

**FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM**  
**TOWN HALL**  
**334 MAIN STREET**  
**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2010**  
**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. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**
  - A. **MOTION:** Dr. Siegel to approve the minutes from October 20, 2010.  
**SECOND:** Mr. Lefenfeld  
**VOTE:** 4-0-1
3. **FINANCE COMMITTEE BUDGET FOR 2012**
  - A. Budget information was e-mailed to all committee members. The Finance Committee has \$250.00 for Dues and Membership and is responsible for the \$100,000 in the Reserve Fund.
4. **HOUSATONIC SCHOOL RE-USE TASK FORCE**
  - A. The Housatonic School Re-use Task Force is a 6 month commitment. After discussion, nobody volunteered at this time.
5. **ANNUAL REPORT – TOPICS, ANY VOLUNTEERS?**

The Annual report has to be submitted to the Selectmen's Office by January 14, 2011. After discussion, it was determined that the committee would review the report from the prior year, and send suggestions to the Chairman who will write a draft report. It was also agreed to include a note of appreciation to former board members serving on the Finance Committee.

Mr. Stark noted he would like to send a letter to the editor of the paper encouraging people to use the Finance Committee Website.

6. **POSSIBLE LETTER TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

Mr. Blauvelt said he would not support sending a letter to the Board of Selectmen in regard to the Finance Committee's involvement on all committees that affects the finances of the Town. He suggested sending a letter without including him. After discussion, it was agreed to invite the Town Manager and Town Accountant to attend quarterly Finance Committee meetings.

**MOTION:** Mr. Lefenfeld to withdraw the idea of writing a letter to the Board of Selectmen.

**SECOND:** Dr. Siegel

**VOTE:** 5-0

Dr. Siegel said that the Town Report should list the votes as split votes or unanimous rather than recommended or not recommended. She noted she would review the Great Barrington Town Code to see if there is reference to the format.

7. **JOINT MEETING ON NOVEMBER 29, 2010**

The joint meeting on November 29, 2010 will be at 6:00 p.m. will be with the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee. The auditors will be present to explain the financial statements.

8. **OLD BUSINESS:**

Mr. Stark stated that he thinks the town should consider charging tax exempt organizations for emergency services because they don't pay real estate taxes. Mr. Blauvelt said that this would be discussed at the January 2011 meeting.

Mr. Lefenfeld spoke on the presentation he attended in Lenox given by Michael Widmer, President of the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation. He noted that there will be a 5% to 10% reduction in local aid. He said that Mr. Widmer based his projections on increases in the budget, revenue streams and the loss of the one time funds like the federal stimulus dollars. It was noted that the Chapter 70 Funds for the state aid to elementary and secondary schools was not forecasted to be cut next year.

Tuesday, November 23, 2010 there is going to be a public hearing at the Senior Center in regard to the Main Street reconstruction project.

Mr. Blauvelt advised he would contact the Town Accountant in regard to the health insurance costs for the Town Employees. It was noted that a Selectmen has to have 10 years of service before qualifying for the retirement benefit of health insurance. Mr. Blauvelt said he would contact Ms. Sartori in regard to the percentage of health insurance is paid by a retired selectmen.

9. **OTHER**

Mr. Breasted, a member of the audience, requested more detail on the health insurance costs for the town and the true cost of the Selectmen's health insurance costs and it should be stated in the Town budget. Mr. Blauvelt noted he would forward a letter to the Town Manager requesting a breakdown of premium costs. Mr. Breasted presented a list of questions that he previously sent to the Town Manger with his responses.

The next meeting was scheduled for January 11, 2011 at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Wichmann, Secretary

(DRAFT - 10/22/10)

To the Board of Selectmen

The Finance Committee believes it should have a greater participation in the resolution of financial issues which materially impact Great Barrington.

Mass. Gen Law Ch 39, Sec 16 requires towns (such as Great Barrington) to “provide for the election and ... duties of ... finance committees, who shall consider any or all municipal questions for the purpose of making reports or recommendations to the town”. Accordingly, Great Barrington Code, Article II, Subsection 7-2 provides for “a Finance Committee which shall consider any and all financial questions for the purpose of making reports or recommendations to the town ...” Further, the mission statement of the Finance Committee, as set out in the 2009 Annual Report, is to “provide advice and assistance ... on financial matters that have a material impact on the well being of the Town ...”.

We realize that the Finance Committee’s regular attendance at Board of Selectmen meetings provides an opportunity for our input. Further, we do not want to go beyond our authority nor invade the responsibilities of either the Town Manager or the Board of Selectmen. Nevertheless, the Finance Committee is concerned that it is not carrying out its responsibilities as set out in the above legislation and mission statement.

Examples of situations where the Finance Committee should have had but did not have substantive involvement include the following: 1) ????????, 2) ??????? and 3) ??????????.

We suggest the Finance Committee be substantively and continually involved in 1) the Board of Selectmen’s dealings with any town issue which exposes the town to a potential expenditure or receipt of more than \$25,000 during any 12-month period and 2) other issues as may be agreed to by the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee. **(Any alternative suggestions for an easy way to determine where we should be involved?)**

We look forward to your response.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

Tom Blauvelt  
Chairman, Finance Committee