

FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES
DECEMBER 2, 2003 PROVINCETOWN, MA. 02667

PRESENT: Sue Buerkel (Chair), Matthew Clark, Gail Enos, Ruth Gilbert, Ann Maguire, Tom Thurston, Robert Vetrick

Meeting was called to order at 4:06 p.m.

EXCUSED ABSENCES: Mark Leech, Ginny Ross

RESIGNATION: Ms. Buerkel announced the resignation of Jennifer Bedard due to time constraints of work commute.

ALSO PRESENT: Keith Bergman, Bruce Miller, Betty Steele-Jeffers

REVIEW OF MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING:

Minutes of May, 2003 meeting were not available. Will be reviewed at next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Mass Municipal Association Convention: The MMA Annual Convention is in Boston on January 17 & 18, 2004. There is \$1000 in Finance Committee budget for convention attendance. There is more info about the convention online. Registration deadline is December 19. Anyone interested in going can notify Ms. Buerkel to get reimbursement.

Budget Time Frame: The Finance Committee budget will be level funded this year and Ms. Buerkel has shifted some funds in order to comply. Budget consists of money for convention attendance, printing of the Finance Committee Report, on-call secretary, dues and membership fees and reserve fund.

School Budget: Mr. Bergman presented issues.

1. He has recommended discussion between the Board of Selectmen and School Committee re: budget with focus on why school budget should have any increase if enrollment is down. Enrollment in the schools has dropped 11%. The gap between actual spending and what is required to be spent by state is increasing. To meet Board of Selectmen's goal of 2 1/2% increase, \$230,000 would have to be cut. Budget needs to be level funded just as municipal departments are doing. Provincetown pays most per child of any town on Cape: in 2002, \$15,000/child compared to state average of \$8500.
2. Question re: use of school facilities. What is best use of high school annex? Could Superintendent's office be moved to one of the schools? Town is several years away from receiving school reimbursement.
3. Superintendent and School Committee Chair are requesting \$500,000 to complete school renovations. Would require a Town Meeting vote. Ms. Gilbert suggested that the Finance Committee tour the school buildings during the school day to gain a better understanding of use.

MOTION by Ms. Maguire to formally ask the School Department for permission for the Finance Committee to tour all school buildings during the school day. Seconded by Ms. Gilbert. Vote passed unanimously, 7-0-0. Request faxed to School Department by Doug Johnstone during meeting.

REORGANIZATION:

Ms. Buerkel announced her resignation as Chair due to family responsibilities.

Committee members thanked her for her guidance as Chair.

Three positions need to be filled: Chair, Vice-Chair (open since Rick Holland ended his term), Secretary (previously Jennifer Bedard).

Ms. Buerkel stated that the responsibilities of the Secretary are minimal thanks to the assistance of Mr. Johnstone and because there is now a Recording Secretary.

The possibility of Co-Chairs was discussed and problems noted. Most active time commitment for officers is mid-January through Town Meeting. It was agreed that the Chair would take office for one year and that the Chair and Vice-Chair would maintain close communication and at least one would be available to chair each meeting.

MOTION by Mr. Vetrick to nominate Ms. Gilbert as Chair. Seconded by Ms. Maguire. Vote passed unanimously 6-0-0.

MOTION by Mr. Clark to nominate Ms. Buerkel as Vice-Chair. Seconded by Mr. Vetrick. Vote passed unanimously 6-0-0.

MOTION by Ms. Maguire to nominate Mr. Thurston as Secretary. Seconded by Mr. Vetrick. Vote passed unanimously 6-0-0.

Mr. Vetrick raised issue of best time for meeting. It was agreed that Mondays work best. He suggested meeting more frequently with meetings on specific topics. Topics suggested by Mr. Bergman included the School, the Manor, the Library and the Fiscal Policy Plan.

Mr. Vetrick asked if the Committee reviews the Pier. It does not.

Ms. Maguire asked if the town will get tobacco funds from the state. It will for the Manor.

NEXT MEETING: MONDAY, DECEMBER 8 at 7:00 p.m. in the Caucus Room.

Members will attend the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 6:00 p.m. for School discussion.

Mr. Miller handed out information re: budget brainstorming session.

MOTION by Ms. Gilbert to adjourn meeting. Seconded by Mr. Clark. Vote passed unanimously 7-0-0.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Chris Hottle / On-Call Secretary

Finance committee sat in on 6:00pm selectmen's joint meeting with school committee.
Finance Committee reconvened at 7:35 in Caucus room for a scheduled posted meeting.

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

Old Business: none

New Business:

New Fincom member Mark Leach was introduced to the board.

R. Gilbert recapped conversation she had with School Committee Chair: Therese Nelson regarding the upcoming school budget and discussion about the town Manager's desire to turn the annex building into affordable housing units.

A. Maguire questioned why the selectmen start with a 2.5% increase in property tax every year when reviewing the budgets. She also stated that she felt the TM had a conflict in dealing with affordable housing issues since his wife serves on the affordable housing task force.

A. Maguire made a motion to request that all materials from departments be presented to the FinCom at least 4 days before any scheduled hearing on their budget, and that a summary or recap sheet be attached to those materials. M. Clark seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Further general discussion about school operations, special needs costs, school choice and other budget issues continued for approx. 45 minutes. Fin com agreed to compile a list of questions for school committee to be answered at a future meeting.

M. Clark spoke about short term vs long term issues with the school committee and proposed that we focus on short term goals in a spirit of cooperation with the school board.

T. Thurston stated that most school committee members are only concerned with the quality of education and not about the cost of that education.

B. Dougal and others suggested that a 60 day working group should be formed with 2 members from Fincom, 2 from Board of Selectmen, 2 from school committee, & Director of Finance in an effort to work with the school committee in getting some realistic figures from them and to get answers to questions that the Fin com wants to ask. Fin com felt that a smaller group would be more successful than what we witnessed at this meeting.

G. Enos made motion to form this 60 day working group to discuss revenue enhancement and cost containment A. Maguire seconded, vote was unanimous.

B. Miller suggested that Fincom ask for copies of the Schedule 19 from DOE. He will get copies for the board.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.