

FINANCE COMMITTEE
JUNE 16, 2010
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
6:00 P.M.

PRESENT:

THOMAS BLAUVELT, CHAIRMAN

LOUIS J. STARK

MARK LEFENFELD

NORMA SIEGEL

ALICE REILLY

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Old Business:

Mr. Stark advised that he would follow-up with the Board of Selectmen on the possibility of streaming the Annual Town Meeting live from a remote location. The Finance Committee would like the Selectmen to explore the idea and the cost involved.

3. New Business:

The closing for Searles/Bryant has not happened yet. Mr. Blauvelt said he sent an e-mail the Town Manager in regard to the sale. Mr. Stark also e-mailed the Town Manager because he understands it is against the law to sell Town property for less than the assessed value. He also noted that he understands that if Town property is sold for less, it has to be published noting why it is being sold for less than the assessed value.

There were no responses on the R.F.P. on the old fire station. It was suggested that the station could be demolished and a parking lot could be built.

An R.F.P. for the old Housatonic Grammar School is going to be advertised soon.

There was a general discussion on the Finance Committee being involved in all negotiations involving financial matters. The concern was that the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager are passing over the Finance Committee on the legal document for the offer on the Searles/Bryant complex. Mr. Lefenfeld suggested reviewing the language in the Town Code and put the request in writing addressed to the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen with a copy to the Town Manager and the remainder of the Board. Mr. Blauvelt noted that he would draft a letter. It was noted that the Finance Committee has to have a public hearing on the disposal of any public building so the advisory function can be carried out. It was also noted that it would be good to have the Board of Selectmen accept the concept ahead of time before an issue arises. Mr. Lefenfeld and Ms. Reilly said they would like to be part of the negotiations.

Properties that are condemned or people who owe back taxes – After discussion it was noted that this is not under the Finance Committee's jurisdiction.

E-mail address on the Town Web Site for the Finance Committee for public input – send a note to Lauren.

Mr. Stark noted that at prior Town Meetings holds were put on individual line items and discussed and voted separately instead of voting on the department total. Mr. Blauvelt noted that the time for line item discussion is at the joint budget hearings and not Town Meeting.

Mr. Stark also brought up the issue of the Finance Committee being a rubber stamp Board. He said should the board be a rubber stamp Board and exactly what is a rubber stamp Board? He noted that some Finance Committees are more hands on and others are just guidance boards. Mr. Stark advised that he contacted the Finance Committee members regarding Truck 7 in Housatonic and asked about going up and looking at it to determine if it needed to be replaced. Dr. Siegel noted that the board had previously done a site inspection a year ago and saw the pictures; had a discussion on it and the independent decision of the Board was that it needed to be replaced. Mr. Stark said the board voted in favor of replacing it and that is a rubber stamp. Dr. Siegel advised that a rubber stamp is approving something because the individual or department wants it and knowing nothing about it. Mr. Stark argued that the people who make the presentation have a particular point of view so if their point of view is accepted without question and that is a rubber stamp as well. Mr. Stark said he felt there was a lot of rubber stamping by Finance Committees in the past.

The Committee discussed having the Town Accountant at the October meeting to assist in clarifying the budget information.

It was also noted that the Finance Committee should be involved in the union contract negotiations.

There will be no scheduled meeting for July and August. The next scheduled meeting will be September 15, 2010.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION: Mr. Lefenfeld to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2010 meeting.

SECOND: Ms. Reilly

VOTE: 5-0

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carolyn Wichmann
Secretary