

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

**PRESENT:**

**SHARON GREGORY, CHAIR**

**WALTER ATWOOD**

**MARK LEFENFELD**

**LEIGH DAVIS**

**THOMAS BLAUVELT**

**ALSO PRESENT REPRESENTING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT:**

**STEPHEN BANNON**

**SHARON HARRISON**

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

II. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. Nonpayment from other Towns in School district and BHRSD related issues and Nonpayment of allocation of school district expenses:

There are a number of issues that go back to the district agreement and what has been owed between towns. Stephen Bannon said the best way to solve this is to reopen the district agreement. We can talk to Senator Downing and Smitty Pignatelli to find out what we need to do to set the minimal contribution in January. Sharon said the final amount that the school committee voted is what the town will pay regardless of what the state comes out with. The governor's budget is called House 1 and that is the budget that comes out in January. She noted when the minimum local contribution comes out with a foundation budget; by law the minimum amount allocated to each of the member towns has to be paid. The legislature then has to vote on the budget and they may change the minimum local contribution because of the money they are going to put into Chapter 70. The assessment is based on the net budget minus the minimum local contribution being allocated based on your agreement. Sharon noted that the governor last year decided by himself that he was going to get to the final ED reform number allocation among the towns as a foundation budget. Leigh asked if there is a list of other towns that this happened to so if we want to lobby, we can pull together. Sharon Harrison noted we can get a list of the regional districts. Stephen said he would obtain a copy of the agreement.

**MOTION:** Leigh Davis that the Great Barrington Board of Selectmen re-opens the district agreement.

**SECOND:** Tom Blauvelt

**Tom amended:** that the Town of Great Barrington pursues the outstanding monies owed and to re-open the entire agreement.

Mark said what about submitting an amendment to the agreement that only addresses this issue. We should make sure that we don't put some other town in the same position in the future and deal with the \$130,000 as a separate issue.

Mark amended the motion that we recommend that the Select Board consider the option of submitting an amendment to the district agreement and address the issue of the payment of each town's portion of the budget based on the final statement.

Sharon amended and added: with an eye towards remedying outstanding differences.

**SECOND:** Mark Lefenfeld

**VOTE:** 5-0

**VOTE ON ORIGINAL MOTION:** 5-0

B. Anticipated Questions at Town Meeting including those brought up at the Mini Town Meeting: Stephen Bannon said if Great Barrington alone rejects the school budget and the other 2 towns pass it then Great Barrington would be responsible for their share and there would have to be a special town meeting in order to vote and approve that sum. If two towns reject it, the school district would have to come back with a budget and all three towns would have to have a special town meeting. If no budget is agreed by July 1, last year's budget would have to be used. If no budget is in place by December 1, the state would facilitate the budget.

C. Recommendations for improving the budget process: Sharon advised she would like to see other ways of creating free cash so that the local revenues are not under estimated in order to have a surplus. Would it be appropriate for the Finance Committee to research to see if there are different ways to plan for free cash? Sharon presented a graph and the use of town municipal figures of \$26,457,117 with less education which is \$14.9 million and all the different areas that are not allocated and rounded them off. She advised it is 64% of the whole budget. Sharon said she looked at separating the departmental allocations and costs - see attached. She noted it would give a better idea of what it costs to run the town.

D. Finance Committee outstanding issues from the past year or other recommendations: Tom Blauvelt noted that he is concerned about uncollected taxes. There are still uncollected taxes from the Guthrie Center of approximately \$14,800. It was noted that the Guthrie Center is on the Board of Selectmen's agenda for a one day beer and wine license. The Town Treasurer noted they are on an installment plan. They have only paid \$1,200 to date. He said we should request that Sandy Larkin give the Finance Committee a list of people who are behind in taxes a few times a year. He noted early in the fiscal year we can ask for a meeting with Sandy and Jennifer to discuss the taxes. Tom said he would like the neighboring towns to assist with some of the programs that Great Barrington provides, specifically the senior center. Sharon suggested asking Polly Mann to a meeting to discuss budget concerns to put into a recommended letter. Sharon said she would contact Jennifer about putting together a meeting.

Tom Blauvelt reported on the CPA – He advised \$400,000 was going to be collected this year. We have a different number in our budget. Tom noted that Warrant Article #12 is asking for \$430,500 which represents the CPA Budget. That article will be read by Karen Smith at the Town Meeting. That number is based on the 3% additional tax on property.

No matching funds were received from the state for Great Barrington. This year the state was able to match 52% of every dollar. They were able to do this because the legislature put an additional \$25 million in the fund. The total for 2014 – 148 communities that adopted the CPA and the state matched 52.22%. Of the 148 communities the local surcharge they collected was 92.5 million and the state matched 54.8 million. They have not matched the 100% since 2008. This year the state has committed to putting in another 25 million. The CPA Committee approved the application process at the last meeting and there will be a public meeting on the application process in early May and we will start accepting applications at some point in the fall. There is an initial 2 page application asking what the funds are being requested for and if it is approved then there is a more in-depth application. After that there would be a vote on which ones we recommend at town meeting for approval. Every year at least 30% has to be designated to specific areas.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**Joint Board of Selectmen/Finance Committee Minutes:**

**MOTION:** Mark Lefenfeld to approve the minutes of February 12, 2014

**SECOND:** Buddy Atwood

**VOTE:** 5-0

**MOTION:** Mark Lefenfeld to approve the minutes of February 25, 2014

**SECOND:** Buddy Atwood

**VOTE:** 5-0

**MOTION:** Mark Lefenfeld to approve the minutes of February 26, 2014

**SECOND:** Buddy Atwood

**VOTE:** 5-0

**MOTION:** Mark Lefenfeld to approve the minutes of March 12, 2014

**SECOND:** Buddy Atwood

**VOTE:** 5-0

**MOTION:** Mark Lefenfeld to approve the minutes of March 3, 2014

**SECOND:** Buddy Atwood

**VOTE:** 5-0

**Finance Committee Minutes:**

**MOTION:** Mark Lefenfeld to approve the minutes of February 20, 2014

**SECOND:** Buddy Atwood

**VOTE:** 5-0

**MOTION:** Mark Lefenfeld to approve the minutes of March 12, 2014

**SECOND:** Buddy Atwood

**VOTE:** 5-0

The Board reviewed the order of the warrant articles to be read by the Finance Committee at Town Meeting.

Sharon thanked Mark Lefenfeld for serving on the Finance Committee.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Carolyn Wichmann,  
Recording Secretary