



Topsfield Finance Committee  
Minutes to the Meetings  
February 27, 2017

**I. Call to Order:** Chairman Karen Dow called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM with Che Elwell, Jon Guido, Eric Menzer, Lou Ross, and Dana Warren present. Mike Hartmann was not present. Also present: Catherine Gabriel, Town Accountant; Laura Zalewski, Library Director; Audrey Iarocci, Library Trustee; Patricia Walsh, Library Trustee; Abby Jackson, Chairman of the Board of Library Trustees; Gail Bryson, Library Trustee; Steve Shepherd, Parks & Cemetery Superintendent; Bob Benjamin, Board of Parks & Cemetery Commissioners; Steve Mscisz, Member of the Board of Parks & Cemetery Commissioners; Phil Knowles, Chairman of the Board of Water Commissioners; Rich Stone, Member of the Board of Water Commissioners; Greg Krom, Superintendent of the Water Department; and Paula Burke, Council on Aging Director. Also, residents Dick Gandt and Scott Mercier.

**II. Minutes:** Lou Ross made a motion to accept the minutes from February 6, 2017. Jon Guido seconded the motion, voted in favor 4-0-2. Eric Menzer and Dana Warren abstained as they were not present for the meeting.

**III. Department Liaison Updates: Operating Budgets, Warrant Articles:**

Continued discussion of budgets, noting any deviations from guidelines. The following departments will be scheduled for March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017:

- a. **Planning Board**
- b. **Masco**

**IV. Department Head Budget Presentations:**

**Library: 7:00PM- 7:21PM,** Dana Warren, department liaison, presented Laura Zalewski, Library Director, and Library Trustee; Audrey Iarocci, Patricia Walsh, Abby Jackson and Gail Bryson. A discussion of the proposed budget followed. Laura would like to modify the Reference Library Assistant position. In 2004 the position was split into two 16 hour positions. It has been increasingly difficult to keep qualified part time library help and training of new hires takes a great amount of time. Laura is requesting the positions be replaced with one 30 hour/week position with benefits. This change would help the library continue to provide quality library services to the residents. This would be an increase of approximately \$7,000-\$20,000 in the town's insurance budget. A discussion followed. Dana thanked them all for coming in and said he would be in contact with Laura soon.

**Parks & Cemetery: 7:30PM- 7:55PM,** Lou Ross, department Liaison, presented Steve Shepherd, Parks & Cemetery Superintendent; Bob

Benjamin and Steve Mscisz, Members of the Parks & Cemetery Commissioners Board. A discussion of the proposed budget followed. They would like to reduce the seasonal work force and add a full-time laborer employee. Seasonal workers are becoming increasingly harder to obtain and retain. This would be an increase of \$20,000 in the P&C budget, with seasonal costs covered by revolving funds; there would also be a \$7,000 to \$20,000 increase in the town's insurance budget. A discussion followed.

**Water 8:00PM-8:30PM,** Lou Ross, department Liaison, presented Phil Knowles, Chairman of the Board of Water Commissioners; Rich Stone, Member of the Board of Water Commissioners; and Greg Krom, Superintendent of the Water Department. Phil reported that the water treatment plant timeline has been delayed due to some setbacks. They will not have a bid in time for Town Meeting in May. They are proposing a Special Town Meeting in June. They will have more information by the middle of March. After they meet with the Board of Selectmen on March 13<sup>th</sup>, they will update the Finance Committee. A discussion of the operating budget followed. Greg noted an increase in the cost of supplies due to the cost of chemicals increasing. There is also a 10% increase for the cost of replacement of household meters. They are not lasting as long as the DEP-mandated testing cycle. High manganese levels clog the meters and destroy them.

**Council on Aging 8:30-9:10,** Dana Warren, department Liaison, presented Paula Burke, Council on Aging Director. A discussion of the budget followed. Paula reported on COA activities and participation. She is requesting the Director position, currently at 35 hours be adjusted to 40 hours, an increase of \$7,709. She would like to see the pay grade for the COA Secretary adjusted from a grade level of a 4 to a 5, reflecting responsibilities of the position, an increase of \$400. Paula is also requesting the outdated tracking software be replaced, an increase of \$2,500. She noted an increase of \$4,952 in the budget for van driver hours due to the relocation of Town Hall. Also an increase of \$7,200 for relocation rental space for the COA programs. Dana Warren thanked Paula for coming in and said he would be in contact soon.

**V.Draft List of Warrant Articles:** Catherine Gabriel passed out an updated Preliminary List of Warrant Articles, dated February 22,2017. A discussion followed.

**VI. New Business:** Karen noted that the Finance Committee will vote the Base Budget on March 13, 2017.

**VII. Upcoming Meeting Schedule:** The next meetings of the Committee will be held on March 6<sup>th</sup>, and March 13<sup>th</sup>, respectively, at 7:00 PM in the Proctor School Teacher's Lounge.

**VIII. Adjourn:** A motion was made by Dana Warren to adjourn at 10:00PM, seconded by Che Elwell and voted in favor 6-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Davis

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Attachments: Masco Budget Binder, Masco Capital Budget Letter, Draft Preliminary List of Warrant Articles, Library Handout, Parks & Cemetery Budget Summary Memo, Water Department Budget, Council on Aging March/April Calendar, and Council on Aging Bar Graph.