. It was suggested that the Selectboard consider asking Mick to prepare a road-by-road status report on the conditions of Gill's roads.

Other requested increases to the Highway budget: new narrow band radios for the trucks, mower, loader, and garage, in order to meet a 1/1/13 deadline from the FCC; new federal requirements relating to road sign size and reflectivity, expected to cost \$2,800 in FY13, and roughly \$12-15,000 total by time implementation is complete in 2018. It was suggested that perhaps a letter to Senator Rosenberg opposing these unfunded sign mandates would be helpful.

When asked about the Machinery Earnings account, Mick explained that for several years he hasn't been able to charge Chapter 90 funds for the use of town equipment on Chapter 90 projects. In order to maximize the amount of roads that are maintained with Chapter 90 funds, in conjunction with ever-increasing costs of asphalt and other road products, he has chosen to direct the funds toward projects rather than taking some for the Machinery Earnings account.

With respect to the Highway Department's request for a new brush chipper this year, it was suggested that perhaps a shared chipper would be a more affordable option. Mick disagreed with the idea – that when emergencies arise, a shared chipper will be in demand by everyone. “When we need it, we need it.” Also, like the shared roadside mowers, there is the issue of disproportionate use, and a lack of care and respect for a machine that “nobody” owns. The current chipper was purchased in 1985 for \$9,900, and is worth \$4,500 today as a trade-in. It currently has 2,262 hours on it, and has had a new timing belt, hydraulic pump, and grinding wheel teeth installed this year. The cost of a new chipper has been quoted as \$42,435. Mick left the meeting.

FY13 Fire Department Budget: Fire Chief Gene Beaubien and Engineers Ken Sears, Stuart Elliott, and Greg Parody joined the meeting at 6:15pm to present the Fire Department's level-funded budget request for FY13.

Although departments were allowed to increase their budgets by any expected step increases to salaries, for the Fire Department this is a hard number to determine. One estimate put the cost impact of step raises for the firefighters at \$142, an amount the Fire Department decided to absorb within its existing budget.

Once the new Headmaster at NMH has started, the Town will begin conversations with the school about committing toward some portion of the cost of a new fire engine. The school paid for half of Engine 1 in 1987, half of Engine 2 in 1995, and all of the rescue van. The Fire Chief warned that Engine 1 is showing signs of needing costly repairs – rust and oxidation repairs to the body, and new rims for the tires.

With a rare piece of good news about NFPA standards, it was stated that the allowed use of turnout gear has increased from 5 years to 10 years as long as it is in safe, good condition.

The Fire Department was asked to develop a list of equipment they ought to be buying/repairing. It may be time for a Prop 2 ½ override to fund ongoing necessary equipment purchases. The Fire Department members left at 6:55pm.

FY13 Library Budget: Library Trustees Lissa Greenough and Ellen Johnson joined the meeting at 6:55pm to present the library budget. It is not a level-funded budget – there is an increase of \$729 in order to raise the Library Director's salary from \$14.09 to \$15.00/hour. The position is not on the Town's wage scale for unknown reasons, and hasn't received any non-COLA increase since 2005. The other increase, \$3,810, is to add one new night of public hours at the library every week – Wednesdays from 2-8pm. While the extra 6 hours per week is the request, funding of any extra hours would be appreciated.

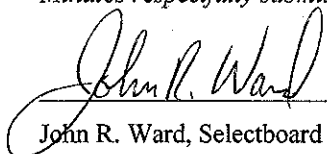
Lissa pointed out that with increased spending on salary lines, in order to preserve our state aid the library will also need to increase its spending on materials.

Last year's building needs study by Renaissance Builders provided an estimate of \$400-500,000 for a 20' x 26' addition to the library. The addition would provide a handicapped accessible restroom, small office, and more space for the collection and for patrons. The Trustees are still researching the needs of the library and its users, and are exploring all possible funding options. Lissa and Ellen left at 7:20pm

General Discussion: As an override or debt exclusion seems to be a distinct possibility, Ray was asked to find out from the Town Clerk what the cost would be to hold an override vote, so that it can be budgeted for.

Adjournment: The Selectboard and Finance Committee adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Ray Purington, Administrative Assistant.*

  
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John R. Ward, Selectboard Clerk