

TOWN OF GROTON FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting held March 1, 2011

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

Absent: None

Guests: T. Delaney, DPW Director

Documents Available at the Meeting: None

Mr. Prager called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM. The minutes of meeting held on 2/26 were approved as submitted by a vote 5 in favor and 1 abstaining after a motion from Mr. Webber and a second from Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Prager reminded the group that there were several outstanding issues to review regarding the Fiscal Year 2012 budget draft. These included, at least, travel & conferences, the managers' incentive program, and capital articles. Ms. Jenkins reminded the group that the warrant is nearly finished and will be available to the FinCom by next week. There are several financial articles, most significantly, the Community Preservation articles, which total nearly \$900,000, not including the Surrenden Farm debt of about \$480,000.

Capital Budget: The FinCom reviewed the Capital Budget requests. Mr. Webber noted that there is a rough mower scheduled to be purchased for the Groton Pool and Golf Club, and questioned the funding, in part because the Selectmen and Town Manager had indicated that "no town funds would be spent on the Club", and in part because no provision had been made to seek second hand equipment if possible. This led to discussion about the viability of the Club, and some of the information discussed on the previous Saturday (see Minutes for 2/26/2011) was reviewed. The Committee expressed lingering concern that there is no formal plan for the snack bar, reduction of labor and expenses if the function hall does not reach the increased revenue projection offered in the FY 2012 budget, and finally what to do with the rough mower if the Club fails. Ms. Jenkins explained that the Finance Team thought that the Highway Department could make use of the equipment. Since Mr. Delaney was in the Building for another meeting, the FinCom asked him to join their meeting briefly. Mr. Delaney felt there was no current need for a rough mower other than for the specific use of the Club. He further explained that he has no similar equipment, so he could not take care of the mowing, nor does he have the staff. Mr. Prager took the action item to speak to Mr. Whalen about purchasing used equipment, possibly through his own operations funds, or contracting the work out; and will speak to the Town Manager about the issue of utilizing town funds for the Club and obtaining some sense of what plans are in place for failure of one or more of the Club's operational entities (snack bar, function, etc).

The FinCom also discussed the purchase of a front end loader and a bailer, given that such equipment has been purchased in the recent past (3 to 5) years; the primary concern being that large equipment should be shared between departments (front end loader). The Committee also wonders how many bailers are needed. Mr. Delaney had left the room by the time the discussion took place. Mr. Crowley took the action item to review the town's vehicle list and to talk to Mr. Delaney about how equipment is utilized between departments. Mr. Webber will speak to the Fire Department about the need for a 4 X4 vehicle this year.

The FinCom determined that it needs more information regarding the second funding phase of the Master Plan. To that end, Mrs. Jenkins was asked to invite Michelle Collette to the next meeting (March 8th).

Other Money Articles: The FinCom would like to discuss the Community Preservation Articles in detail. To that end, Mrs. Jenkins was asked to invite representative(s) from the Community Preservation Committee to attend their next meeting (March 8th). Mrs. Jenkins also reminded the FinCom that she has the CPC applications in electronic form, and summaries of the applications in hard copy, if members want to review.

Unexpended Tax Capacity: It appears that, with a level assessment anticipated from the Groton Dunstable School District, and a confirmed reduced assessment from Nashoba Tech, the town's budget for FY 2012 may result in more than \$400,000 unexpended. The FinCom considered alternatives for the use of that tax capacity. Suggestions included: leaving the funds unspent; using the funds to underwrite the FY 2012 capital budget thereby preserving the balance in the CapStabilization fund; or initiating and funding an irrevocable trust for Post Employment Benefits other than Pension (OPEB). Before a final recommendation is made, Mrs. Jenkins is asked to bring additional information regarding OPEB funding to the next meeting (March 8th).

Other Business: The FinCom reviewed the results of the previous night's Special Town Meeting. The general feeling is that members could have performed more "due diligence" regarding the Sacred Heart Church land and the Fire Station. Mr. Hargraves reminded the group that he had encouraged the Selectmen to hold a public hearing prior to town meeting specifically to discuss the need for a fire station. Mr. Prager felt that the Committee had not thoroughly reviewed the potential zoning issues. All members felt pressured by time while coming to a decision about their position, and now feel that delaying their vote, pending more information, would have been more prudent. There was also general discussion of the FinCom's role in the budget process, with no specific conclusions drawn.

The meeting adjourned by unanimous vote, at 9:15 PM, upon a motion from Mr. Hargraves, and a second from Mr. Flynn.

The next meetings are March 8, 2011 at 7:00 PM in the First Floor Conference Room at Town Hall

March 13, 2011 at 9:00 AM in the First Floor Conference Room at Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted:

Valerie Jenkins

Town Accountant, Recording.