

Finance Committee Meeting
Minutes of Meeting 2-9-2018

Aquinnah Town Hall Selectmen's Meeting Room

Members present: Chairman Allen Rugg, Tom Murphy and Mark Foster*

* via conference call

Also present: Board Administration Assistant Sophia Welch, Town Accountant Emily Day, Town Administrator Jeffrey Madison, Selectman Chairman Jim Newman, Conservation Committee Chair Sarah Thulin, DPW Director Jay Smalley, Fire Chief Simon Bolin, Chief Belain

- The meeting began at 10:00am

- First on the agenda was the review of minutes. Tom made a motion to approve the 10/17/17 minutes as presented. Mark seconded. The Committee voted 3-0, the motion passed. Tom made a motion to approve the 11/6/17 minutes. Mark seconded. The Committee voted 3-0, the motion passed.

- Sarah Thulin, Conservation Committee Chair, asked to speak with the Committee concerning a State requirement for the maintenance of a conservation restriction in the Circle area and near the Lighthouse. Sarah gave a brief overview of the matter to the Committee. In order to comply with the State requirements, the Town needs to create a specific budget and line items to uphold this requirement to mow and enhance the endangered species in the area. It was noted that DPW has done a great job with the initial \$5,000.00 but there needs to be maintenance annually. There was discussion concerning the amount to satisfy the conservation restriction. Sarah felt that there was another year of robust work that needs to be done. Sarah and Jay agreed that a line item of \$2,000.00 should be budgeted in the DPW budget. There was discussion regarding the propagation of the endangered species tinkers weed and the volunteered time and money that Sarah has given and the volunteered time from local botanists. Sarah informed the committee that eventually there will be a bill from Polly Hill Arboretum for the tinkers weed seed. Emily asked for Sarah to get a bill from Polly Hill so that she can plan for payment. The Committee thanked Sarah for her time and volunteering and, in time, they will work on how to handle this unique situation for future budgeting. Jay confirmed that he can identify a line item to satisfy the requirements and his budget will be able to accommodate these specific conservation restriction costs.

- Emily gave a brief overview of the draft budget as of February 9th. She noted that part of the budget will not change and what has changed is partly due to department step increases and contractual obligations of the Town. In addition, she informed the Committee that there isn't a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) this year only step increases for Town Employees. There was discussion regarding the increase of the ambulance service budget and the proposed addition of another paramedic. Tri-Town will be presenting their budget at the next meeting. Emily informed the Committee that the Town is over the levy limit by approximately \$400,000.00, most of which is education and the Town is still going to be in an over-ride position mostly because of the school assessment. There was discussion on the need to be prepared for Town Meeting where this over-ride will be brought to the floor. Looking at the general government category, Allen asked where the Town Administrator increase derived from. Jeffrey informed the Committee that he has been working close to, if not over, 50hrs/week which is greater than what he was hired for. Sibel had increased the hours from 32 to 40 making the position full time but Jeffrey was unsure where the hourly rate came from. Jeffrey will be presenting that budget in the coming meetings. As for other departments, there is no increase in hours, only step increases. There was discussion on where the Administration

Assistant position falls.

- Next, the Committee met with Jay Smalley, DPW Director, to discuss his proposed budget. Jay noted that there wasn't much change in his proposed budget. The Committee reviewed the budget and found that there can be reallocation among his expenses without changing the bottom line budget. Jay spoke about converting the old fire truck into a sander truck, requested by the Selectmen, which will cost approximately \$26,000.00. Emily pointed out that this would be a one-time project and could be brought to Town Meeting as a warrant. The Committee asked for Jay to do a cost analysis of this project. Jay noted that he had spoken to Carolyn regarding the recreational facilities budget and they both agreed that it won't change. There was discussion on where the Lighthouse management budget would fall under now that the Town has taken over management. Jeffrey noted that there will be a warrant at the Special Town Meeting for start-up expenses, separate from the amount budgeted in the DPW budget, for this coming Lighthouse season but that no-one has been identified as the administrator. The Committee discussed whether the Lighthouse Management should become its own department/budget separate from the DPW budget, where Lighthouse Keeper and Lighthouse maintenance currently falls. Jay voiced concern with the Lighthouse maintenance being removed from his budget because his department would still be doing the maintenance. The Committee reassured him that he won't have any problems getting the work done even if it's under another department. The Committee thanked Jay.

- Next, the Committee met with Fire Chief Simon Bolin. Simon informed the Committee of the following increases in his budget: Fire Chief contract obligation increase of \$5000.00, \$2,000.00 increase in firefighter wages for 2 new firefighters, and a total of \$2,100.00 in expenses (\$1000.00 for equipment, \$1,000.00 in training and \$100.00 in fire/gear supplies). The Committee discussed the Fire Chief contractual increase and hours. Simon noted that the Fire Chief contract is for 3 years and next year it will be increasing by \$10,000.00. The Committee found that Simon's hours varies depending on weekly meetings but that he is generally in office every Sunday for 3-4 hours and it can change any given week. He noted that the contract states "how ever many hours is needed to get the job done effectively". There was discussion on the number of firefighters and what the optimum would be for the Town. Simon felt that 16 firefighters would be optimal but that it is difficult due to changing State mandates (increasing training hours) and the fact that the job is not a high paying job. There was discussion on merging Aquinnah and Chilmark fire departments. Simon felt that the merge would be beneficial over the long-run. Jim noted that the Selectmen will discuss this matter at their next meeting. The Committee thanked Simon.

- Next, the Committee met with Police Chief Randhi Belain. Chief Belain gave a brief overview of the Police Department budget and pointed out that as far as wages go, the budget is driven by step increases. On the expense side, Chief Belain pointed out the two increases: an increase of \$1,000.00 for vehicle maintenance and an increase in the Martha's Vineyard Law Enforcement Council (MVLEC), which consists of tactical team training and equipment expenses, dues and the Mobil Command Vehicle expenses (shared by all Town Police departments). There was discussion regarding the "seasonal and all other wages" line item. Chief Belain informed the Committee that the line item is overtime for existing staff and seasonal staff, which is only \$47,000.00 out of the \$256,000.00. He noted that the salaries of the Chief, Sargent and full-time patrolmen are separate. Chief Belain pointed out that the remaining \$210,000.00 of overtime pay consists of items such as time-off relief and training leave for the Sargent and two Patrolmen. The Committee discussed whether it would be beneficial to conduct a cost analysis of adding another full-time patrolman. Chief Belain noted that he has looked at a cost analysis but felt that it might cut it by 30%, if that. Emily pointed out to the Committee that the Police department historically comes under budget, but they need to be prepared. Emil will look at past years to see how much the department comes under every year. The Committee thanked Chief Belain and asked for him to not take the discussion personal. There was discussion on the need for more space for the Police and Fire department as well as all of the Town departments.

- Emily finished giving the Committee a run through of the budgets. She pointed out certain department budgets that have little to no change. All other departments will present their budgets to the Committee in the coming weeks. There was discussing regarding the Town's insurance budget. It was suggested that Jeffrey meet with the Town's insurance agency to review all of the plans.

- With no other business to discuss, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn.
The Committee voted 3-0 in favor. The motion passed.

- The meeting ended at 12:09pm

Respectfully submitted,
Sophia Welch
Board Administrative Assistant