

**MINUTES
FINANCE COMMITTEE
TOWN HALL
334 MAIN STREET
GREAT BARRINGTON MA 01230
SEPTEMBER 14, 2016
5:30 PM**

The chair called the meeting to order at 5:30. Members present were Walter Atwood, Will Curletti, and Janet Lee. Also present were town manager Jennifer Tabakin, consultant Eddie Sporn, and Selectboard member Ed Abrahams.

Minutes of the meeting of June 14, 2016 were approved, without objection.

FY2017 RESERVE FUND TRANSFERS: The town manager announced that financial coordinator Lauren Sartori is leaving at the end of the month. The opening will be posted by next Monday. Until the position is filled, the town manager wants to retain an accounting firm that provides interim municipal CPA services. She said that several firms are pre-cleared by the state to be hired for this purpose, so there is no need to go through the procurement process for them. The town manager has received a proposal from one of them and has checked its references. She said that the town's auditors support this approach and this particular firm. The firm would not do everything that the financial coordinator has done, but would concentrate on oversight tasks that are necessary during the transition, such as reviewing warrants, reconciling accounts, monitoring budget compliance, and signing off on authorizations. She said the plan would be for the firm to provide 16 hours of services per week for up to ten weeks; at \$150 per hour, the total cost could be \$24,000 plus an allowance for travel costs, at \$.50 per mile, because the firm is in Boston. (She said that all of the pre-cleared firms are in the eastern part of the state and that local firms that deal with municipalities, which would have to be hired through a procurement process, are not familiar with our MUNIS software). She said that funds budgeted in the salary line for this position would be transferred to the consultant line to cover some of the cost. Before entering the contract, she asked the Finance Committee to authorize transferring from the reserve fund the amount by which the salary line could fall short, which she estimated would be \$722 per week.

On motion by Atwood, seconded by Lee, the Committee authorized by unanimous vote the transfer of up to \$7500 from the reserve fund to the consultant line for financial services, to be used if needed.

In addition, the town manager requested a transfer of \$7950 to purchase a module of the MUNIS software for creating forms and documents for inter-office communication and electronic billing. This is a key functionality that is needed to streamline operations by eliminating time-consuming hand-written systems and eventually supporting an integrated "customer" database for all town services and permits. Due to a misunderstanding with the supplier, this module was not included in what the town had budgeted to buy this year.

On motion by Atwood, seconded by Lee, the Committee authorized by unanimous vote the transfer of \$7950 from the reserve fund to technology to cover the cost of this MUNIS module.

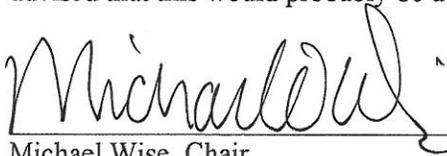
BUDGET PLANNING FOR FY18: The chair advised the Committee that the draft budget policy would likely be ready sometime next month to be discussed and approved by the Selectboard and the Finance Committee. It would be good to provide input early, while it is being prepared. Lee noted that the newly hired financial coordinator would be stepping into this process for the first time, so it would be prudent not to expect to change too much of it. The town manager observed that the staff is trying to get ahead on the budget process while Lauren is still here, and that operations and technology consultant Eddie Sporn has been working on documenting processes and modernizing systems to support a smooth transition. She advised the

Committee that this consulting contract has been extended for another six months. She also noted that some of what Lauren now does, such as technology, would likely not be part of the new hire's responsibilities, and that she might request some input and assistance from the Committee, and from the town's auditor, in the hiring process.

The town manager also reported that the town is joining with some other towns in the county to hire an economic development consultant, to work with the town planner and manager providing seven hours per week of services. Berkshire Regional Planning is coordinating this effort and covering the consultant's benefits. We are the only town in the group in south county. The individual has been identified by BRCP but not yet formally hired.

CITIZENS SPEAK TIME: There were no citizens in attendance who asked to speak.

The meeting adjourned without objection at 6:22. The next meeting will be at the call of the chair; the chair advised that this would probably be a joint meeting with the Selectboard about budget policy in October.



Michael Wise, Chair