



Topsfield Finance Committee
Minutes to the Meetings
Town Hall: COA Activities Room
(2nd Floor)
January 28, 2019

I. Call to Order: Chair Karen Dow called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM with Jon Guido, Mike Hartmann, Lou Ross(7:13PM), Eric Menzer, and Dana Warren present. Che Elwell was not present. Also present: Catherine Gabriel, Town Accountant; Glenn Clohecy, Building Inspector; Barbara Michalowski, Town Treasurer; Toulia Guarino, Town Assessor; and Jen Collins-Brown, Fire Chief. Members of the public present: David Larson, Libby Wilson, Jeanine Cunniff and one other. Karen Dow announced at 7:02 PM that Jeanine Cunniff was going to make a video recording.

II. Minutes: Dana Warren made a motion to accept the minutes, as amended from January 14, 2019. Lou Ross seconded the motion, voted in favor 4-0-2. Mike Hartmann and Jon Guido abstained as they were not present for the meeting.

III. Department Budget Presentations, including:

- a. **Town Treasurer/Collector, Principal Assessor 7:00PM-** Mike Hartmann, liaison, introduced Barbara Michalowski, Town Treasurer, and Toulia Guarino, Town Assessor. Barbara passed out the debt service budget; she reported that the financial team has reviewed the town's options for going out to bond. The new bond amount will be known in March and once all projects are complete the exact amount needed will be borrowed in a final round, most likely in November.

Toulia mentioned that the increase of \$10,000 in the Assessors budget is due to the state recommending the cyclical reinspection program be an annual program to ensure that inspections are current. Currently, \$100,000 is requested every 3 years. This change would spread out the cost evenly.

- b. **Building Inspector 7:30PM-** Eric Menzer, liaison, introduced Glenn Clohecy, Building Inspector. Glenn reported that a new program has been implemented that allows contractors/residents to apply for building permits online. The increase in the budget of \$10,000 is to pay for a \$10 per permit fee charged by the software company, paid for by the applicant. This cost is expected to be

offset by an anticipated increase in general fund revenue, which is where all permit fees go. The anticipated revenue amount is based on \$10 per permit, with an estimate of 1,000 permits in a year. A short discussion followed on the topic of researching an increase to the permit fee, which would be determined and approved by the Board of Selectmen.

- c. Fire 8:00PM- Eric Menzer, liaison, introduced Jen Collins-Brown, Fire Department Chief. Chief Brown discussed the increases in the budget, focusing on the need for shift coverage. She proposes converting the budgeted amount for the existing \$50/night stipend to ensure call firefighter availability to wages to cover manning the station from 6 pm to midnight, 7 days a week. The Chief explained that more than half of the overnight calls are received during this time frame, and it is hard to find coverage, even with the stipend of \$50 that the department offers. She is requesting \$44,000 to add coverage from midnight to 6AM on Friday and Saturday night. This request would extend the coverage to 24 hours on Friday and Saturday.

IV. Liaison-led Updates and Discussions: Operating Budgets, Revenues, Other Expenditures: A brief discussion was held on some of the budgets, noting and discussing any deviations from guidelines.

1. Jon briefly gave an overview of the status of the elementary schools' budget. He said they are still early in the process. The administration has just presented the budget to the school committee, including costs for contractual agreements, 5-day kindergarten, and revamping how children are taught. The school committee will be having a working session on February 1st at 10AM, to prioritize and discuss the budget further.
2. Karen discussed a potential warrant article to be voted on in May. Lynne Bermudez, Selectwoman, has discussed the possibility of a future local-option meal tax. It could raise \$40,000-\$50,000 in revenue. The selectmen would place the article on the warrant, Town Meeting would vote, and if approved, the tax would have to go to the state for approval.
3. Dana briefly reported that Masco is requesting a rep from each town to discuss how capital needs of \$30-35 million can be funded. Dana will be discussing it further with Mark Lyons and John Spencer.
4. Lou reported that the Parks & Cemetery department has two requests. They are requesting an additional fulltime employee. They are also requesting \$5,000 for the Holiday Walk in December. This event has been privately funded in the past; however, it has been difficult to collect enough to cover the event.

V. FinCom Model Status: Mike presented model V1.7. All categories from the omnibus budget are included, except for schools and debt. Free cash has been certified and is now included. Insurance increases are included as well.

VI. Correspondence: None.

VII. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting: Karen asked that each of the members sign the 'Financial Policy Guideline' document that was approved 12/20/18. Each member present signed. This is to implement the policies that have been previously discussed and voted on.

VIII. Upcoming Meeting Schedule: The next meetings of the Committee will occur on February 4th, and February 11th at 7:00 PM in the Town Hall Council on Aging Activities room.

X. Adjourn: A motion was made by Dana Warren to adjourn at 8:46 PM, seconded by Lou Ross and voted in favor 6-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Davis

Attachments:

1. Agenda
2. Minutes of 1/14/19
3. Model V1.7
4. FY20 Debt Service Budget