

TOWN OF GROTON FINANCE COMMITTEE

*Tuesday, July 12, 2016: 7:00 p.m.
Selectmen's Meeting Room, Town Hall
173 Main St. Groton, MA*

Present for Finance Committee: G. Green (Chair), R. Hargraves (Vice Chair), Art Prest, D. Manugian B. Robertson, P. Dufresne (recording secretary)

Absent: M. Bacon,

Also Present: None

Documents available at the meeting: End of Year Line Item Transfer Requests
NEWS: Super Town Meeting by John Ellenberger

Mr. Green called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Reorganization of Committee: Mr. Green asked for nominations for Chairman for FY17. Mr. Hargraves nominated Mr. Green for the position of Chairman, and Mr. Robertson seconded that nomination. Mr. Green accepted the nomination. **The Vote: 4-0-1** (Mr. Green abstained).

Mr. Green asked for nominations for Vice Chairman for FY17. Mr. Robertson nominated Mr. Hargraves, and Mr. Manugian seconded that nomination. Mr. Hargraves accepted the nomination. **The Vote: 4-0-1** (Mr. Hargraves abstained)

Line Item Transfers: The memo previously distributed to the BOS and FinCom indicated that to meet FY16 budget restrictions, \$3,043 must be transferred from Fire Wages to Fire Salaries, \$2,878 must be transferred from Country Club General Expenses to Country Club Wages, and \$76 must be transferred from Insurance Deductible Reserve to Insurance & Bonding Expenses. Mr. Manugian requested clarification regarding the transfer request for Fire Salaries. Ms. Dufresne explained that the Fire Chief worked on 7 holidays during FY16. MGL Chapter 48, Section 57E provides for an extra day's pay whenever a Fire Chief is on duty at any time on a holiday. While this law is referenced in his contract, it was not budgeted for. She noted that this transfer request will most likely have to be repeated in FY17, but should be properly recorded in the budget for FY18. **On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Prest, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to approve the FY16 Year End Line Item Transfers as presented. The Vote: 5-0-0**

Filling of Vacant Seat on FinCom: The Finance Committee members reviewed the letters of interest submitted by Ms. Jenifer Evans and Ms. Lorraine Leonard. They agreed that both candidates possessed strong skills and should be invited to attend the next regular meeting (August 2nd) for an informal interview process.

Invoice Approval: Mr. Green asked whether, given the current financial situation of the Town, the FinCom still wished to pay \$204 for a membership to the National Association of Town Finance Committees. The group discussed the various benefits of membership and decided that the value of the membership (educational workshops, comprehensive handbook, etc.) were sufficient to justify the relatively minor expense.

Charter Review Committee Update: Mr. Robertson informed the group that the CRC had voted to recommend that the Town's budget submission deadline remain December 31st. He went on to say that two additional submissions were expected: the first to consider whether the Town Clerk's position should be appointed or elected (Mr. Pease will be submitting this request), and the second to consider whether the Town Manager should be given the authority to sign expense and payroll warrants for the Town (instead of the BOS). Mr. Robertson noted that the CRC had approved and would be recommending to Town Meeting all the requests that the Finance Committee had an interest in. Mr. Green suggested that all the CRC recommendations be reviewed by Town Counsel prior to presentation at Town Meeting. Mr. Hargraves agreed (based on prior experience) that this step was crucial.

GDRSD Agreement Review Committee Update: Mr. Green said that he believes this committee's work is just about finished and their recommendations have been passed on to the School Committee. The Finance Committee's representative has confirmed that the School Committee does have the final decision on what changes are made to the agreement. The Town's only recourse would be to circulate a petition and hope to collect the signatures of 10% of voters. As it stands, the School Committee will vote the changes it wishes to incorporate and then they will submit the revised agreement to Town Meeting for final approval. Mr. Green will continue to advocate that an independent Finance Committee be formed specifically to work with the school district on their budget. He plans to speak further with the district administrators as he feels that many people are in favor of the concept, but don't want it made part of the formal agreement. While it is not appropriate for the BOS or the Town's Finance Committee to be representatives on a district Finance Committee, Mr. Green feels it would be a positive move for the district to create its own "non-political" Finance Committee and to memorialize this as part of the regional agreement. Mr. Prest expressed concern that some of the district administrators have reacted negatively to this suggestion. Mr. Green agreed but said he hoped they understand that the Town has no wish to meddle in district operations, but would like the district to have access to a committee with the specific expertise to help them analyze their financial well-being. Mr. Manugian asked whether it would be useful to appoint a liaison from the Town's Finance Committee to the District's Budget & Finance Subcommittee. Mr. Green replied that the Tri-Board Committee that is already in place seems to fill that gap and has been instrumental in keeping the communication channels open. Mr. Prest mentioned that the School Committee is missing a crucial level of budget oversight; he is concerned that most of the issues are simply deferred back to the Superintendent. He expressed frustration about how difficult it has been to obtain detailed information about certain areas of the district budget.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Manugian requested several changes to the draft copies of the minutes from 6/13 and 6/29. He asked that all references to "Mr. Manugian" contained in the 6/29 minutes be changed to "Mr. M. Manugian" for reasons of clarity (to distinguish Mr. Mike Manugian from Mr. David Manugian). He also asked that the minutes of 6/13 be amended to correct Mr. Green's remarks (second sentence on page 3) to reflect that he felt that the crucial difference between the District's B&F subcommittee and the Town's Finance Committee was the level of financial expertise they can offer.

On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Robertson, the Finance Committee voted in the majority to approve and release the minutes of 6/29/16 as amended. The Vote: 4-0-1 (Mr. D. Manugian abstained as he was not present for that meeting).

On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Robertson, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to approve and release the minutes of 6/13/16 as amended. The Vote: 5-0-0.

District Wide Meeting – Mr. Prest drew the group’s attention to an article he had previously distributed that was written by John Ellenberger (Super Town Meeting is The Big Hammer) regarding the experience of Dennis/Yarmouth in 2008. He noted that the expense should be borne by the school district should they decide to move ahead with such a meeting. Mr. Green mentioned that the School Committee may decide to hold a special town meeting specifically for Groton as they already have the required funding from Dunstable.

Mr. Green asked whether the group felt that the FinCom should release to the public any type of formal communication regarding the potential district wide meeting and how this would impact the tax levy. Mr. Robertson said it would be useful to just state the facts: there would be no increase to the levy, however the municipal budget could be impacted. Mr. Green stressed that all members should consider before they engage in any communication (especially online) whether the message they plan to impart will engender a debate. He went on to say he prefers to engage individually with those who are interested which avoids public debates and aids compliance with open meeting law. Mr. Manugian said that while he prefers not to participate in online conversations, merely reiterating facts that are already part of the public record would seem to be safe.

Mr. Green officially adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Dufresne, Recording Secretary