

TOWN OF GROTON FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting Held February 5th 2013

2nd Floor Meeting Rm., Town Hall, Groton, MA 7:00 p.m.

Present: R. Hargraves, M. Flynn, S. Webber, G. Green, J. Crowley, J. Prager (Chair), P. DuFresne (Town Accountant, Recording),

Absent: P. DiFranco

Guests: Nancy Wilder (Groton Public Library Trustees), Michelle Collette (Town Planner), R. Tom Delaney (DPW Director)

Documents available at the meeting: Reserve Fund Transfer Requests #4 - #8
Draft FY2014 Town Operating Budget
Police Dept. Overtime Analysis FY13 YTD
FinCom Liaison Assignment Spreadsheet

Discussion of Reserve Fund Transfer Requests – Ms. Collette requested that \$350.00 be transferred from the Reserve Fund to support the Conservation Commission Salary budget. She indicated that the Administrative Assistant for that department is due a \$350.00 longevity benefit payment by virtue of the SEIU contract. This had been overlooked during the budget setting process.

On a motion by Mr. Webber, seconded by Mr. Crowley, the Finance Committee voted unanimously in support of transferring \$350.00 from the Reserve Fund to the FY13 Conservation Commission Salary budget.

Ms. Collette requested a transfer of \$270.00 from the Reserve Fund to support the Board of Health General Expense budget. She explained that legally required stable license and “right to farm” notices used to be mailed out free of charge either with the electric light bills or with the quarterly tax bills. Since both those billing processes are now outsourced, a fee is incurred for adding extra inserts. This fee was never budgeted, and will likely cause an appropriation deficit if not covered from another source.

On a motion by Mr. Webber seconded by Mr. Flynn, the Finance Committee voted unanimously in support of transferring \$270.00 from the Reserve Fund to the Board of Health General Expense budget.

Ms. Collette left the meeting at this time (7:05 p.m.)

Ms. Wilder explained that the Library is in need of support for their FY13 Salary budget due to the accrued vacation benefit paid out to their recently retired Director, and some salary overlap that

occurred during the training period for the incoming Director. Additionally, the FY13 Wage budget was also incorrectly budgeted due to longevity and seasonal employee wage obligations under a union contract that had not yet been settled when the budget was prepared. Several of the committee members felt that it would be more appropriate to delay this transfer until later in the year in case the true expense turns out to be less than anticipated. Mr. Webber asked that Ms. Dufresne and Ms. Loverin (Human Resource Director) review both the FY13 and FY14 budgets to ensure that there are no additional instances of overlooked longevity payments.

On a motion by Mr. Hargraves seconded by Mr. Webber, the Finance Committee voted unanimously in support of transferring \$2,580 from the Reserve Fund to the FY13 Library Salaries budget and \$1,335 from the Reserve Fund to the FY13 Library Wages budget.

Ms. Wilder left the meeting at this time (7:15 p.m.)

Mr. Prager informed the group that Mr. Haddad (Town Manager) had called him earlier in the day notifying him that he would be requesting a Reserve Fund transfer in the amount of \$15,000 due to an emergency situation. Mr. Haddad felt it was necessary to immediately upgrade security at Town Hall in response to an incident that had taken place which had caused employees to feel uncomfortable or in danger. Upon reviewing the backup documentation, the Finance Committee felt that it was difficult to determine how much of the \$15,000 requested was for the security upgrade, and how much was for a non-emergency upgrade for the fire alarm system. Mr. Delaney joined the meeting at this time and explained that the current fire alarm system was a proprietary system owned by Siemens. The Siemens equipment is expensive to maintain and inflexible, and is not particularly suited to the needs of the Town Hall building. He felt that as immediate repairs are needed to the alarm system in the attic, it would be more efficient to integrate the fire alarm system with the proposed security system. The new system would be fully integrated (providing fire alarm, burglary protection and panic buttons). It is also expandable to meet future needs, and would allow complete radio communication with the Public Safety Building. This would give the Police Department the information it needs to adequately protect both the people and the building.

Mr. Prager felt that the better part of this request was non-emergency in nature and should be proposed as part of the FY14 Capital Budget. He wondered if it would be possible to install the emergency security measures right away, but defer the fire alarm upgrade until Town Meeting. Mr. Delaney was not sure that there was sufficient space for the wiring necessary to run portions of both the old and new systems concurrently. He noted that the nonfunctioning fire alarms in the attic should be repaired as soon as possible. This would be a \$2,000 expense that would essentially be wasted as it would have to be redone once the upgrade was approved in the spring. The committee members pointed out that these upgrades had already been postponed in previous years, and were therefore not convinced that this entire project could be considered and approved as part of an emergency transfer request now. Mr. Delaney reminded the group that there is essentially no infrastructure in place to adequately deal with any security issue at Town Hall. Mr. Webber suggested that the management team at Town Hall could be trusted to recognize when an untenable or unsafe situation exists in the building. Mr. Delaney added that if the backup documentation supporting the security upgrade was insufficient, it was due to the fact that the incident that caused the emergency situation had only just occurred that day. Mr. Webber asked about the status of the FY13 Municipal Buildings budget. Mr. Delaney replied that his year to date expenses in that line item were less than expected due in part to lower heating costs. He felt he may be able to cover a portion of this project within his current

operating budget. Mr. Webber suggested that he begin work on this project, and request a Reserve Fund transfer later in the year if it becomes necessary to do so. Mr. Prager advised that funds be spent prudently on this; he reminded Mr. Delaney that these upgrades had been postponed in the past because they were considered “low-priority” issues. Mr. Delaney agreed, but added that needs in this area have progressed more quickly than had been anticipated. Mr. Prager thanked Mr. Delaney for being available to comment on the request, but felt that without the Town Manager or the Police Chief on hand to speak to this issue, no real sense of urgency had been conveyed.

Mr. Webber moved to approve the transfer of \$15,000 from the Reserve Fund to the Municipal Building Expense Budget for the purpose of installing security devices at Town Hall. Mr. Green seconded the motion. The motion failed. The Vote: 0-6-0

Mr. Webber expressed concern regarding the number of Reserve Fund transfer requests that had been received relatively early in the fiscal year. Mr. Prager agreed that this trend should be discouraged.

Discussion of Liaison Assignments – The Finance Committee members reviewed the assignments from the previous year. Mr. Green said he would be happy to work with the Fire Department. Mr. Hargraves would continue to work with the schools. Mr. Webber would take the Enterprises and the Police and Dispatch Departments. Mr. Prager would work with the Library and various general government departments. It was noted that various updates to the spreadsheet were necessary due to personnel turnover during the last year.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – The Finance Committee deferred approval of meeting minutes to their next meeting.

Meeting Dates: The Finance Committee plans to meet again on February 26th (7:00pm) and on March 9th (9:00 am).

On a motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Mr. Hargraves, the Finance Committee voted to adjourn at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Dufresne, Recording Secretary