Minutes of the Finance Committee (Virtual meeting) July 14, 2020

Members attending: Mr. Fenton (Chairman), Mr. Linton, Mr. Love, Mr. Domineck, Mr. Peters.

Members not attending: Ms. Lennon, Ms. Herron

Additional Attendees: Mr. Bogren (Select Board liaison)

Virtual “Zoom” Meeting called to order at 7:03 pm.

Minutes for the June 3 virtual meeting moved by Mr. Linton, seconded by Mr. Domineck. Approved unanimously.

YEAR-END TRANSFERS:

1. From Election Supplies (1162-5400) to Election Purchased Services (1162-5200) $200 to pay for the police detail for the Annual Town Election. May not need full amount, but wants to allow for overtime in case the election takes longer than thought. Moved by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Linton. Approved unanimously.

2. From Tree Warden tree planting (1295-5700) to Tree Warden Purchased Services (1295-5200) $1000.00 to supplement budget required for the removal of problem trees. Mr. Love suggests that $1,000 is not enough money to cut down a tree, so he recommends that the money remain in the tree planting subaccount. Mr. Fenton indicated that the tree warden determines if a tree is dangerous to public safety and then removes it. This may be just part of the expense of already incurred by removing a tree and the budget was short. Motion to approve by Mr. Domineck, seconded by Mr. Peters. Approved 4 - 1 with Mr. Love abstaining.

3. From EMS Compensation (1232-5103) to Fire Compensation (1220-5103) $1,008.00 to pay fire training merit of $3000.00 resulting from an unexpected number of fire incidents this fiscal year. Moved by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Linton. Mr. Domineck: Question not about the transfer, per se, but about the templates used for these transfers. Not consistent between departments and always filled out appropriately. Discussion suggested that the chair submit a letter to the Administrator asking to have transfer templates consistent between departments and appropriate for the reasons for transfer. Motion approved unanimously.

4. From Council On Aging (COA) office assistant (1541-5104) to director (1541-5102) $125.00 to be applied to COA services. Moved by Mr. Peters, seconded by Mr. Linton. Approved 4-1 with Mr. Love abstaining.

5. From Police Payroll (1210-5103) to Police Supplies (1210-5400) $4,638.52 to outfit the last cruiser with a computer needed for dispatch regionalization. Expected grant to cover this expense was not available. Moved by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Linton. Approved unanimously.

Mr. Love expanded upon the discussion concerning forms used for transfers. He indicated that the issue came up many months ago with the Capital Committee. The forms used for transfers are exceedingly inconsistent with different people signing them, different information given etc. Suggests that one form be provided for all departments which will ensure that all information given by the various departments will be consistent. As an example, he notes that “extraordinary and/or unforeseen” is a phrase that pertains to a Reserve Transfer and not a simple $125 transfer within a given budget. Requests that the forms be tightened up. Mr. Seth suggests adding how much money is left in the budgets, etc.

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLES:

Article 1 – Water Department Receipts: Mr. Love raises the point that both the Water Dept and the Light Dept are Enterprise Funds, but the Light is subjected to an independent audit. His question is why not? Secondly, they don’t have a budget that comes before us and they are not separately audited, who are they accountable to and what if the receipts are not a $M? We are voting on receipts and expenditures, but what if the receipts fall short are we locked into expenditures, ensuring a deficit. Etc. Lack of accountability. Lack of understanding. Mr. Fenton suggests that the difference in handling the financials may derive from the way the two funds were created,. Otherwise can’t answer Mr. Love’s question. Asks the Selectboard liaison Mr. Bogren if he knows about this. Mr. Bogren: A very good question. Requires clarification. Motion to make recommendation at Annual Town Meeting moved by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Peters. Approved unanimously.

Article 2 – DPW Facility: Mr. Fenton: Turned down at the town election only by 7 votes, but can come up again on the Presidential ballot. Discussion concerning whether we put off the new building to next year. Question of good time to build or not, interest rates/building expenses. Mr. Love thinks the expenses may actually be higher now. Also don’t know % interest, don’t know life of debt. Too many questions to be definitive. Mr. Fenton: This is only granting authorization to spend $11M, not an absolute. If cheaper, good, if more, they can’t. One can’t know everything right now. And how can we begin the process of building a building if we don’t have authorization to pay for it? General agreement that we need the building. Motion to make recommendation at Annual Town Meeting moved by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Linton. Approved unanimously.

Article 3 – DPW Roof Replacement: Motion to make recommendation at Annual Town Meeting moved by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Domineck. Approved unanimously.

Article 4 – Fire Department Hose Replacement: Mr. Love: Capital Committee voted in favor of this article with the idea that the money would come from the DPW roof money. Can’t have one but not the other. Mr. Fenton: The money is in the Capital Fund regardless of DPW roof transfer. The two requests are separate, not connected. Doesn’t see a problem. They need the hoses. Motion to recommend Approval made by Mr. Linton, seconded by Mr. Domineck. Approved unanimously.

Article 5 – DPW Dump Truck: Motion to recommend Approval made by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Linton. Approved unanimously.

Article 6 – Paxton Center School and John Bauer Senior Center Parking Lots: Mr. Love: The Senior population has been told we are going to do this. Badly needed. And Mr. Putnam of DPW has said that money from the Road Stabilization Fund will be used to do this. Motion to recommend Approval made by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Domineck. Approved unanimously.

Article 7 – Water Tank Maintenance: Mr. Love: Tie this back to Article 1 for more information. Not opposed, just need more information. Motion to make recommendation at the Town Meeting made by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Peters. Approved 4-1 with Mr. Fenton abstaining.

Article 8 – OPEB Account: Motion to recommend Approval made by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Peters. Approved unanimously.

Article 9 – Chapter 90: Motion to recommend Approval made by Mr. Peters, seconded by Mr. Linton. Approved unanimously.

Article 10 – Revolving Accounts: Motion to recommend Approval made by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Peters. Approved unanimously.

Article 11 – Appropriate funds to Road Improvement: Mr. Fenton makes argument that money is needed to balance the budget. Mr. Bogren indicates that the town was told when the fund was created that money would be there for roads. Agreement with the voters. Mr. Fenton: These are extenuating circumstances. Mr. Love: We should wait until the entire budget is reviewed. Motion to make recommendation at the Town Meeting made by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Linton. Approved unanimously.

Article 12 – Use funds from the Road Improvement: Motion to make recommendation at the Town Meeting made by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Domineck. Approved unanimously.

Article 13 – Gold Star Family – Property Tax Abatement: Mr. Bogren explained the problem with the submission of the article. Will be straightened out before meeting. Mr. Kent, veterans agent, suggested we support 22D which does not need approval. However 22F needs to be voted. The question is whether we need this Article since 22D is already implemented. This question needs to be revisited at next Selectboard meeting. Mr. Brogren would personally take no action. Motion to make recommendation at the Town Meeting made by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Peters. Approved unanimously.

Article 14 – Gold Star Family – Property Tax Abatement: This article gives abatement to surviving parents or guardian of soldiers and sailors who suffered a fatal injury, etc. The question is whether to extend this abatement to extended family as well as spouse who may be suffering financially. Mr. Love: Needs clarification. Mr. Bogren: Difficult decision. Example: If parents are divorced, does this abatement apply to both households. Motion to make recommendation at the Town Meeting made by Mr. Peters, seconded by Mr. Domineck. Approved unanimously.

Article 15 – Wachusett Greenways: Motion to recommend Approval made by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Linton. Approved unanimously.

Article 16 – Town Budget: Mr. Love suggests we can’t vote the article since the numbers are all unknown. This article approves something that doesn’t exist. Mr. Fenton indicates that the article indicates “or any other sum” repeatedly. So we are approving any number that fits in there. Motion to recommend Approval made by Mr. Domineck, seconded by Mr. Linton. Approved unanimously.

Article 17 – WRSD Budget: Mr. Fenton: This has been approved by 4 towns, so what we say really doesn’t matter. To vote disapprove is to make a statement. Mr. Love indicated that although there is nothing we can do, we still don’t like the WRSD assessment coming in at over 4%. It should be 2.5%. Mr. Fenton: Doesn’t approve of the WRSD assessment. Motion to recommend approval made by Mr. Domineck, seconded by Mr. Linton. Approved 3 – 2, with Mr. Love and Mr. Fenton dissenting.

Article 18 - Bay Path Budget: Mr. Fenton: Note that Bay Path assesses MLC, plus transportation and debt. Motion to recommend Approval made by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Domineck. Approved unanimously.

REORGANIZATION for 2020-2021:

Nominations: Mr. Fenton for Chair, Mr. Love for Vice-Chair; Mr. Domineck for Clerk. Moved by Mr. Linton, seconded by Mr. Peters. Vote unanimous for each position.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35.

Respectfully Submitted,

Richard Fenton, Chair.