TOWN OF GROTON FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting Held February 26th 2013
1st Floor Meeting Rm., Town Hall, Groton, MA 7:00 p.m.

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

Absent: P. DiFranco, S. Webber,

Guests: None

Documents available at the meeting: Draft FY2014 Town Operating Budget
Police Dept. Overtime Analysis FY13 YTD

GDRSD Budget FY14 - Mr. Prager said that he had reviewed the school budget and felt that the 1.8% increase reflected was reasonable given that they had returned level-funded budgets for several years now. He encouraged members of the Finance Committee to attend the School Committee meeting planned for February 28th. He added that he has no real problem with the basic budget, but is concerned about what they will request for their IT upgrade. The group discussed the Governor’s initial budget and the latest Cherry Sheet information for municipalities. Mr. Prager felt that the Town was assured of a good result if the final State budget approximates the current Cherry Sheet figures.

OPEB Discussion - The Committee members discussed the Town Manager’s recommendation to begin a funding plan for the OPEB liability. Mr. Prager reiterated his position that he would rather not invest in an irrevocable trust large sums of money that could be needed in an emergency. Should the federal government ever mandate such a funding plan for municipalities, it should certainly be reconsidered at that time. Mr. Prager felt that funds could be set aside in a Stabilization Fund if need be; this would allow recourse in the event of an emergency. Mr. Flynn agreed saying that Groton is in a good financial position at the moment, but unforeseen circumstances could occur and quickly undermine this position. Mr. Green believes the Federal Government is encouraging this because towns are in fact going bankrupt and leaving the federal government without a plan for making the employees whole. The group discussed the Governor’s current recommendations to reduce the OPEB liability for Massachusetts (increasing the number of years of service required to obtain post-employment benefits, raising the retirement age and re-balancing the cost-share for premiums).

Weed Harvester Discussion- The Finance Committee considered reducing the weed harvester budget due to the plan to use herbicide to treat the weeds on Lost Lake. They decided to make no reduction at this point as it was understood that the harvester would be active on Baddacook Pond and elsewhere during the season.

Ambulance Discussion – Mr. Hargraves expressed concern over the financial implications of using the ambulance for making routine inspections. He would like to see a mileage report from the Fire Chief.
Mr. Prager felt that the Chief’s explanation regarding this procedure was adequate. Response time is greatly improved if the crew that is already out on an inspection receives an emergency call. Significant response time is lost if the crew must drive back to the station to pick up the ambulance before traveling to the emergency call. Ms. Dufresne will obtain ambulance mileage reports from the Fire Department.

**Lost Lake Sewer Funding** - Mr. Flynn wondered why the $12.9 million funding plan for the Lost Lake Sewer project was still in the Capital Plan for FY2015. Mr. Green replied that he was unconcerned about this as it appears to be a placeholder. Mr. Flynn argued that the project was effectively dead, and this should not be included in the Capital Plan. Mr. Prager said that he tended to agree with Mr. Flynn even though he is a member of the newly formed Lost Lake Sewer Committee. Mr. Green pointed out that the Selectmen are still generally supportive of the sewer effort, and would like to explore some different financing schemes.

**Building Inspector Hours** – Ms. Dufresne informed the Finance Committee that the Selectmen had approved a plan to increase the Building Inspector’s hours to full-time for FY2014; the justification being that the department is busy enough to warrant this change. The associated permitting revenues have also increased, which tends to support this decision. The Finance Committee discussed the limitations of regionalizing this sort of position. They noted that concern over splitting the retirement and other post-employment benefits plays a part in the impracticality of regionalization schemes in general.

**Department Head Budget Review Meeting** – In an effort to address FY14 Budget issues, the Finance Committee would like to meet with the following Department Heads on Saturday, March 9th for a Budget Review Meeting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Palma</td>
<td>Police Dept</td>
<td>9:00 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chief Bosselait</td>
<td>Fire Dept</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bob Whalen</td>
<td>Pool &amp; Golf Center</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Vanessa Abraham</td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tom Delaney</td>
<td>DPW</td>
<td>11:00 am</td>
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<td>Jason Bulger</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>12:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mike Bouchard</td>
<td>Town Clerk</td>
<td>12:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Haddad</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>1:00 pm</td>
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**Deficit Spending for Snow & Ice** – Ms. Dufresne informed the committee members that while there is still a balance left in the Snow & Ice budget at this time ($42,000), it is very likely that the Town will overspend this line item for FY2013. Therefore, the Town Manager has requested that the Finance Committee vote to approve deficit spending of this line item for FY2013. She noted that the Town spent approximately $31,000 on overtime for the February 8th storm; the average for a moderate storm being around $15,000. She noted that the invoices for the hired contractors are often not submitted for several weeks after a storm takes place.

**On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Crowley, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to approve deficit spending of the FY2013 Snow and Ice Budget. The Vote: 5-0-0**
**Approval of Meeting Minutes** –

On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Crowley, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to approve the meeting minutes from January 26, 2013 as drafted. The Vote: 5-0-0

On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Flynn, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to approve the meeting minutes from February 5, 2013 as drafted. The Vote: 5-0-0

**Meeting Dates:** The Finance Committee confirmed their next meeting for March 9th (9:00 am).

*On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Green, the Finance Committee voted to adjourn at 8:20 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Dufresne, Recording Secretary