



Topsfield Finance Committee  
Minutes to the Meetings  
January 8, 2018

**I. Call to Order:** Chairman Karen Dow called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM with Che Elwell, Eric Menzer, Lou Ross, and Dana Warren present.

Jon Guido and Mike Hartmann were not present for the meeting. Also present: Catherine Gabriel, Town Accountant; Steve Whelan, Town Moderator; Dick Gandt, Selectman. Members of the public present: Sarah Guido, Bruce Bolnick, Diane Torrey, Carole Carter, Jeanine Cunniff, David Larson, Gerry Buckley, Robert Cornetta and approximately 5 others.

Karen Dow announced at 7:03 that Jeanine Cunniff was going to make a video/audio recording; late arrivals were notified of this recording.

**II. Minutes:** Dana Warren made a motion to accept the minutes from November 20, 2017. Che Elwell seconded the motion, voted in favor 5-0-0.

**III. Department Budgets: Liaison Reports:**

Catherine Gabriel has assembled the submitted department budgets into a master document, including sections noting requests over guidelines. She will post on Accountant's section of the town website and/or work with Jen Davis to post on the FinCom section. A brief discussion was held on some of the budgets noting and discussing any deviations from guidelines.

1. Eric Menzer met with the Fire Chief and briefly mentioned that the Fire contract (salary/wages) should be finalized soon.
2. Che Elwell discussed that the Police budget came in at guidelines but an officer has retired; due to this there may be revisions in the budget. Also, contracts are being negotiated.
3. Lou Ross said that the Planning Board and Zoning Board budgets are small and level. The marijuana moratorium runs out this year. Highway and Stormwater are at guidelines, as is the Water department budget is within guidelines. The Water Treatment Plant project, which is coming in on budget and is scheduled to be finished by Spring 2019. The River Road project will go to bid in February.
4. Dana Warren briefly reported that the Library budget is within guidelines. It's too early for a Masconomet budget.
5. Karen mentioned that the Town did not receive a state land grant to help fund the acquisition of Donibristle Farm. Liaisons should continue to go through the budgets and any departments that have requests over guidelines should set up a time to come meet with the Finance Committee. Lou Ross will keep track of who is coming in and when.

**IV. FinCom Model Status** Karen mentioned that Mike will implement the

submitted budgets into the model with the goal to have an updated version for the next meeting in two weeks. Karen also noted that free cash has been certified at \$2,280,274 as compared to an assumption of \$1.6M in version 1.2, due to higher than expected Motor Vehicle Excise Tax and collections of prior year tax bills. Lou will stay in touch with David Bond on Snow & Ice spending.

**V. Preparation for Joint Meeting with BOS 1/24/18: Public Forum on Budget**

Karen discussed the public forum meeting. The meeting will give citizens the opportunity to understand the budget process and hear about facts and challenges in Town finances, as well as ask questions. Steve Whelan, Town Moderator, will moderate the meeting. He noted that if citizens have questions beforehand, they could forward them to his email (moderator@topsfield-ma.gov) prior to the meeting. There will also be notecards and pencils for questions at the meeting.

**VI. Correspondence:** Karen noted an email request for the police contract impact that was also sent to the Selectmen and Town Administrator, who are better positioned to answer this question. She also noted an email regarding the FinCom authorizing the elementary schools to increase spending by 3% due to an enrollment increase of 8 students; this 3% was a guideline not an authorization, and took into consideration many factors besides enrollment, as discussed at the 11/20 FinCom meeting. A third email questioned whether a subcommittee met with the Fire Chief; answered above as Eric Menzer was the only FinCom member at the meeting.

**VII. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting**

None

**VIII. Upcoming Meeting Schedule:** The next four meetings of the Committee will be held on January 22nd, January 29th, February 5th, and February 12<sup>th</sup>, respectively, at 7:00 PM in the Proctor School Teacher's Lounge.

**IX. Adjourn:** A motion was made by Dana Warren to adjourn at 7:31 PM, seconded by Che Elwell and voted in favor 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Davis

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Attachments: none