

TOWN OF GROTON FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of Executive Session Meeting Held March 7, 2012

Legion Hall, Groton, MA 9:15 p.m.

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

Absent: S. Webber

Guests: Anna Elliot, Peter Cunningham, Fran Dillon (Members of the Board of Selectmen), Mark Haddad (Town Manager)

Documents available at the meeting: None

On a motion made by Mr. Green and seconded by Mr. Hargraves the Finance Committee voted to enter Executive Session pursuant to MGL Chapter 39Section 23B for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining. The Vote: Mr. Green – Yes, Mr. Flynn – Yes, Mr. Crowley – Yes, Mr. DiFranco – Yes, Mr. Prager – Yes, Mr. Hargraves – Yes.

SJC Ruling on Quinn Bill – Mr. Haddad informed the group that the SJC has ruled that cities and towns that had previously adopted the Quinn Bill are not liable for that portion of the educational incentive that was owed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Therefore, no retro-active budget adjustment will be necessary.

Ongoing Union Contract Negotiations – Contract negotiations are currently ongoing with the SEIU-Town Hall, SEIU-DPW, and the Groton Police Patrolmen’s Association. Mr. Haddad has offered all the labor unions a 3-year COLA adjustment of 3%-2%-2%, provided they reformat their wage scales to eliminate step increases and replace them with wage and salary ranges instead. The Police and Fire Communications Union has agreed to this new format and that contract has been signed. Mr. Haddad said that as the other unions were less open to the idea of eliminating steps, he countered with a new program that would offer merit-based increases (up to 2% annually). Mr. Prager argued that such a program would have to be strictly structured and include measurable standards. Mr. Haddad replied that he was considering a point-based evaluation form that would be incorporated into the employee annual review process. He stressed that all employee reviews would be completed in November of each year, thereby allowing ample time for FinCom and the BOS to review the process and decline funding in advance of the budget deadline if necessary. Mr. DiFranco noted that while he supports the program in theory, he feels it might be difficult to set measurable achievement standards for those jobs which involve tasks that are more routine or “blue-collar” in nature. Mr. Haddad replied that there is room in every job for making an extra effort and it should be possible to identify and reward this. Mr. DiFranco mentioned that the department heads would have to be responsible for creating the specific measurement criteria. Mr. Haddad agreed and said that training would be offered to the department managers to ensure that the program is administered fairly and consistently. Mr. DiFranco wondered if part of the merit reward scale could include points for an employee who offers ways of reducing their department budget in any given year. Mr. Haddad agreed to consider this idea.

Teachers’ Union Negotiations – Mr. Haddad briefly summarized progress made in settling the teachers’ contract. As regards health insurance, teachers are being encouraged to choose the HMO plan at an

85/15 cost share instead of the POS plan at an 80/20 cost share. The wage proposal on the table for the next three years involves COLA's of 0% for FY12, 1%/1% for FY13 and 1%/1% for FY14.

On a motion by Mr. Hargraves and seconded by Mr. Green, the Finance Committee voted to exit executive session at 9:35 PM and not return to open session. The Vote: Mr. Green – Yes, Mr. Flynn – Yes, Mr. Crowley – Yes, Mr. DiFranco – Yes, Mr. Prager – Yes, Mr. Hargraves – Yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Dufresne, Recording Secretary