

TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
FINANCE COMMITTEE
TOWN HALL
334 MAIN STREET, GREAT BARRINGTON, MA
MINUTES
September 10, 2013
5:30 P.M.

PRESENT:
SHARON GREGORY, CHAIR
WALTER ATWOOD
MARK LEFENFELD
LEIGH DAVIS
THOMAS BLAUVELT

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 P.M.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Thomas Blauvelt to approve the minutes of June 25, 2013.

SECOND: Mark Lefenfeld

VOTE: 5-0

MOTION: Buddy Atwood to approve the minutes of August 14, 2013 with amendments.

SECOND: Leigh Davis

VOTE: 5-0

MOTION: Mark Lefenfeld to approve the minutes of August 20, 2013.

SECOND: Buddy Atwood

VOTE: 4-0-1 (Thomas Blauvelt abstained)

Sharon explained the minutes that she transcribed from the August 20, 2013 meeting.

It was noted that Phase 1 and 2 of the upgrade of the waste water treatment plant will be about 18 million in the next 5 years. Phase 1 of the upgrades had been approved but the bids came in more than 1.1 million over budget. Some of the expenditures were removed from Phase 1 and put into Phase II. \$4.5 million is budgeted for Phase 1 and Phase II is estimated to be at 12.8 million. It was advised that people use the catch basins as a dumping facility and people let their rainwater drain into the catch basins causing more work for the plant. She noted that there should be fines for rainwater dumping into the storm drains. Sharon said she asked Tim Drumm and Joe Sokul for the Waste Water Treatment Plant Billing Codes. She advised that Tim explained that group homes are charged the same as residences but it is not spelled out. It was suggested that two people from the committee could help Tim do an analysis of how charges for sewer are determined.

2. FINANCIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Tom noted he attended the Board of Selectmen's meeting two weeks ago and Chris Lamarre from the Assessor's Office made a very good presentation. The total taxable value of real and personal property declined 2.8 %. We went from 1.36 billion to 1.32 billion. That is broken down by class. Residential category decrease is 3.95%. Residential property in 2013 was 1.079

billion. FY14 it is valued at 1.036 billion. The value of commercial property is up 3/10's of a percent. Industrial properties are up 5.2%. The amount we need to raise this year through the tax levy is \$17,931,000. The tax rate will be up .42 over last year. The estimated CPA Revenue is \$395,800 for 2014. The surcharge will be \$65.00 to the average tax bill. There are 3,423 property owners. The Board of Selectmen adopted a single tax rate for residential, commercial and industrial which is currently \$13.56. Chris Rembold has been appointed to the CPA Committee. Tom advised that the Board of Selectmen adopted a single tax rate for the year. Sharon inquired if the CPA money could be used for capital projects we now have under consideration Tom advised he would check into it but the money needs to be approved at a Town Meeting. ~~It was suggested the money could be used for the fairgrounds improvement.~~ *There was no motion on this so not sure we should include it in the minutes.*

Leigh Davis advised that she wrote and cc'd the school committee, Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen and Jennifer Tabakin just reminding them about the motion that the Finance Committee made at their June 25, 2013 meeting in regard to the School Resource Officer grant. She noted that the Board is waiting to be formally acknowledged and directly addressed by the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee about any decisions or actions in favor of the accepting the grant for the SRO. Leigh read the response from David Adler dated August 17, 2013. (The letter will be filed with these minutes).

Sharon advised she has wanted to schedule a meeting with the Town Manager to develop a planning calendar for the upcoming year. She said it is too late to begin discussing the long term capital plan as well as the operating budget in November. Tom said the Town Manager also owes the committee a quarterly update on the unpaid taxes.

NEW BUSINESS:

A, Sharon said she would help work on the costs of the Waste Water Treatment Plant Billing Code. Tom advised he would work on it as well. We should continue to think about economic development in the Town to see if these valuable infrastructure facilities we have can be spread over a larger base. (Rising Paper had originally paid 50% of the Treatment Plant costs but no longer.)

B. There was a review of the Housatonic Sites – The tour began at the Fire Station, continued to the Ramsdell Library, reviewed it including the cellar. A proposal may come from the library trustees in regard to using the cellar and using the third floor for the Historical Society and performances. Then they continued to the Housatonic War Memorial Building. It was rehabbed about 10-12 years ago. It was noted that they continued to the Housatonic Elementary School. The building has been closed and the heating system has been drained. Sharon said the moth balling the Searles School was astounding. There was mold and it was seeping into the other buildings. It was noted that something has to be done to market the building so it doesn't suffer further deterioration which will necessitate demolition after all, the building is the entire town's responsibility. We can ask two people to take on this project and make a motion at the next meeting to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that we create a task force that would consist of the Planning Board, Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen. Leigh Davis and Mark Lefenfeld will work on that.

C. Report of the Town Meeting on "Strategic Planning". Sharon said that Jennifer Tabakin made a presentation summarizing the governance issues, accountability and structure of the Town, its issues, some policy advocacy, local economy, issues on public safety. Sharon said she would like the Finance Committee to have input into the process and to attend some of these meetings. She would like to see a 20-25 year strategic plan rather than the 5 year plan. Sharon said she made copies of the Capital Improvement Requests for FY 14. She noted she would like a project where we look at the CIP in a more comprehensive way, that we have a 20 to 25 year spread to these expenditures, those that have been approved, those that are high priority and those that have simply been proposed. She advised she would like them rated 1 (approved), 2 (high priority), and 3 (proposed only). Tom felt we should look at trend line expenditures in the past 10 years. Sharon and Tom advised they would develop a spread sheet time line overlaying the CIP with the Wastewater Plan and School projects so our townspeople can see the full financial impact of the aggregate, long term commitments. Leigh said she would be back up. Chris Rembold noted that one of the outgrowths of the master plan is to develop a long term capital plan. The school and the wastewater need to be taken into consideration even though they are managed under different legal entities.

Sharon said we could meet on school committee matters on Wednesday, October 9th in preparation of the October 29th meeting. Discussion would include the role of the Finance Committee relative to the School Committee, their Capital Expenditures plan and School Resource Officer if relevant at that time. Both meetings would be at 5:30.

Buddy said that there was a car roll over at the Water Street Cemetery and the posts were torn down. He said the DPW is going to have to pay for the replacement but the insurance payment will be turnover to free cash. Buddy said he will ask Joe how it is going to be handled. He said he would report on that later.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Wichmann (corrections highlighted)

Carolyn Wichmann
Secretary