

TOWN OF GROTON FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 2/15/2011

Present: J. Prager (Chair), M. Flynn, P. DiFranco, S. Webber, R. Hargraves, J. Crowley, V. Jenkins (Town Accountant, recording), P. Dufresne

Absent: None

Guests: Representatives from the Board of Selectmen, Town Manager

Documents Available: Warrant for Special Town Meeting 2/28/2011
Assessments from Groton Dunstable and Nashoba Tech for FY 2012

Mr. Prager called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM. Mr. Haddad addressed the group and confirmed that the Selectmen had received Mr. Sangiolo's resignation. There is one applicant for the opening at present, but the Selectmen are keeping the position open to allow a period of time for others to come forward. He will keep the Committee informed.

The warrant articles were reviewed:

Article 1, Sacred Heart Church land purchase: As noted in the warrant, the land is proposed to be purchased for \$475,000; \$300,000 will come from Stabilization and \$175,000 from Ambulance Receipts Reserved. Mr. Haddad explained that he believes the land has value even if it is not used as the site for a fire station in the future. He further noted that the need for a fire station has been under consideration since 2002, when the current station was evaluated and found to have code issues and to be inadequate to store current equipment. He and the Selectmen agree that much more information is needed before approaching Town Meeting with a request to build a fire station; but that the delay in accomplishing a thorough review should not prevent purchasing the land now. As part of the fire station review, Mr. Haddad explained he is working on a financing plan that may avoid excluding the entire amount of the debt service, but he has not completed the analysis. It was also noted that there is a private college (Thomas More) that is interested in moving the church to another site in Groton that they hope to purchase. The purchase is contingent on a favorable vote under Article 2 (see below). The Sacred Heart land is currently valued at \$575,000 (without the building). In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Haddad and members of the Board of Selectmen said that if the college is unable to take the church, the Purchase and Sale agreement requires the Archdiocese of Boston to deal with the building.

Article 2, Extension of the Sewer District for the use of Thomas More College. Mr. Haddad reviewed the intent of the College to purchase land on Old Ayer Road for the purposes of building a campus that will not exceed about 250 students. To do this, they will need access to sewer capacity and will pay all costs of construction. The Sewer Commissioners have already agreed to extend the capacity. The

College also intends to offer a payment in lieu of taxes that will equal the current taxes. Thomas More is a conservative Catholic organization and will need a chapel. They have confirmed their intent to move the Sacred Heart building to their campus if they are successful in purchasing the land.

Article 3, Ambulance Purchase. The Fire Department has requested acceleration of the purchase of a new ambulance, originally intended for the Fiscal Year budget, due to continuing and worsening repair issues with one of their current vehicles. The funding will come from Ambulance Receipts reserved and has no effect on taxes or the current FY 11 budget.

The Finance Committee took positions on all three articles as follows:

Mr. Webber moved, and Mr. Hargraves seconded support for Article 1. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Webber moved, and Mr. Hargraves seconded support for Article 2. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Hargraves moved, and Mr. Flynn seconded support for Article 3. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The Finance Committee reviewed its previous discussions regarding the Library's request to increase funding from the Town by \$10,000 for its Fiscal year 2012 budget in order to ask for \$10,000 less funding from Trust Funds.

The Committee feels that the impact on the Trust Funds is not of a significant nature, and that the funds are there to be used, and that the Trust Fund Commissioners have stated that they will formulate plans for use of expendable funds that will safeguard against too rapid depletion of the balances. Therefore, Mr Hargraves moved, and Mr. DiFranco seconded no support for the Library's request for more taxpayer funds. The motion passed by a vote of 5 in favor of no support, none against, and one abstention.

Ms. Jenkins reminded the FinCom that they have recently received the draft assessment from each of the District schools. Groton Dunstable's assessment for FY 12 shows an increase of only \$11,000 over this year's operational assessment; as well as decrease in excluded debt of more than \$200,000. Nashoba Tech's assessment is decreased by more than \$75,000.

Mr. DiFranco noted for the Committee that he had reviewed the Parks Department budget, which appears reasonable, but that he advised more competitive bids, especially for items that exceed \$10,000.

Mr. Hargraves moved, and Mr. Flynn seconded approval of the minutes of January 22, 2011 as amended with minor changes. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0-1.

Mr. DiFranco moved, and Mr. Webber seconded approval of the Executive Session minutes of January 22, 2011; with the minutes to be held from public view until the purpose of the Session has been accomplished. The motion passed with a vote of 5-0-1.

Next meetings: 2/26/2011, 9:00 AM First Floor Meeting Room Town Hall.

3/1/2011, 7:00 PM First Floor Meeting Room Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Jenkins, Town Accountant, Recording