

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

May 22, 2017

Call to Order: The Selectboard and Finance Committee meetings were called to order at 6:00 PM. It was noted that Greg Snedeker would participate remotely due to a family emergency.

Selectboard Members Present: John Ward, Randy Crochier, Greg Snedeker (remote)

Selectboard Members Absent: None

Finance Committee Members Present: Timmie Smith, Fred Chase, Claire Chang, Tupper Brown, Ronnie LaChance

Finance Committee Members Absent: Jacob Rau

Others Present: Ray Purington, Lynda Hodsdon Mayo

Review of Minutes: Minutes from 5/17 and 5/18 were not ready.

1.07 Treasurer: Ronnie presented her budget request for FY18. The request for expenses for is down by \$130. There was discussion of keeping ACA Reporting & Forms “fully funded” at the FY17 amount of \$1,000, but it was ultimately decided to stick with the \$500 requested. Ronnie is requesting an increase of \$1,500 to her salary, to \$21,534.30 for FY18. She is also requesting a \$1,500 increase for the Tax Collector’s salary, to \$23,881.58.

The terms “salary,” “stipend,” and “compensation” were all used at various times to refer to the money received by an elected official from the Town in exchange for performing the duties of the office. No one term was embraced by all. Budget spreadsheets for future years will be revised to read “stipend” or “elected compensation.”

There was a discussion of the compensation of all three elected positions – Town Clerk, Treasurer, and Tax Collector – that have requested increases. Several people spoke of their difficulty reconciling the way pay is determined for appointed positions (using the Town’s wage scale) and the way pay is set for elected positions (by a Town Meeting vote). It was wondered “At what point does an elected official’s stipend become a wage that’s relied on for earning a living?”

It was noted that it is very difficult to arrive at a compensation amount by looking at what comparable towns pay for the same positions. Besides the amount of pay, other significant factors include whether fees are kept as compensation, if the officials have staff or assistants, different duties and responsibilities assigned by each town, and varying office hours from town to town.

Lynda commented that the Personnel Committee for many years has not performed the salary review process as required by the Personnel Policies. If this review happened, the Personnel Committee would be making compensation recommendations to the Selectboard, which the Selectboard could, in turn, bring to Town Meeting. She also noted that periodic increases to the compensation for these three positions is important in order to keep the positions paid at a level that will attract Gill residents to run for office in the future.

Early on in the discussion it was suggested that any increase should be an equal percentage across all three positions. Later, there was a suggestion of a \$2,000 increase for the Town Clerk position and \$1,000 each for the Treasurer and Tax Collector positions.

Randy made a motion, seconded by Greg, to approve the increases to the three stipends as requested (\$3,440.84 for Town Clerk, \$1,500 for Treasurer, \$1,500 for Tax Collector). The roll call vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Fred made a motion, seconded by Tupper, to approve stipend increases as just voted by the Selectboard. The vote was 4 in favor and 0 opposed. Ronnie abstained from the vote due to a conflict of interest.

1.08 Tax Collector: In addition to the previously discussed increase in compensation, a \$167 increase in expenses was requested for FY18. There was minimal discussion.

Lynda Hodsdon Mayo left the meeting.

2.2 Fire Department: Randy noted that he has questions about the IamResponding app included in the Fire Department's proposed budget for FY18. He did not request changes to their budget, but would like to have the Department meet with the Selectboard before the app is purchased.

2.3 Emergency Management: Randy suggested the stipend for the Emergency Management Director for FY18 be reduced from \$3,500 to \$2,500. He explained it has been at \$3,500 only for the last 3-4 years, and the increase only happened because the Town received the corresponding amount of additional funds from Vermont Yankee.

Randy made a motion, seconded by Greg, to reduce the FY18 stipend for the Emergency Management Director from \$3,500 to \$2,500. The roll call vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Claire made a motion, seconded by Tupper, to reduce the FY18 stipend for the Emergency Management Director from \$3,500 to \$2,500. The vote was 4 in favor, 0 opposed.

3.2 Highway Department: It was noted that the Highway Superintendent was unavailable to attend tonight due to illness. The FY18 budget request was discussed, especially the \$1,500 and \$1,000 increases for Repairs/Trucks and Machinery Repairs/Parts. It is unlikely truck repairs costs will be at the FY16 and FY17 levels (approx. \$22,000 per year), and the requested increase was felt to be unnecessary. By consensus, the two lines will be level funded.

Several "to do" items came out of a general discussion: 1) After Town Meeting, have a Selectboard agenda item to revisit the concept of Department Liaisons. 2) Resume distribution of Accountant's Reports to the Selectboard. 3) Investigate having a Road Inventory done.

COLA: There was discussion of the Personnel Committee's recommendation of a 2.5% COLA to all employees for FY18. Greg noted his research has found all economic indicators to be in the 2.2 – 2.7% range, and he is comfortable with a COLA in the 2 – 2.5% range. The ability of those on fixed incomes, especially elders, to pay higher taxes was talked about, and it was mentioned there is a push at the Federal level to change the formula for calculating annual Social Security increases in order to use a more senior/elder-based calculation. Randy suggested to not do COLA for elected positions in FY18. John indicated his preference was to choose one particular inflation index, such as Social Security, and follow it for the long haul, rather than picking and choosing from year to year.

Randy made a motion, seconded by Greg, to budget a 2.0% COLA for all employees for FY18, with elected officials to receive no COLA. Randy – yes. Greg – yes. John – no. The motion passed by a vote of 2 in favor, 1 opposed.

Tupper made a motion, seconded by Ronnie, to support the COLA vote of the Selectboard. The motion passed by a vote of 3 in favor, 2 opposed.

Highway Bucket Truck: The Selectboard discussed the bucket truck that is owned and shared by the Towns of Gill, Northfield, and Vernon, VT. Northfield and Vernon have indicated they no longer want to be a part of the shared truck program, and the truck has been offered to Gill to purchase for \$3,000. Gill contributed \$1,600 toward the \$3,200 purchase price of the vehicle in 2010.

There was a feeling the bucket truck is not used or needed often enough to justify the costs of ownership, including maintenance, an annual inspection of the bucket & boom, and an additional \$680 yearly insurance premium. It was felt there are other vehicle and equipment priorities for the Town. Randy made a motion, seconded by Greg, to not purchase the bucket truck. The roll call vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Fin Com Adjournment: The Finance Committee adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Selectboard Adjournment: The Selectboard adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ray Purington.

Signed copy on file. Approved 05/31/2017

Greg Snedeker, Selectboard Clerk

Adopted by the Finance Committee in lieu of separate Finance Committee minutes on 05/31/2017.