

TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
FINANCE COMMITTEE
GREAT BARRINGTON TOWN HALL
334 MAIN STREET, GREAT BARRINGTON, MA
MINUTES
FEBRUARY 20, 2014
5:30 P.M.

PRESENT:

SHARON GREGORY, CHAIR

WALTER ATWOOD

MARK LEFENFELD

LEIGH DAVIS

THOMAS BLAUVELT - ABSENT

Meeting was called to order by Sharon Gregory, Chairman, at 5:30 P.M.

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Minutes of January 6, 2014 – 5:45 P.M. Meeting

MOTION: Mark Lefenfeld

SECOND: Leigh Davis

VOTE: 4-0

Minutes of January 6, 2014 – 6:00 P.M. Joint Meeting with Board of Selectmen

MOTION: Mark Lefenfeld to approve.

SECOND: Leigh Davis

VOTE: 4-0

Sharon advised that the purpose of the meeting is to review the municipal and school budgets in anticipation of the many joint meetings to follow.

2. **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

A. CPA Update – Tom Blauvelt – Tom was absent. Town Manager earmarked some projects in the budget that may qualify for CPA consideration but funds may not be available by Town Meeting..

B. School Update – Leigh and Sharon attended the three Town budget meeting on the 19th. Sharon presented a brief budget overview. The budget had not yet been fully reviewed by the school committee. The overall budget is proposed increase by 6.71% with Great Barrington's share 5.75%, Stockbridge 3.18% and West Stockbridge 14.45% being higher because of population change. The overall net operating change is 1.152 million dollars. Some of the increases included health insurance for \$336,000. Salaries are currently under negotiation. There is a 22% increase in electricity and that is due to a change in the electrical contracts. A maintenance person is being added in the middle school. The renovations are not included in the budget but there is some technology upgrades in the amount of \$175,000 for capital expenditures for computers. The Town's operating budget is up 4%. Jennifer advised that the budget is level service but includes people costs and inflation. Money was included in the budget for CPA that may fall into that category. The refinancing – 1.7 million savings – the town received 40% and

the state 60%. That equals \$680,000 savings. In reality, we spent more than the 6.7%. Sharon noted she asked about the unfunded liabilities/liabilities/post-retirement benefits and they said There is a 42 million liability which the school is not funding. Sharon said as a committee she would like them to note on their budget every year the number of employees and retirees that need to be covered and what the projection is.

School consolidation – They have begun that. There is a Mass Association of School committee that met with Ben Downing and Smitty Pignatelli and they are working on a cooperative pooling of resources, etc.

FY2015 BUDGET ANALYSIS:

Sharon said she has been taking the budget and allocating all the expenses, retirement and technology for the departments. It gives us a truer cost of the various services. We need to think about what level of service we want in these various departments. We can cut the budget down or increase the revenues. There was a general discussion of cutting overtime in the Police and DPW and maybe increasing the revenue in the cemetery to cover the cost. We need to ask department heads to take the approach in each one of these meetings to go for level funded. We should ask the DPW and Police to reduce their budgets or we can ask the Town Manager about a 2% reduction overall. When we review the departments we are going for more cuts so we can end up with an overall level funded budget. We could consider centralized dispatch system. We are looking for a level funded budget to go to the Town Meeting. Buddy Atwood suggested Sharon contact Sharon Harrison and ask her for a copy of the enrolment for Berkshire Hills. Sharon said she is going to send an e-mail to Peter Dillon about following up on her questions from the meeting. Sharon advised she didn't want investments cut that are important to the long term reduction of costs but to look at innovative ways to make deeper cuts and do it early as possible and to have the Town Manager get back to us.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Wichmann
Secretary