

FINANCE COMMITTEE
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
TOWN HALL
334 MAIN STREET, GREAT BARRINGTON, MA
MAY 17, 2011
6:00 P.M.

FINANCE COMMITTEE:
THOMAS BLAUVELT, CHAIRMAN
MARK LEFENFELD
LOUIS J. STARK
ALICE REILLY
WALTER ATWOOD

ALSO PRESENT: KEVIN O'DONNELL, TOWN MANAGER

1. Re-organization – Elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman.

CHAIRMAN:

MOTION: Mr. Atwood to nominate Mr. Blauvelt as Chairman.

SECOND: Mr. Lefenfeld

VOTE: 4-0 (Mr. Stark did not vote)

Mr. Blauvelt accepted the nomination.

VICE CHAIRMAN:

MOTION: Mr. Atwood to nominate Mr. Lefenfeld as Vice Chairman.

SECOND: Ms. Reilly

VOTE: 4-0 (Mr. Stark did not vote)

Mr. Lefenfeld accepted the nomination.

RESERVE FUND TRANSFERS:

2. Reserve Fund Transfer of \$15,000 to cover increased transportation costs for the SBETC (Discussion/Vote)

MOTION: Mr. Atwood to transfer \$15,000 from the Reserve Fund to cover increased transportation costs, and unforeseen and extra ordinary expenses for Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation.

SECOND: Ms. Reilly

VOTE: 5-0

Mr. O'Donnell noted that this is a short term interim solution for 2011. SBETC is currently doing a restructure and re-organization. For 2013 they will make an application through the normal budget process. The FY 13 allocation will be closer to \$45,000. It was noted that they are approaching other towns as well for funding. SBETC previously received funding from the former Earth Angels. The state has also cut their funding. The total passengers served are 6,785 with 5,657 passengers being from Great Barrington.

3. Reserve Fund Transfer of \$35,000 to the Taconic Main Street Storm water project design. (Discussion/Vote) It was noted that this money is for engineering studies to design the project. Mr. O'Donnell noted that the \$605,000 in the budget was to be borrowed for the Main Street reconstruction project. By doing the transfer the Town won't have to borrow as much and we will be into the 25% design by the time of the public hearing.

MOTION: Mr. Lefenfeld to transfer \$35,000 from the Reserve Fund to cover unforeseen and extra ordinary expenses for design of the Taconic and Main Street Storm water project.

SECOND: Ms. Reilly

VOTE: 5-0

4. Set future meeting dates:

Mr. O'Donnell said that there are plans for the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen to meet jointly in July or August to look at the outlying years of Capital Improvement Projects. The meetings will be on the weeks that there is no Board of Selectmen meeting scheduled. It is also planned to meet earlier on the budget policy. That would be in addition to the 4 to 5 regular meetings. The revenue stream for the WWTP has to be looked at as well. There are plans for an additional meeting to look at the overall revenues, where we stand and where adjustments can be made. We are looking at having a joint meeting in September with the Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen and the School Committee to discuss the impact on the property tax levy.

Mr. Stark questioned Mr. O'Donnell on the pilot programs for tax exempt organizations. Mr. O'Donnell noted the Assessor's Office is working on that. Mr. O'Donnell stated he would be reporting back to the Finance Committee when he and the assessor were finished with their review of pilot. Basic agreements have been made. We have looked into some of the properties Simon's Rock has but it is not cost effective to pursue it. Simon's Rock was open to offering discounted memberships to Town Employees but they have a Special Permit that limits the membership amount and they are almost filled to capacity. It was also noted that Simon's Rock has to upgrade their sewer pipes because of a lack of flow causing effluent to build up just past Oak Street. Simon's Rock also provided interns last year at no cost. Mr. O'Donnell noted that we cannot charge tax exempt organizations for municipal services. Berkshire South is offering discounts for Town employees. There are two former churches back on the tax roll, one on Main and Kirk and the second on Main Street.

There was a brief discussion on the consequences of laying off Town employees. Mr. Atwood noted that because the Town doesn't pay unemployment insurance, the Town gets a bill for approximately 75% of the salary of the laid off person.

Mr. O'Donnell noted that the Town could save by applying higher co-pays and deductibles in the Health Insurance Plan. He noted the House has passed a version of it and the governor supports it. The health care plan would require cooperation with the unions.

Mr. Breasted noted that since the minutes of the March 22, 2011 meeting were circulated that they should be discussed at this meeting. Mr. Blauvelt noted that the Board was not prepared to discuss them. Mr. Breasted said there were three things that the Board voted to do.

- 1) To ask the Town Manager to check with Town Counsel on creating a separate tax rate for residential, commercial and industrial.
- 2) To ask the Town Manager to check with Ms. Sartori about health insurance costs per capital for Town employees because the numbers did not add up.
- 3) Discuss Chip Elitzer's e-mail on unfunded liability and Mr. O'Donnell's executive summary.

Mr. Breasted said he did not receive answers to his questions.

Mr. O'Donnell advised that the actuarial study will be completed this fall.

Mr. Stark requested a copy of the DPW contract and retirement contract. He was advised by Mr. O'Donnell that the retirement contract is with Berkshire County Retirement System.

Respectfully submitted,



Carolyn Wichmann
Secretary