

**TOWN OF GROTON FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 9-14-2010
(7:00 PM First Floor Conference Room, Town Hall)**

PRESENT: Jay Prager (Chair), Steve Webber, Robert Hargraves, Joseph Crowley, Mike Flynn, Tom Sangiolo. Valerie Jenkins (Town Accountant, Recording)

ABSENT: Peter DiFranco

GUESTS: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Library Trustees Mark Gerath, Jane Allen, and Nancy Wilder; Police Chief Don Palma; Fire Chief Joe Bosselait; Water Superintendent Tom Orcutt; Selectman Fran Dillon.

Documents available: Budget-to-actual final revenue report for FY 2010
Budget-to-actual expenditure various report for FY11 effective 8/31/2010
ATM warrant Draft effective 9-1-2010
Expenditure report, Library (provided by Library Trustees)

Mr. Prager called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Webber moved, and Mr. Hargraves seconded, approval of the minutes of 8/17/10 as amended. Amendments include correction of spelling errors and clarification of the explanation of “tri-board” to reflect the board includes only members from various boards in the Town of Ayer; not members from more than one town. During discussion of the minutes, Mr. Hargraves asked for follow-up regarding the cost allocation for the newly hired Building Inspector, specifically whether Boxboro had agreed to pay the employee separately (which the FinCom had requested to be considered) or whether Groton would still absorb the full time costs and bill for reimbursement. Mr. Haddad replied that no reconsideration of method of cost sharing had taken place. He noted his reason for this as being able to maintain more control.

FY 11 Departmental Budget Reviews: Mr. Prager reminded the assembled department representatives that the general goals for review were to help future budget development by starting earlier in the current year and to review the results of the current year’s approved budget by measuring actual activity on a periodic basis. Library: Three Trustees of the Library discussed the departmental budget in the absence of the Library Director who is on vacation. The Trustees reviewed current year expenditures with the FinCom, noting no unusual occurrences to date. Mr. Gerath also noted that over the past several years, the Trustees have relied on greater amounts of non-tax funding to help maintain library programs and material acquisition; most other sources of funding do not allow labor expenditure, so they rely solely on tax funding for that portion of their budget. A library use survey, done every five years, notes the primary request for library services points to having more hours open to the public. An increase in hours would result in the need for more staff. In contrast, Mr. Gerath did not rule out the possibility of reduction in force if there are future cuts in the Town’s appropriation for the Library, but noted that the Trustees would probably approach Town Meeting with an independent request for added funding if the FY 12 budget recommendation was not sufficient for their needs. Finally, Mr. Gerath requested the FinCom explain what they expected to learn from periodic quarterly reviews. Mr. Prager replied that it is possible that some departments may not need to appear quarterly; this is a new process for the FinCom and will likely undergo some changes. Police: Chief Palma reported that the “run-rate” for his budget is about the same as last year at this point, but that he hopes for a reduced

level of overtime near the first of the year, due to the hiring of two more officers. In response to questions from the FinCom, he described his highest use of overtime to generally occur in the summer to cover vacations and again mid-November to mid-December due to several major holidays. Regarding dispatch services, he describes the call volume as consistent in pattern, and agreed with the FinCom that it is reasonable to open discussions with the Dunstable Chief about an increase in Dunstable's annual contribution to the appropriation for Dispatch Services. He further noted that, because we have established a "regional Dispatch center", he is able to apply for and has received several State grants in recent years. The FinCom asked for some statistics to clarify the call volume and encouraged the Chief to seek to add towns to the Dispatch center. Fire: Chief Bosselait reported that several brush fires have impacted his wage budget but that, for now, he would suggest additional appropriated funds. He notes that they have "become experts" in dealing with these types of fires; improving their methods of personnel deployment in these special situations; and seeing a need to transition to four-wheel drive tankers to bring water to difficult terrain. Recently call volume for Fire has been up; EMS calls may be slightly up. He reminded the FinCom that EMS calls create the revenue that pays for capital purchases for the department. Water: Mr. Orcutt reports that revenues are up for the first two months of the year, due to the ongoing drought. He also reminded the FinCom that they had a very bad year last year in terms of revenue, resulting in reduction in force, so they are cautious about the recent improvements in cash flow. In terms of the current year expenditures, their overtime rate is up as they get used to the loss of a full time employee. DPW: Mr. Haddad reported for Mr. Delaney who is on vacation. He reported that revenues at the transfer station are up and that this appears to be due mainly to improved prices for recycled materials. Expenses show the tipping fees are steady, labor costs are normal for the time of year and will likely show the expected overtime increase for snow removal later in the year. There was a brief discussion of a regionalized recycling center. Mr. Haddad noted that Mr. Delaney would have more information about this in the future and that the concept of regionalization of town services is one of the goals of Board of Selectmen this year.

Other Business: Country Club: Responses to the RFP to lease golf operations resulted in two interested parties who met with Mr. Haddad last week. Responses to the RFP for function hall operations are due the first week in October. Mr. Haddad will inform the FinCom of the ultimate results of both leases.

Next Meetings: September 20, 2010 at 5:30 PM in Town Hall prior to the 7:30 Public Hearing on the Fall ATM warrant. Agenda items will include review of minutes and review of warrant articles.

October 5, 2010 at 7:00. Second Floor meeting room – Town Hall. The agenda is pending at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Jenkins
Recording Secretary