

FINANCE COMMITTEE

MEETING, February 15, 2017

A scheduled meeting convened at 7:00 pm in Room 5.

Members of the committee in attendance: Mr. Creighton, Ms. Mellish, Mr. Oldeman, Ms. Thorne and Mr. Furlong. Mr. Croft, Ms. Kaneb, Mr. Susko and Mr. Evans were absent.

Board of Selectmen in attendance: Mr. Kehoe and Ms. Driscoll.

Town Administrator, Mr. Federspiel, Town Accountant, Ms. Mainville and Fire Chief Kramlinger were also in attendance.

Mr. Creighton presided.

Agenda items scheduled for discussion:

- Budget Discussion – Public Safety
- Continued Budget Review
- Continued School Budget Review
- Other business that comes before the Committee
- Approval of Minutes

Mr. Furlong moved the Finance Committee meeting to order.

Mr. Creighton asked for a Public Safety update. Mr. Kehoe informed the Committee that he, Ms. Driscoll, Mr. Federspiel, Chief Conley and Chief Kramlinger had a meeting and facility tour at Essex County Regional Emergency Communication Center (RECC) with the Director and the Essex County Sheriff. Mr. Kehoe stated the facility is impressive and the group had an informative meeting. Mr. Federspiel indicated it was unlikely a move to the RECC could be proposed prior to Town Meeting, however, the option should be thoroughly reviewed following April's Town Meeting.

Strengths to support move to RECC:

- The team was assured current dispatchers will likely be offered positions at the RECC and will receive 180 hours of training and close supervision at the facility.
- Technology is state-of-the-art.
- Current per capita fee of \$16.26 will result in a significant savings for the Town.
- Initial contract is for 5 years.
- 92% of State 911 cell phone calls go through the RECC and dispatchers stay on line until helped is dispatched.
- Town will hold positions on the Governing Board of the RECC, with Town Administrator, Town Accountant, Fire Chief and Police Chief participating.

Considerations prior to proposing move:

- Dark Police Station following close of business. Resolve how to best manage walk-ins and crisis situations.
- The decision to move to a regional facility will result in the permanent loss of the Town's PSAP license.
- Community will experience a significant cultural shift.
- RECC's resolution of the Beverly's legal dispute.

Next Steps:

- Meet with Towns currently in the RECC for up-to-date recommendations.
- Fully develop projections of the financial costs of moving to the RECC with a 5-year contract.
- Develop plan to cover dark police station including all related costs.
- Hold public forums.

The consensus of the Committee; the move should be fully studied prior to presenting to the Town. Both Ms. Thorne and Ms. Mellish have been actively working on regional dispatch for close to 10-years and understand there are strong opinions in the community for keeping dispatch in Town. Communication and information will be an essential part of a successful move if this is the final recommendation of the BOS and Finance Committee.

Continued Budget Review:

Emergency Management \$10,500: Mr. Furlong moved to approve the budget, Ms. Thorne seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Harbormaster \$114,215: Ms. Thorne moved to approve the budget, Ms. Mellish seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Building Department: \$79,363: Ms. Thorne moved to approve the budget, Mr. Oldeman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

DPW, Sanitation \$559,5500: Mr. Creighton moved to approve the budget, Ms. Thorne seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Historic Commission \$4,979: Ms. Thorne moved to approve the budget, Mr. Oldeman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Conservation Commission \$67,153: Mr. Creighton moved to approve the budget, Ms. Mellish seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Board of Health \$117,505: Mr. Creighton moved to approve the budget, Ms. Thorne seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Veterans Services \$15,000: Mr. Furlong moved to approve the budget, Ms. Thorne seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Council on Aging \$165,970: Ms. Thorne moved to approve the budget, Ms. Mellish seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Library \$465,764: Mr. Furlong moved to approve the budget, Ms. Thorne seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. (Budget includes Sunday hours.)

Non-Appropriated Expenses: \$498,326: Ms. Mellish moved to approve the budget, Mr. Furlong seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Continued School Budget Review:

Mr. Creighton stated the vote on the School Budget will be held when additional Finance Committee members are present.

School Budget is currently \$24,466,844 with MBTS share at \$13,813,861 = 3.71% increase.

Mr. Furlong expressed concern that representatives of MERSD do not see the Finance Committee as a partner in the budget process. He had hoped that the relationship with the representatives would be more constructive and was disappointed with the meeting the Committee had with MERSD representatives. Mr. Creighton stated he attends the School Committee Open Meetings and fully participates by asking pointed questions in those meetings.

Mr. Kehoe stated, the relationship with MERSD representatives has historically been challenging in part because the school representatives report to the elected School Committee not the Town. Additionally, the current School Committee Chairman prefers to hold all meetings on the School Budget with joint Town Committees.

There will be a meeting in May with MERSD and Town Committees. This meeting outside of the budget process, according to Mr. Creighton, will help to frame long term thinking and inform Committee members of ongoing school needs and school representatives of the on-going budget challenges faced by the community. Hopefully, resulting in more open communication around future budget challenges; including funding the new school and annual operating budget increases which are problematic.

Community Preservation Committee Recommendations:

Community Preservation funding from the Town CPA property tax surcharge has decreased from 3% to 1.5% and state funding is anticipated to decrease with the addition of large communities like Boston and Somerville who voted to participate in the Community Preservation Trust Fund.

Ms. Thorne introduced the recommended projects for CPC funding. The most significant project proposed is the Tuck's Point Chowder House renovation which is budgeted at \$300K.

Ms. Mellish requested a summary report of CPC funding in the primary areas of Open Spaces, Recreation, Historic Preservation and Community Housing.

Mr. Creighton asked if there had been requests for funding which are not recommended by CPC. Ms. Thorne indicated there was a request from the Downtown Improvement Committee for funding and the cost of the project was high and related to lighting in the downtown area which is not recommended for funding now.

Discussion moved to Affordable Housing Trust; CPC has recommended transferring approved funds from FY 17 to the Trust. Mr. Creighton asked if the Trustees had developed a plan which was recommended by the Finance Committee in 2016. Ms. Mellish stated the Trust has developed a Mission Statement, defined goals, identified types of projects and had site visits to potential building sites. Additionally, the Trustees have met with Habitat for Humanity and Harborlight Community Partners and developed an understanding of the types of projects these organizations are likely to be interested in developing in MBTS.

Ms. Mellish indicated the most desirable property likely to become available in the community is the DPW site on Pleasant Street. Mr. Oldeman stated that the sale of the land would help to offset costs of the new DPW facility. Mr. Creighton mentioned land use is an essential part of the Master Plan and requires careful consideration.

Mr. Creighton stated the Committee would hold on the vote to approve CPC funding until next week.

Minutes for 12/12/16, 12/20/16 and 2/22 were approved. Mr. Oldeman moved to approve the minutes, Ms. Thorne seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Thorne moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.