**Minutes of the Finance Committee April 18, 2019**

Members attending: Mr. Fenton (Chairman), Ms. Herron, Ms. Lennon, Mr. Linton, and Mr. Love

Members not attending: Mr. Runstrom, Mr. Peters

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

Meeting called to order at 7:30pm.

Motion to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2019 meeting made by Ms. Herron, seconded by   
Ms. Lennon. Approved unanimously.

RESERVE FUND TRANSFER REQUESTS

Transfer to 1192-5200 Public Building $4,875 to pay to have the flag pole on the common refinished. Motion to approve by Ms. Herron, seconded by Ms. Lennon. Approved unanimously.

Transfer to 1292-5400 Animal Control Officer Supplies to replace ACO vehicle. Motion to approve by Mr. Love, seconded by Ms. Lennon. Approved unanimously.

Transfer to 1915-5812 Central Purchasing – Oil. To pay for oil for the Public Buildings. Motion to approve by Mr. Linton, seconded by Ms. Herron. Approved unanimously.

WARRANT ARTICLES

1. Water Department Receipts. Motion to approve by Ms. Herron, seconded by Ms. Lennon. Approved unanimously.
2. OPEB Account deposit. Motion to “Take No Action” by Ms. Herron, seconded by Mr. Linton. Ms. Riches indicated that this is a place holder and that there is no intention of transferring money to this account at the present time. Vote was unanimous to “Take No Action”.
3. OPEB Account withdrawal. Motion to approve by Mr. Love, seconded by Ms. Herron. Following extensive discussion both in favor and in opposition to the motion, a vote was held. Motion was disapproved by split vote: Mr. Love voted in favor, four voted against approval.
4. Stabilization fund. Motion to “Take No Action” by Mr. Linton, seconded by Mr. Love. Vote was unanimous to “Take No Action”.
5. Capital Depreciation. Motion to “Take No Action” by Ms. Herron, seconded by Ms. Lennon. Vote was unanimous to “Take No Action”.
6. Chapter 90. Motion to approve by Ms. Herron, seconded by Mr. Linton. Approved unanimously.
7. Revolving Accounts. Motion to approve by Ms. Herron, seconded by Mr. Linton. Approved unanimously.
8. Appropriate funds to Road Improvement. Motion to approve by Mr. Linton, seconded by Mr. Love. Approved unanimously.
9. Use of Road Improvement Funds. Motion to approve by Mr. Love, seconded by Mr. Linton. Approved unanimously.
10. Ambulance Replacement. Motion to approve by Ms. Herron, seconded by Ms. Lennon. Some discussion for clarification. Mr. Fenton: Are we selling the old ambulance. Ms. Riches: Any benefit has been included in the price. Not much. Approved unanimously.
11. DPW Facility site plan. Motion to approve by Ms. Herron, seconded by Ms. Lennon. General agreement that a new DPW facility is needed. Approved unanimously.
12. DPW Roof Replacement. Motion to approve by Mr. Linton, seconded by Mr. Love. Discussion concerning the wisdom of replacing the roof of a building that Article 11 intends to replace. Approved unanimously.
13. Council on Aging Heating Boiler Replacement. Motion to approve by Ms. Herron, seconded by Mr. Linton. Mr. Fenton: Why has there been so much repair of the 10-year old boiler? Ms. Riches: It is required to heat a large space. Approved unanimously.
14. Ladder/Pumper Combination Truck. Motion to approve by Ms. Herron, seconded by Mr. Linton. Considerable discussion by Mr. Love, a member of the Capital Committee and other members indicated that a new engine was probably needed, but uncertainty existed that can be cleared up with the capital assessment. Mr. Bogren asserted that our 30 year old primary vehicles had 30 year old backups in case the primary vehicles were inoperative. General discussion indicated that while the assessment by the Center for Public Management would determine equipment needs for a Fire Dept. for Paxton, it might be best to replace our aging ladder/pumper truck. Approved unanimously.
15. Police Cruisers. Motion to approve by Ms. Lennon, seconded by Mr. Love. It would appear that purchase of three vehicles is cost effective. They are needed to replace aged vehicles. However, all three would have to be eventually replaced at about the same time. Approved unanimously.
16. Water Main Engineering Study. Motion to approve by Ms. Herron, seconded by Ms. Lennon. Approved unanimously.
17. Capital Equipment and Building Needs Assessment. Motion to “Take No Action” made by Mr. Linton, seconded by Ms. Herron. The town has obtained a grant to perform this assessment by the Center for Public Management. Thus, this Article would provide only redundancy. Vote was unanimous to “Take No Action”.
18. Citizens Petition for an Operation Audit. Motion for disapproval by Mr. Linton, seconded by Ms. Lennon. Discussed that Article would provide redundancy with the assessment by the Center for Public Management which will assess operations as well as capital planning. Disapproval by split vote: Four voted for disapproval, Mr. Love abstained.
19. Stormwater Bylaw. Motion to approve by Ms. Herron, seconded by Ms. Lennon. Approved unanimously.
20. Marijuana Bylaw. Motion to approve by Mr. Linton, seconded by Ms. Herron. Mr. Fenton: Thinks that it is “a new low” to fund our municipal operations using money obtained by the sale of recreational drugs. Eighty other towns, including Holden, Sterling and West Boylston have banned the sale and culture of marijuana, so a ban would not be unusual. Mr. Bogren indicated that liquor merchants have filed legal challenges by arguing that drugs are no different than liquor in that both are legal commodities. Committee members indicated that tax money could be used to fund town operations. Approved by split vote: Four voted for approval, Mr. Fenton abstained.
21. Wachusett Greenways: Motion to approve by Ms. Herron, seconded by Ms. Lennon. Approved unanimously.
22. Asnebumskit Water Tank. Will vote the night of the ATM because of incomplete information.
23. Town Budget. Motion to approve by Ms. Herron, seconded by Ms. Lennon. Mr. Love: Argued that the municipal budget should have included a 4% COLA rather than the 3% that the FinCom previously approved, because of wage inequities concerning jobs performed. Mr. Fenton: An on-going compensation study should disclose any inappropriately low wages. Subsequent increases in wages as proposed for FY2021 should eliminate inequities based upon actual data. Approved unanimously.
24. WRSD budget. Motion to approve by Ms. Herron, seconded by Ms. Lennon. Mr. Love reminded the committee that the Holden meeting of town representatives, a 3.5% increase in WRSD budget was encouraged (Paxton representatives abstained). Mr. Love feels strongly against the requested 3.95% increase in budget, and believes a 2.5% increase is more appropriate. Noted that while Paxton’s enrollment went down, the town’s requirement went up. Mr. Fenton: Generally believed that most would like a lower budget, but it can’t be done without an increase in State aid to education. Approved by split vote: Four voted to approve, Mr. Love voted disapproval.
25. Bay Path Budget. Motion to approve by Ms. Lennon, seconded by Ms. Herron. Approved unanimously.
26. Out of District Student Expenses. Motion to approve by Ms. Herron, seconded by Mr. Linton. Mr. Love: Although it is generally considered that this expenditure is one that must be paid regardless, MGL indicates that tuition for out-of-district students is to be set by the regional district’s School Committee or the Board of Trustees and approved by the Commissioner of Education, which is why everyone thinks that we have no choice but to pay it. However, special legislation has permitted two county agricultural high schools (Bristol and Norfolk) to charge non-resident tuition rates that don’t have to be approved by the Commissioner of Education. The big question is how does Norfolk arrive at the tuition amount that they demand we pay?  A normal rational justification for an amount charged would be….normal tuition….plus a factor for local real estate taxes for an average single family home. Instead, the amounts that we have been charged over those four years have been multiples of that rational calculation. This is the question that Mr. Love indicates that he has asked repeatedly for three years. Approved by split vote: Four voted for approval, Mr. Love voted disapproval.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:15pm.

The next meeting will be scheduled for 6:30 the evening of the Annual Town Meeting on Monday, May 6th.

Respectfully Submitted,

Richard Fenton, Chair.