

TOWN OF GROTON FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting Held February 21, 2012

Present: J. Prager, G. Green, J. Crowley, P. DiFranco, R. Hargraves, V. Jenkins (Accountant, recording), P. DuFresne (Accountant in Training)

Absent: S Webber, M Flynn

Guests: Selectman Peter Cunningham

Documents available at the meeting: FinCom Member P. DiFranco's analysis of Police response data

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 7:03 PM. The minutes of meetings held on January 31, 2012 and February 11, 2012 were approved unanimously, as submitted, after a motion from Mr. Hargraves and a second from Mr. Crowley.

A draft of the warrant for the Spring Annual Town meeting is not yet available; the agenda item for general review of the warrant is tabled until a future time.

The FinCom reviewed the following departments' budget requests with the goal of assessing whether further meetings would be needed with department managers prior to taking a position on the budget submissions:

DPW and Land Use Divisions: The FinCom agreed that no further information or meetings were required.

Fire Department: The FinCom is satisfied with the information submitted. However, at the request of Mr. Webber who is absent this evening, Mr. Prager noted Mr. Webber's concern that increasing the Fire Department's full time staff may lead to a perception that the Department is moving toward a full time 24/7 operation and that this would cause concern among the call firefighters. Mr. Green noted that he has met with Lt. Daly and Chief Bosselait and he does not believe that the request for more staff should be viewed as a move to eliminate the call members, but more an attempt to resolve unmet needs. He suggested that the FinCom could clarify that they are supporting the single instance of one full time firefighter, and that this support does not indicate approval of moving to a 24/7 full time department. The Committee concluded that there is no need to meet further with the Chief regarding operations. There is some interest in considering the land as a site for the new Fire Station (see below, under Country Club).

Conservation Commission/Community Preservation Committee: The FinCom is aware of an application from the Conservation Commission for CPC funds in the amount of \$150,000. They would like to meet with both groups to discuss the need to move funds into an account that already has more than \$600,000.

Police Department: The FinCom would like to meet with Chief Palma again, in order to clarify staffing issues. It is acknowledged that there is a need for more management level staff and to that end, the Committee is inclined to support the promotion of one current patrolman to sergeant level. However, the need for an additional patrolman is less clear. Mr. DiFranco's analysis of several years of statistics provided by the Chief appears to document more activity, rather than an increase in incidents. Mr. DiFranco notes the increased levels of traffic stops and building checks, suggesting that this increase is due to the addition of more officers in past years—"more staff = more activity". Incidents of crime,

