

# TOWN OF GROTON FINANCE COMMITTEE

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*Minutes of Regular Meeting Held November 17, 2014*

*Selectmen's Meeting Rm*

*Groton Town Hall, 173 Main St. Groton, MA, 7:00 p.m.*

**Present for Finance Committee:** R. Hargraves (Vice Chair), G. Green (Chair), Mark Bacon, Art Prest, D. Manugian, P. DuFresne (Town Accountant, Recording)

**Absent:** B. Robertson, Barry Pease

**Guests:** Mr. Scott Harker, Members of the Press

**Documents available at the meeting:** None

*Mr. Green called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.*

**Electronic Voting Study Committee** – Mr. Green polled the members to determine who might be interested in serving on this committee. It was generally felt that Mr. Pease was interested in doing so, although he was unable to attend the meeting this evening. Mr. Manugian offered to be the backup designee in case Mr. Pease did not in fact wish to serve on this committee.

**FY16 Finance Committee Reserve Fund Budget** – Mr. Green explained that the Finance Committee has control over a Reserve Fund that is used to cover unanticipated or extraordinary expenses for which there is no other appropriation. In the past, the Finance Committee has set the level of this fund at \$150,000. He asked Ms. Dufresne how much had been spent from that fund over the last several years. Ms. Dufresne replied that \$141,521 had been spent in FY14, \$134,655 in FY13, and \$93,968 in FY12. Mr. Green said that he had considered reducing this reserve for FY16 because an attempt has been made to fully budget the Public Safety Departments for FY15. However, since this new approach has not yet been proven successful, he would recommend level funding the Finance Committee's Reserve Fund for FY16. Mr. Manugian agreed saying that the Finance Committee is uniquely positioned to be able to address unanticipated needs in any department; it would be prudent to retain that flexibility. Mr. Green added that the Town Manager had recently requested a transfer from the FY15 Reserve Fund to reimburse the Municipal Buildings budget for repairs to the retaining wall at the Williams Barn. Mr. Green asked him to monitor that budget and request a transfer later in the year if it is still necessary. Ms. Dufresne noted that the IT Department will need a Reserve Fund transfer of \$9,000 to cover the vacation buy back for the previous IT Director who left at the end of August. Mr. Hargraves expressed concern that employees are allowed to accumulate such a large amount of unused vacation time during the year. He feels that this is a management issue, and employees should be encouraged (for their own well-being) to take the vacation time that they have available.

**On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Prest, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to recommend a budget of \$150,000 in the Reserve Fund for FY2016. The Vote: 5-0-0**

**Charter Review Committee** - The Finance Committee determined that several of their members were interested in serving on the Charter Review Committee: Bud Robertson, Bob Hargraves, Art Prest and Mark Bacon. Mr. Green noted that the Finance Committee could only designate two individuals for this purpose, and asked for ideas on how to select two names. Mr. Russ Harris spoke from the audience to remind the group that the Finance Committee could choose two designees from outside its own membership. He felt that "casting a wider net" might in fact improve the overall makeup of the Charter Review Committee. Mr. Scott Harker spoke from the audience questioning why the committee was being appointed at this early date. According to the Charter, the Review Committee does not exist as an entity and therefore cannot begin to meet until after the Spring Town Meeting is adjourned. They then can meet for one year before presenting their recommendations. He felt that the BOS might be acting prematurely in this case. The Finance Committee members reviewed the procedure in the Charter and agreed with Mr. Harker's interpretation. Mr. Prest noted that the Review Committee should have been convened immediately after the last Spring Town Meeting. Mr. Hargraves suggested taking up this matter again at a subsequent meeting when a full board is available to vote. Mr. Green would prefer that the Finance Committee defer action on this until he could speak with the BOS for clarification on the timing for convening the Charter Review Committee.

**On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Bacon, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to defer designating members for the Charter Review Committee until the Chairman of the BOS provides an interpretation of the procedures for convening the Charter Review Committee. The Vote: 5-0-0**

**Approval of Meeting Minutes –**

**On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Manugian, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to approve and release the meeting minutes of October 20th, 2014. The Vote: 5-0-0**

*Mr. Green officially adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Dufresne, Recording Secretary