

Town of Ashby, Massachusetts

**Finance Committee Meeting**

**March 13, 2012**

Present: Chris Haynes (chair), Joe Armstrong-Champ (secretary), Kathy Panagiotes, John Margosiak, Kevin Stetson, Sue Carron.

Guests:

Lillian Whitney

Started: 7:40pm

Old Business:

Lease for Ashby Elementary School. FinCom members question why lease is for 10 years instead of 20 years. This is regard to a comment by Dr. Marshall (?) at the special town meeting re: voting on the renovations/cost for the school. Heard by those FinCom members present at that meeting we would have the school for 20 years.

The minutes from February 7 and February 28 were approved.

New Business:

This was a discussion of strategy the FinCom should take with regards to the Fiscal Year 2013 budget.

Action List:

- How did Doug arrive at the budget numbers? We would like to see some documentation on this, including a list of Department Head needs and any discussions about the budget.
- We would like to be notified via email when discussions regarding the budget have been had.
- At times it is unclear which version of the spread sheets are the most recent. We would like to see them versioned and/or dated.
- The FinCom would like to be included in union contract negotiations, if possible.
- FinCom wants more information about why the IT budget increased so much (\$17,500).
- FinCom would like more information about the Senior Work-Off, since it is possible that there will be more people who can't afford the potential upcoming tax increases.

It was decided that non union salaries should be increase by 1 – 1.5%.

A discussion on wage disparity between Ashby employees and other town employees took place. We felt that without more information, we can't address this. The following motion was passed: "Wage disparity correction can only be addressed after a formal

salary study takes place. The study needs to be consistent to towns of similar size and work hours”

It was decided that \$65,000 - \$68,000 of the 2.5% increase should be spent towards the school budget. This is about 55% of the increase and is consistent with the total amount of the budget spent for the schools. The rest would need to be voted on by an override.

John suggested putting the Health Benefits increase of 12% to the voters to vote just like the school budget. In other words, fund 2.5% and let the people vote for the remaining 9.5%.

There is uncertainty as to how the available free cash will be spent. The following motion was passed: “The FinCom would like to see a free cash spending plan with details generated by Doug.”

The Articles from the Special Town Meeting and Annual Town Meeting Warrants were reviewed. Most were simply reviewed. The following were discussed in more details:

- Article 1 dealing with the purchase of an emergency generator for the Town Hall and Police Station: FinCom would like to see the project plan for the Generator warrant item i.e., costs, equipment type, school/ police station/town hall hook up costs (electrical box, switches, maintenance plan and cost). This is necessary in order to plan for the true cost of this project prior to approving.
- Article 2 dealing with the electronic sign for use during emergencies: This was generally thought to be an unnecessary expenditure at this point. A further point was brought up by John who said that all new requests should have a plan for use, who can use it and how it is to be used.

Next regular meeting is March 27 at 7:30pm.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:38 pm

Chairman’s note: all references to finances are estimates and are likely to change.