

## **Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

### **May 1, 2007**

Those Present: Al DeVito - chair, Sharon Estrella, Richard Knabel and Ann Nelson. Brian Athearn arrived at 4:55.

Guests: Bruce Stone, Town Accountant; Manny Estrella, Fire Chief; Glenn Hearn, Skipper Manter and Dianne Powers, Selectmen; Ernie Mendenhall, Planning Board; Susan Wasserman, Margaret Logue and Tim Mathiesen.

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m.

#### **Reserve Fund Transfers:**

Jennifer Rand requested a transfer of \$209 to pay the balance of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter worker's comp insurance. Richard made a motion, Seconded by Sharon, to approve the request. The motion passed 4-0.

Manny Estrella requested \$20k to fix the pump on one of the fire trucks. Parts will cost about \$10k and labor the rest. With only \$24,202 in the reserve fund for the remaining 2 months of FY07, Al expressed his concern about making such a large transfer at this point. He asked Manny if \$10k would suffice for the time being. Skipper pointed out that \$5k could be replenished from free cash at the upcoming special town meeting. Richard moved to approve a transfer of \$15k, seconded by Ann. The motion passed 3-0-1 with Sharon abstaining.

#### **Meetings:**

Al clarified that he wished to set up meetings with the Capital Improvement Planning Committee and the Personnel Board.

#### **Review of Budget Hearings:**

Al invited comments from the committee concerning the effectiveness of the budget hearing process. Was it effective? How could it be tightened up? Sharon felt having more of the smaller groups in one night would help with time. She stated that it is a worthwhile effort that helps the FinCom keep in touch with what the departments/boards are doing. Richard said he learned a lot and felt it was very worthwhile. He asked Nancy to include tabs next year in the budgets binder to help locate the pertinent budgets for each meeting. Al thought it important to document promises and statements by department heads and to follow up on those plans. Ernie Mendenhall agreed that he could give a yearly Long Range report. Al concluded that they should proceed as this year, but tighten up the schedule.

#### **Review of Town Meeting:**

Al again turned to his fellow members to assess the FinCom's lack of effectiveness at the town meeting with regard to the school budget and the UIRSD withdrawal. In his own comments he noted the following:

- Need voter support to get major things accomplished

- Linking two items enhanced an impression of being anti-school
- Identify the primary goal: control spending by running a responsible district
- Have a better understanding of school costs
- Focus on the budget rather than withdrawal
- Develop a cadre of friends of the FinCom

Brian stated that the budget is complicated and hard to understand when faced with for the first time at town meeting. It is then easier to vote from emotion rather than fact. Richard felt the challenge to the budget was misinterpreted as being anti-school. Sharon stated that a continuing lack of support from the Board of Selectmen makes it difficult for the FinCom to be effective. She was disappointed that the moderator did not allow a written vote and felt that hampered teachers and school staff from voting as they might have. Skipper said that the two issues ran together and with emotions running high, one defeated the other. He felt the FinCom could have done a better job presenting the cost of the two sites, the declining enrollment and the additional sections at West Tisbury, resulting in WT paying 85% of the budget. He also stated that an exit strategy falls to the school committee. Town's people present expressed concern that there was an appearance of an us against them attitude. Newly elected selectwoman Dianne Powers stated that she would be in favor of a meeting of the Board of Selectmen, the FinCom and the School Committee.

#### **Election of Vice-Chair:**

Brian nominated Richard, which was seconded by Sharon. The motion passed 4-0-1, Richard abstaining.

#### **Minutes:**

With a motion from Richard and a second from Sharon the minutes of April 3 were approved 4-0-1, new member Ann Nelson abstaining.

#### **Richard's Survey:**

As discussion was about to begin of the draft survey Richard had prepared, it became known that the draft had been sent to all town employees. Ernie Mendenhall admitted to sending it out and stated that he felt strongly that it should not be undertaken. As this was a draft, not yet discussed by the committee, FinCom members were quite frustrated by this action. Members were distressed that something they had not had an opportunity to review as a committee had been sent to the public with their names on it. The FinCom members as a whole felt a significant violation of trust. There was no further discussion of the survey.

There being no other business, a motion for adjournment was made and seconded.

Next meeting will be on Tuesday, June 12 at 4:30 at the Public Safety Building.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Nancy Rogers, Administrative Clerk