

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON**  
**FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**TOWN HALL**  
**334 MAIN STREET, GREAT BARRINGTON, MA**  
**MINUTES**  
**December 2, 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 by Chairperson, Sharon Gregory.

Minutes: Minutes of the 11/14 meeting were approved.

CPA: Tom Blauvelt reported on the last CPA meeting. The Committee did not feel they would be ready to propose anything at the next Annual Town meeting because they would not have put an application process in place in time for projects to be submitted and evaluated. Sharon Gregory asserted that since we would have collected nearly \$400K, it is important to show our taxpayers that we would put the money to work, so would it be possible to accelerate this process. As an example, the Finance Committee had proposed that financial consideration be put towards developing a marketing proposal for the renovation and sale of the Housatonic School. The Committee was concerned that mothballing the School would lead to irreparable deterioration if not addressed expeditiously. Tom asked people to attend the next CPA meeting.

On the School Committee, Peter Dillon, Superintendent, and Steve Bannon, Chair of the School Comm., both attended the Committee meeting. Sharon Gregory posed the questions and Steve's and Peter's replies in green bold italics below:

1. What flexibility we have with the current plans and the State funding? In the next six months, will we be able to reformulate our proposal to emphasize needed renovations and retain State funding? The School Committee is awaiting discussions with the State as to how flexible they are. The District must meet their educational requirements upon which the grant was originally based, but beyond that, the State will need to determine how much change will be accepted; or, if not, require the application process to be restarted and reevaluated. Peter noted that some aspects of the proposal, such as the renovation of the parking lot could probably be eliminated without impacting the size of grant, since it was not reimbursed.
2. How can we lessen the impact on tax payers? Having engaged in some research the amortization period of the bond, instead of 20 years, it appears to be possible to increase the period to 25 or 30 years, thus reducing the impact on our taxes (instead of +9%, something less). What is being done to review this? The School Committee is considering this; the longer term will cost more in aggregate, but will reduce the annual impact [much like home owners' 20 year vs. 30 year mortgages].
3. Will the current bond for the Middle & Lower Schools be refinanced? If so, what impact will this have on the School budget? The impact will be a savings of \$1.7 million over the remaining life of the

bond of which we will receive 40% of the savings. Peter will get back to us on the impact on the tax rate.

The remaining questions were not fully addressed but the Finance Committee is taking an active interest in these issues. Steve Bannon did report that the "Tuition-In" contracts are being renegotiated.

4. Regionalization/Centralization. As an aside, Ms. Gregory suggested that if there were high school consolidation, one could see why the school size might be larger; however, absent that, the building should be downsized rather than institutionalize "Tuition-In" and "Choice-In". Steve said that the State is responsible for estimating the size of the student body and it was on this basis that they awarded the amount of the grant.

5. Allocation.

a. Tuition contracts (with other towns) need to be renegotiated to lighten GB's load on School budget expenses, both operating and capital expenditures.

b. We also need to lobby Smitty Pignatelli and others to get the \$5,000 cap for Choice-In/Out changed, especially for rural communities. The formula was created 20 years ago and has not been updated.

The meeting was adjourned at 6 pm.

Sharon Gregory  
Chair, GB Finance Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sharon Gregory', written over the typed name and title.