

Joint Meeting Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 17, 2007
Town Office Building
7:00 PM

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chair Nancy Yeatts for the Board of Selectmen. Board members present-Nancy Yeatts, Charles Evirs and Derek Maksy.

Chairman Velez called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Finance Committee members present-Richard Velez, Martha Weeks-Green, Gary Mansfield, Robert Hill and James Hanlon.

Also present: Town Administrator Rita Garbitt and Town Accountant Cynthia McRae.

There was a moment of silence for Michael Holmes, a former Lakeville Police Officer, who passed away the previous night.

Meeting Minutes

Mr. Velez distributed the previous meeting minutes to all the members for review.

Changes to the Committee

Chairman Velez stated that he would like to nominate Ms. Weeks-Green as Chairman. Upon a motion by Mr. Hill to nominate Ms. Weeks-Green as Chair of the Finance Committee and seconded by Mr. Hanlon, it was

VOTED: Martha Weeks- Green as Chair of the Finance Committee.
Unanimous in favor

Ms. Weeks-Green will continue on as a member of the Capital Expenditure Committee until June 30, 2007.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Velez and seconded by Mr. Hanlon, it was

VOTED: To appoint Robert Hill as Vice-Chair to the Finance Committee.
Unanimous in favor

Upon a motion made by Mr. Velez and seconded by Mr. Hanlon, it was

VOTED: To appoint Robert Hill as the Wage & Personnel Representative.
Unanimous in favor

Upon a motion made by Mr. Hill and seconded by Mr. Hanlon, it was

VOTED: To appoint Mr. Velez to the Capital Expenditure Committee as of July 1, 2007.
Unanimous in favor

Review of the FY 08 Budget

The Town Administrator reviewed the latest update to the FY 08 Budget Summary. Ms. Garbitt explained the changes to the enrollment of students attending Bristol Agricultural School, Out-of-District Special Education Costs and the Local School Budget which included \$72,000 for steps and raises and \$50,000 for para-professionals. Ms. Weeks Green pointed out that special needs costs have to be paid prior to everything else. There was a brief discussion regarding Freetown being two (2) months behind in paying their assessments to the Regional School District. Their real estate tax bills did not go out on time, so they were forced to borrow, and the Region had to draw on their Excess and Deficiency (E&D) Account. The Department of Revenue (DOR) had certified their E&D balance, but the Business Manager said there was a mistake, but it has been corrected. Ms. McRae stated we need to have this in writing. Chair Weeks-Green asked the recording secretary to send a letter to the Business Manager, Louis Rodrigues, c.c.'d to the Superintendent and the Regional School Committee, that the Finance Committee would like a copy of the recertification of E & D for July 1, 2006.

The Town Administrator reviewed the FY 08 Budget for the Regional School District. With the House Ways & Means Budget, the Region will receive more than the Governor's budget. Thus, Mr. Rodrigues was asked for a new assessment based on the new Chapter 70 funding. It was thought that the assessment would go down. All that changed was the delta, the difference of their budget and the total revenues of their first budget, so, they are still requesting \$2,340,000. The only figure that changed was the delta amount of \$2,017,000. The Town received a budget stamped in on February 2, 2007 that requests a \$2.6 million increase. The latest assessment shows an increase of \$2.48 million but the Town has not received a budget that matches that amount. There will be a joint meeting on April 30th with the School Committee. It was attempted to get a meeting scheduled before then, but the Region was not meeting. Freetown is meeting with the Region on April 24th. Freetown is going to have their Town Meeting on May 7th.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding the 20 teachers retiring at the High School and the Middle School and the savings that should be reflected in the budget because of lower salaries and the elimination of longevity and sick leave buy back payments that were included in the FY 07 budget. Ms. Weeks-Green stated we should get the information on the teachers that are leaving, not to micro manage, but to understand the numbers they are producing. Mr. Mansfield replied they should have this back up data supporting their information. Ms. Weeks-Green said she will call the Superintendent tomorrow and let him know what we need. Ms. Garbitt explained the Lexington Plan for teachers that signed up for the Early Retirement. They receive an annual longevity payment prior to retirement. Using an average of \$4,750 times 20 teachers the total is \$95,000. They also have a sick leave buyback provision in their contract. So even if you use \$100,000 (which is low) for sick leave buyback and \$95,000 for early retirement payments, there still should be at least a \$100,000 savings. Page 99 shows their fixed costs and staff for the schools. They are looking for \$800,000 for the new staff. This is over and above the 20 replacements. Chair Yeatts stated there are three (3) additional teachers at the High School. Ms. Garbitt stated that is the academic teacher and tutors which is over and above the amount. What are the real needs, and what are their additional needs? Mr. Mansfield said they should have this as their starting point, then their wish list. Mr. Evirs added that the Region's summary sheet does nothing to show any savings on the teachers that are retiring. They just increased everything. Mr. Velez said it sounds like micro managing to the School Department, but the Regional School Committee should be held accountable. It is more of an informational request. If the Finance Committee speaks to Dr. Furtado directly, then how does the School Committee play in with this?

Further discussion ensued regarding Free Cash, Building Permit Fees and the progress on the projects for National Development and Oxford Development. Mr. Mansfield stated he had an aversion to taking money out of stabilization since too many things can happen that will make it evaporate, but we need it this year, so I understand. Ms. Garbitt stated half of the increase in State aid was Chapter 70. On the town side there were not a lot of increases, contracted services and gasoline basically. Mr. Mansfield asked if there is anything that we can do about conserving to save on gas. Ms. Garbitt replied the Town is looking at leasing a small more energy efficient vehicle for the assessors. Mr. Evirs stated we did speak with the Police Chief about not leaving the cruisers running. Ms. Garbitt said the Assistant Animal Control Officers have been told not to patrol for loose dogs. The biggest consumers of gasoline are the Police Department then the Highway Department. Mr. Mansfield asked if there is any movement on the national level for more conservative vehicles. Ms. Garbitt stated our Police Chief is willing to purchase a more economical vehicle when his car comes up for replacement.

Ms. Weeks-Green questioned the salary for the Library Director. Ms. Garbitt stated that the new Youth Librarian's salary was included on the same line. Ms. Weeks-Green said I have factored the Youth Librarian out of the total. Ms. Garbitt said the salary for the new Library Director was within the budget because it includes the longevity payment for the former Library Director. Ms. Weeks-Green said we did not approve it for salary. Mr. Mansfield said we have a philosophical difference with salary and longevity. I separate them. Ms. Weeks-Green stated it seems to be high money for a Library Director, and we already discussed this for the Assistant Town Clerk. Maybe I need to see how it works with the Wage and Personnel Board. To me the salary is the line item salary. Chair Yeatts stated we went through three (3) rounds to look for a new Library Director. I sat on all three (3) committees. Ms. Garbitt stated the Library Trustees went to the Wage and Personnel Board and asked for a salary increase because they were not getting any really good applicants to apply. They surveyed the salaries of similar towns in the area, and Lakeville was one of the lowest. If the longevity was included, it was within their budget. Ms. Weeks-Green stated to us those are two (2) separate line items, and we consistently find out about it after the fact, and I want it to stop. Mr. Mansfield said I agree. We approve one thing, and then numbers come in higher which we did not approve. Mr. Hill agreed. Ms. Garbitt said the Finance Committee's representative to the Wage and Personnel Board, Stephen Olivier, was present at the Wage and Personnel Board meetings when the Library Director, the Youth Librarian and Assistant Town Clerk were reclassified. It was his responsibility to update the Finance Committee on these changes. Mr. Maksy stated that he is on the Wage and Personnel Board now, so he will look into this. Mr. Mansfield said I will say that the library is humming now. We are very fortunate. We have a great library. Mr. Hill stated that maybe they should look at possibly increasing their overdue fees, since they seem to be using 1950's fees.

Ms. Garbitt stated the Budget Summary does not have to be voted on tonight by the Finance Committee. I am just presenting the recommendations from the Board of Selectmen. As the final numbers come in, the summary will change. The budgets for the Selectmen, Town Accountant, Assessors, Highway Department, Police Department, Fire Department, Building Department, Animal Shelter, and the Veterans Benefits were reviewed.

Update on current FY 07 budget

Ms. Garbitt distributed the Revenue and Expenditure Report for FY 07. She reviewed the potential deficits. Snow and Ice-\$28,000; Veterans-\$15,000; Police-gasoline \$30,000; Unemployment for the School Department-\$6000; Cable Committee legal fees for Verizon License-\$3,000; Special Education-\$62,000; Gas and Plumbing Inspectors-\$2000. \$15,000 will be transferred from the 40R funds to cover the legal fees for the 40R by-law. The FY 07 budget will continue to be looked at as it

gets closer to the Town Meeting. The total deficit at this time is \$145,500.00. The Police, Fire and Highway Departments have increased their gasoline budgets for next year.

The Town Administrator distributed revised pages for the FY 08 Budget books. Ms Garbitt reviewed the changes on the health insurance costs under Employee Benefits. Seven (7) employees have been added due to three (3) retirements, a new police officer, a new firefighter, and two (2) new employees for the School Department. Also, some newly elected part-time Officials joined. The total increase is \$345,000; \$145,000 for the new employees and \$200,000 for the increase in the premiums. If the Town had stayed with the Plymouth County Health Insurance Fund, the cost for FY 08 would be increased an additional \$145,000. Ms. Weeks-Green asked when can we discuss employees, union and non union, paying more towards their health insurance. Ms. Garbitt stated during contract negotiations. Ms. Weeks-Green stated that she has heard from many people about the 90% that the Town is paying for the health insurance. They have concerns about it, so we need to change it. I would like to make sure that we see town employees pay more towards their health insurance. Selectman Maksy suggested looking at the line item and work it backwards to see what kind of reduction you are looking for.

Ms. Garbitt stated Treasurer Debra Kenney would like to discuss the issue regarding the stipends for part-time Elected Officials. She would like the Board of Selectmen to look at this in the future, not the stipends in particular, but that the stipends trigger the health insurance. There are ten (10) part-time officials eligible for health insurance benefits. Mr. Evirs pointed out that the Town Moderator is paid a \$150 stipend and is eligible for health insurance. Ms. Weeks-Green said she would not have a problem eliminating the stipend for the Town Moderator, upon the retirement of the current Town Moderator. Mr. Mansfield stated he had a problem doing position at a time. He would prefer to do it as a policy for all of them rather than to pick and choose. So put forth a policy. This would help for consistency. Ms. Weeks-Green said one (1) is so different than the other glaring nine (9). It was decided to table the issue for now and come back and address it for next year. Mr. Hanlon stated the stipend is not the issue. \$14,500 for health insurance is the issue, and they still get it after they retire. Frankly, these people are part-time. If we take that approach it will benefit everyone. I would like to have a blanket policy rather than who is next policy. Mr. Mansfield stated the stipend with the health insurance was an incentive to stay, but now maybe they stay just for the health insurance benefit. Ms. Weeks-Green said okay, bring this back in the fall to look at.

Ms. Weeks-Green asked about the salary for the Assistant Town Clerk. My recollection was that we brought someone in for training to help. If we have a Town Clerk, that seems to be a high salary for an Assistant Town Clerk. Ms. Garbitt explained the wages in the FY 05 budget were for a part-time clerical person (three (3) days a week). She was asked if she wanted to work full time and declined. The Treasurer's Office was covering the Town Clerk's office two (2) days a week, and the wages were coming from the Treasurer's budget. When the part-time clerk left, Sandy wanted to fill the position with a full time Assistant Town Clerk so that she could take a full weeks vacation instead of just long weekends. Even though the Treasurer's Office personnel were cross-trained for dog and fishing licenses, etc., they could not sign death certificates or attest to true copies. Sandy never intended the position to be temporary. The Treasurer's wage budget was reduced because she was able to hire someone at the first step to fill a vacant position at the top step. By reducing the Treasurer's wage account and increasing the Town Clerk's wage account, the net effect was no increase in the overall budget. Sandy Horton did a salary survey of similar towns for Assistant Town Clerks and based on the requirements, it was approved by Wage and Personnel Board.

Chair Yeatts asked why take a clerical person and put them up to a managerial level. Ms. Weeks-Green said that is my question. Mr. Velez stated I thought this was all done in preparation of a transfer

of the reins. Then the office staffing would revert back after the change. Ms. Yeatts asked what is the difference in pay for a full time clerical person. Ms. Garbitt said the hourly rate for the top paid clerical person in the Board of Health is the same as the Assistant Town Clerk which is \$19.48. The classifications are based on the level of responsibility. The Assistant Town Clerk must be bonded and registered with the State. In the absence of the Town Clerk, the Assistant would be in charge on Election Day. Sandy Horton never took a vacation for more than one day since she had to be in town for death certificates. In addition, the Town Clerk needed a full time Assistant due to the Town growing which increased her workload. Ms. Weeks-Green stated that is not how it was presented to this committee. I will have to go back and look at previous minutes. Mr. Mansfield said I seem to side with you, but I would have to look at the minutes to confirm it. Mr. Velez stated my recollection was that it was a transitory thing, not to increase the staffing in the office. Ms. Garbitt said employees from the Treasurer's Office were cross trained to assist the Town Clerk, not to perform the Town Clerk's functions. That is why the Town did not have to close the Town Clerk's Office when she went to meetings. Mr. Evirs asked who certifies a death certificate, marriage certificate or birth certificate if the Town Clerk is on vacation. Ms. Garbitt stated it does not get done. There was further discussion regarding the functions that only the Town Clerk only can do.

Ms. McRae stated the Assistant Town Clerk is an appointed Town Official. Mr. Mansfield said it seems to be a high amount looking at other positions in the town. Ms. Garbitt stated Sandy Horton did do a survey, and we were trying to be comparable. Ms. Weeks-Green asked what are our choices here. Mr. Evirs stated the Wage and Personnel Board approves these positions, so the comments should go back to that Board. Mr. Velez said there are two (2) levels of concern. Are we actually augmenting the staff level, since to my recollection I did not think that, so that needs resolution; then the level of compensation seems high? Ms. Yeatts said I wonder what other towns do. Ms. Weeks-Green stated the employees make it too convenient for people here since the Town Hall is always open, and the taxpayer is not inconvenienced by the fact that we do not have any money. Mr. Evirs stated the Town Clerk gets paid \$53,575 plus longevity, so to pay the assistant 30% less is not that out of line, if you look at it realistically. I think that is substantially less for the next level of an employee. Since that person is expected to step in if the other person is not there. This is just looking at the salary, not whether the person is to be there or not. \$40,500 for the level of responsibility is not that far out of line. Mr. Velez asked why are we discussing a position salary level until we resolve the matter if the position is to be there or not. Ms. Weeks-Green said we can eliminate the position and put money in there for clerical. Mr. Velez stated we need to first verify if the position should be there, and the rest will become mute. Rather than taking up the time about the salary amount, let us verify the position that we should be discussing a salary structure for.

Mr. Mansfield said we need to come to some resolution on this before Town Meeting if there is to be a change. What is the position of the Board of Selectmen? Ms. Yeatts said we recommend as a whole, but I think I brought this question up in the first place. Ms. Garbitt stated speaking from my experience as the former Treasurer/Collector, I know what is required of the Town Clerk's office and how much the work load has increased over the last several years. I feel they need two (2) full time people in that office. Sandy Horton had been saying that for years. Ms. Yeatts said everyone needs more help, and we do not have the money to give everyone the help they need. Sandy Horton was a hard worker. Ms. Garbitt stated Sandy Horton knew that office needed another full time position, and she thought that even after she retired the Assistant Town Clerk position would continue on. Ms. Yeatts said I never went there when I could not get something done. Ms. Garbitt stated that is because Sandy Horton took work home with her every night and came in on weekends plus the Treasurer's office was helping out. Jan Tracy brings work home too. Employees should not be expected to do that. Mr. Maksy said I was not here then, but the discussion, paperwork, and minutes need to come

forward to determine where this needs to go. Ms. Weeks-Green agreed. We need the minutes. I will look for the minutes as well and Mr. Velez and Mr. Mansfield.

Mr. Velez left the meeting at 9:15 PM.

Other Business

There was further discussion regarding the increases in health insurance benefits since 2004, reduced motor vehicle excise taxes, ways of generating additional revenue, and business development.

Executive Session

At 10:20 PM, upon a motion made by Selectman Evirs and seconded by Selectman Maksy, the Board

VOTED: To enter Executive Session and not return to Open Session for the purpose of discussing the pending litigation regarding the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Fire Department.
Polled Vote: Selectman Evirs – Aye, Selectman Maksy – Aye, Selectman Yeatts – Aye.

Upon a motion made by Gary Mansfield and seconded by Robert Hill, the Finance Committee unanimously

VOTED: To enter Executive Session and not return to Open Session for the purpose of discussing the pending litigation regarding the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Fire Department.
Polled Vote: Martha Green – Aye, Gary Mansfield – Aye, Robert Hill – Aye, and James Hanlon – Aye.