

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting, December 8, 2003  
Caucus Room, Town Hall, Provincetown, MA 02657

The Finance Committee convened at 7:35 p. m., for a scheduled posted meeting. Prior to this meeting members of the Committee attended a Selectmen's Joint Meeting with the School Committee which commenced at 6:00 p.m.

Present for the Finance Committee were: Matthew Clark, Robert Vetrick, Ann Maguire, Gail Enos, Ginny Ross, Tom Thurston, Sue Buerkel, Mark Leach & Ruth Gilbert. Former Finance Committee member Bill Dougal and Director of Municipal Finance Bruce Miller were also in attendance.

Old Business: None

New Business:

New FinCom member Mark Leach was introduced to the Committee.

Chair Ruth Gilbert recapped a conversation she had with School Committee Chair Therese Nelson regarding the upcoming school budget and the Town Manager's desire to turn the School Annex building into affordable housing units.

Ann Maguire questioned why the selectmen start with a 2.5% increase in property tax each year when reviewing the budgets. She also stated she felt there was a conflict of interest regarding the Town Manager and any dealings he has with affordable housing issues, since his wife serves on the Affordable Housing Task Force.

Ann Maguire made a motion to request that all materials from each department be presented to the FinCom at least four days prior to any scheduled hearing on their budget, and that a summary or recap sheet be attached to those materials. Matthew Clark seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

There was further general discussion about school operations, special needs costs, school choice, and other budget issues, which continued for approximately 45 minutes. FinCom agreed to compile a list of questions for the School Committee, for reply at a future meeting.

Matthew Clark expressed concern over the adversarial tone of the joint meeting of the School Board and Board of Selectmen and suggested that FinCom should play a role in facilitating a constructive, fact-based debate that could yield both consensus on ways to address our short-term budget pressures and a shared long-term strategic vision for the schools."

Tom Thurston stated that School Committee members are probably by nature concerned, in the main, with education quality, and secondarily with its cost. They join the Committee because of their interest in providing a solid education for the Town's young people.

Bill Dougal and others suggested that a subcommittee or task force approach would be most effective in

achieving a resolution acceptable to all. This group could comprise two members designated by each of the Board of Selectmen, School Board, and Finance Committee and would also include the Director of Municipal Finance. It would be charged to develop and to defend consensus recommendations within sixty days.

Gail Enos made a motion to form this seven-member working group to develop—within sixty days—consensus recommendations for revenue enhancement and cost containment in the schools. Ann Maguire seconded, the vote was unanimous.

Bruce Miller suggested that FinCom ask for copies of the Schedule 19 from DOE. Bruce will get copies for the Board.

The Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m. Minutes developed from notes provided by Ruth Gilbert and Matthew Clark.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Thurston  
FinCom Secretary