**03/17/2021 Paxton Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Members Attending**: Richard Fenton (Chair), Mark Love (Vice Chair), Anthony Domineck (Clerk), Seth Peters, Tim Linton, June Herron, Jennifer Lennon

**Members Not Attending**: N/A

**Additional Attendees**: Carol Riches (Town Administrator), Peter Bogren (Selectman)

Virtual meeting called to order at 7:01 PM EST

* Review minutes from 3/10/21 meeting: MTA Love, 2nd Domineck. Unanimously approved
* DPW Budge (1421): Fenton: I don’t understand if they are unionized why are they dealing with steps 9,8,7,4? Riches: They move through steps by obtaining additional licenses. They also move up a step at the end of the contract (3-year contract) regardless of additional licensure.
  + Fenton: Calculated compensation for foreman 2 as an example. Would be 1.8% increase from last year. Listed as ‘C8” which calculates to $52,707. What’s the difference? Add 3% to that it’s $54k, not $58k. Riches: Wrong spreadsheet, it’s union contract step 8.
  + Fenton: Increase in OT from $5k to $10k. Likely relative to higher salaries.
  + MTA Herron, 2nd Peters. Unanimously approved.
* Snow/Ice (1423): No Discussion. MTA Herron, 2nd Lennon. Unanimously approved
* Cemetery Commission (1491): MTA Lennon, 2nd Herron. Jennifer Lennon. Unanimously approved
* Insurance/Bonds (1193): Originally passed 2/10. Revised upwards to $143,914. MTA Herron, 2nd Love. Unanimously approved.
* Council on Aging (1541): Fenton: Per Collins study, Director listed as working 30hrs and determined D1 last year, D2 this year. Using D2 and 30 hrs., salary should be higher. Riches: 10 hrs./week are paid from a grant.
  + Discussion: Love: $66k on a $14 million budget is less than 1% (even less than 1% of the operating budget after WRSD has been paid). Note on record that this is extremely low for servicing 25% of our population. There used to be a Director and Outreach Coordinator for seniors but not anymore. This is a bargain for $66k in a town this size.
  + MTA Love, 2nd Lennon. Approved unanimously (2 abstained)
* Library (1610) – Fenton: Were going to apply step to clerical but cannot due to how the budget is put together and calculated manually. Remainder is understandable. Books will go up once COLA finalized.
  + MTA Herron, 2nd Lennon. Unanimously approved
* COLA – Currently at 2.5%. Fenton: Need to decide if it is applied in addition to step increases. MA inflation was 2% last year, Boston was 3%.
  + Love: When we met last week, I thought we deferred to the Select Board. Fenton: Correct, discussion only tonight, Select Board meets Monday. Love: Suggest step up and COLA due to history of being behind. Fenton: Historically we based COLA on what was left at the end of budgeting process. If no money, no raises were awarded, etc. 4 or 5 years ago we decided to take a different approach to consider COLA first. Bogren: Looking at FY21 grid, step 1 will not change and will not be competitive. Fenton: Should COLA going forward be more closely tied to inflation? Will attend Select Board committee meeting Monday to discuss.
* New Business:
  + Love: Is there a way to summarize the changes in budget deficit from 3/8 to 3/15 ($73k change)? As of today, up to $205k deficit. Fenton: All based on school budget estimates and exclusions. Also have made updates, fixed spreadsheet errors, etc. Love: We have not talked about WRSD budget, increased to 5.7%. Approved by school committee, now up to towns. Suggest opposing due to deficit.
  + Domineck: Are there material gains to be made? Bogren: School budget increase was 2.8%, it’s our assessment that’s making the jump. Princeton and Sterling will pass. Our numbers have not gone down, other towns have.
  + Peters: Have heard that school spent money on track resurfacing. Can we confirm?
  + Bogren: Should we reschedule town meeting? Need to know when federal funds will be distributed. Sterling has postponed to June 14. Rutland is May 8. Princeton May 11. Holden May 17. Fenton: Not likely to eliminate deficit, maybe decrease by 50%. Peters: 50% is better than nothing and would help.
  + Love: Do not want to delay town meeting personally. As a member of Finance, I want us to go on record as stating Finance committee should take an official position on the timing of the town meeting.
  + Fenton: If we have a meeting May 2 then we would still have to come back to approve budget. Suggest postponing one month to handle all in 1 meeting.
  + All members of Finance agree that we should move town meeting.
  + Procedural vote regarding support of WRSD budget as presented. Unanimous vote of ‘no support’ for the assessment as currently presented.
  + Bogren: Suggest drafting a letter to the School Committee chair to be included in a packet that is distributed to town employees. Fenton: Will draft letter within the week. Bogren: Wait until after Monday select board meeting to send to the school committee.
* Motion to adjourn by Mr. Love, 2nd Peters. Unanimously approved.

Virtual meeting adjourned 8:05pm

Respectfully Submitted

Tony Domineck, Clerk