

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

January 27, 2016

Page 1 of 6

**Meeting Date:** January 27, 2016

**Called to Order:** 5:00 PM

**Location:** 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA

**Finance Committee Members Present:** John Hanold, Michael Naughton, Fred Bowman, and Patricia Pruitt. Chris Menegoni and Greg Garrison were absent.

**Selectmen Present:** Chris Boutwell (arrived at 6:10 PM), Michael Nelson and Rich Kuklewicz.

**Others Present:** Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen, IT Administrator Laura Arruda, Director of Health Gina McNeely, Town Planner and Conservation Agent Walter Ramsey, Director of Parks and Recreation Jon Dobosz, Peter Golrick and Jeanne Golrick

### **Minutes**

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 20, 2016.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

**Review Software Requests** with Director of Health and IT Administrator (Building Inspector was unable to attend)

### Board of Health

In the Board of Health narrative, Ms. McNeely said she could increase her department's efficiency and effectiveness by purchasing software called WinWam.

- This program is being used by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division of Community Sanitation, the City of Newton, the towns of Ashland, Hopkinton, and Medway to name a few.
- The software runs on a windows platform and allows the health inspector to enter all inspection findings into a handheld tablet. The software cites chapter and verse of the applicable state law; preventing citation errors and creating extremely uniform orders to correct and reports. Photos can be taken with the tablet and embedded in the forms.
- Employing this software would cut down the average food establishment inspection time by an hour to an hour and a half, depending on the size of the facility. This is because currently all citations are handwritten and code citations must be looked up and applied to the order to correct.
- The same software is capable of documenting housing inspections, swimming pool inspection, recreational camps for children other inspections.
- The cost to own the software and all the inspection forms and training and support is \$5,600. We would need to purchase two handheld tablets at a cost of under \$2,000.
- Ms. McNeely estimates that owning the WinWam system would increase their productivity by 25% or more. This would mean shorter wait times for inspections,

safer food facilities, better housing and great consistency in all reports which always helps with cases that go to court.

- Ms. McNeely put this request in without a strong expectation of having it approved.
- This software is specific to the Board of Health, and would be primarily used by the Health Inspector.
- The software is for food, pool, camps, and housing inspections. The BOH does about 200 food inspections per year.
- Ms. Arruda and Ms. McNeely will look into the following questions and get answers:
  - What are the specifics as to where the software and data will be stored? Backup data versus executable files?
  - Will the software and/or data need to be on the town server to ensure backups?
  - What does the annual maintenance fee include? Support, updates, new versions?
  - Do any other departments need the information that will be generated by the software, and how would that be transmitted?
  - Is there any difference in licensing fees depending on whether the software is loaded on individual tablets or the town file server?
  - Is this, or any similar software, on the state bid list?
- Mr. Hanold asked what they would do with all the time this would save. Ms. McNeely noted that it was expected that having the Health Inspector would free up a lot of her time, but in actuality there have been more complaints and other issues that have come up. Even so, one of the impacts of having the software would be the ability to keep current with required inspections.
- The general consensus is that, while this specific software seems good for the Board of Health, other options should be investigated in the hope that a single software program could be used for all types of inspections and shared among departments, especially the Board of Health, Building Inspector, and Assessors. Additionally research should be done to see how well different options work in other towns.
- Mr. Naughton asked if there was a way to document the time currently used for each process and the time that would truly be saved with the software.
- Ms. Golrick stated that the Board of Health is not a town department, but rather reports to the State Board of Health, and encouraged the Board of Health to get the software from the state rather than having taxpayers pay for it. Ms. McNeely replied:
  - The Board of Health is a town department under the oversight of the town's elected Board of Health.
  - No board of health answers to Boston, they are all autonomous.
  - The Board of Health upholds state laws as mandated by the State Board of Health.
- Mr. Golrick noted that the tablets will need to be replaced every few years as an ongoing expense.

**Minutes**

Selectmen Moved:

To approve the minutes of December 9, 2015. Need Michael and Rich -

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 1 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 6, 2016. Need Chris and Rich -

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 1 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 13, 2016. Need Chris and Michael -

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 1 Abstained

**Review Planning Requests -Mr. Ramsey discussed his various requests.**

1. Demolition of 38 Ave. A: This request is being withdrawn due to new interest in the site.
2. Demolition of Strathmore: Same questions as 38 Ave. A, including alternative scopes of effort considered.
  - a. This is a tough topic politically. Different people want to either demolish it or redevelop the properties. Meanwhile, ongoing maintenance costs are increasing.
  - b. Mr. Ramsey looked at four alternatives:
    - i. No action. The buildings would continue to deteriorate as the Town tries to find a developer. Finding a developer will likely be at whims of grant availability.
    - ii. Abate the entire complex. This would involve removing all asbestos and other hazardous material at a cost is \$702,000. Abatement has to be done prior to demolition, as it is much more expensive to do after demolition. This option does not provide a visible improvement, but may make the site more desirable to developers because they would have less work to do.
    - iii. Demolish the entire complex. The current rough estimate for this is around \$6 million. The Town would likely never recoup this cost. It would also be difficult to bring in any development, and the Town could end up with the County's most expensive park.
    - iv. The option being brought forward: culling out the worst of the buildings. This would remove 30-40% of the gross floor area. The Town is likely to recover their investment. This also reduces Town's liability. The remaining buildings would be mothballed until future development. This option was recommended in 2007. In exploring the question of which buildings to demolish, the general consensus on order of priorities is Building 5a, Building 6a, Building 8, the smokestack, and then Building 7 and/or Building 1.
  - c. After several years of showing the property, Mr. Ramsey has concluded that it's too big for any one project.

- d. The \$2 million amount for demolition of some of the buildings includes \$30,000 for an engineered plan for the demolition.
  - e. If the cost is too high, Mr. Ramsey requests that the Town consider appropriating \$30,000 to develop an engineered phased demolition plan to provide a shovel ready plan for a later town meeting.
    - After discussion, it was decided that Mr. Ramsey would review the \$30,000 estimate for the engineering study and adjust to include determining costs involved and what needs to be done to prevent further deterioration. The engineering study would include the costs for demolishing all buildings, and create a menu of costs.
    - Going forward, the plan will be to present two articles at the May 7, 2016 Annual Town Meeting. One will be for the engineering demolition study at a revised amount, and one will be for \$702,000 to abate all of the buildings. A third article for the cost of demolishing some of the buildings will be presented at the Annual Town Meeting in May of 2017.
3. Industrial Park Property-
- a. This is a property sold by the Town in 2013 with an option to repurchase.
  - b. The property was sold for \$132,000, with net proceeds to the Town of \$118,800.
  - c. The owner is in default of the restrictive covenants, and permits have expired.
  - d. MEDIC recommends this appropriation and action to repurchase property.
  - e. This parcel is of particular interest because it's the last large scale lot, and one of the best lots available in the county.
  - f. Mr. Hanold asked why the current owner shouldn't just sell it and leave the Town out of the situation. Mr. Ramsey said there's a definite benefit with the Town having control of the sites. Lots are sold by the Town at market rate while an owner could offer it at a higher cost, which makes it less attractive to buyers. Mr. Ramsey thinks it may also be illegal for the owner to sell it without meeting the terms of the covenants.
  - g. Ms. Golrick asked about following the trail of money, and why it isn't being used to buy back the property. Ms. Olsen thinks it's in general fund but will check to see if it went into Sale of Industrial Land. (Upon later research, Ms. Olsen determined that the net proceeds were, in fact, held in the Sale of Industrial Land account, and that there are sufficient funds available in that account for this purchase. It also transpired that this account should be more accurately called "Sale of Real Estate", and the funds can be used for any purpose for which the Town can borrow for 5 years.)
4. Planning & Construction of Public Works Facility:
- a. The planning process has begun with a \$15,000 appropriation for a design study.
  - b. Weston and Sampson is doing the feasibility study.
  - c. A cost estimate is expected prior to the Annual Town Meeting, likely in March or April.
  - d. The plan is to bring something forward for town meeting to vote on within a year.
  - e. The current placeholder for the cost is \$5 million.
  - f. A preliminary budget for the building project will be known in about 3 weeks.

5. The Planning intern:

- a. Mr. Ramsey is requesting \$4,000 to hire a graduate student intern for 10-15 hours per week for approximately 5 months, from September 2016 through January of 2017. The intern would be able to use the Planning Administrative Assistant's workstation in the afternoons when it is vacant.
- b. The intern would take over some of the general duties of the Planner, leaving more time for Mr. Ramsey to work on the multitude of special projects he has been assigned.
- c. Mr. Kuklewicz noted that when Mr. Abbondanzio left a list of projects by department, Mr. Ramsey had the lengthiest list by a large margin.
- d. The intern would be hired through a program at UMass, which sets the pay criteria, and contributes to the cost. This program is used throughout the county, and is the program used to hire Mr. Ramsey as an interim planner for Montague.
- e. Ms. Golrick is concerned that the planning position is spread too thin now, between the planning function and various committees and group assignments. She is concerned that the other commitments take time away from the planner doing the planning job. Mr. Naughton felt that the Finance Committee was being asked to manage the planner's workload, and noted that this was a question for the Selectmen.

**Review Parks and Recreation Budget Request**

- Mr. Hanold noted that the Parks and Recreation budget was revised last year to better reflect the expenditures of specific programs in the revolving fund and general expenses in the operating budget. One of the major changes was moving the pool expenses to the revolving fund where it would be reflected as part of the various program costs.
- Mr. Dobosz noted that the difficult time of year for the revolving fund is in February and March when they are in between programs.
- Mr. Hanold asked why the part-time wages in the operating budget were almost fully spent by December. The Part-Time wages are only for the Summer Playground program, which runs from the end of June through most of August, so that account is usually fully spent by the end of August. Any expenses in the Summer Playground program in late June are funded from the Revolving Fund.
- Mr. Dobosz works to make sure programs are self-supporting, although this is not always successful.
- Mr. Dobosz is working with the FCRHRA on a CDBG project to create a master plan for the two parks in Lake Pleasant.
- Mr. Naughton asked about the Facilities/Grounds Repair and Maintenance account, which shows a budget of \$3,500 and expenditures through December of \$6,500. Mr. Dobosz answered that this over-expenditure will be offset by a balance in the playground materials account. Mr. Dobosz was asked, if the Facilities/Grounds Repair and Maintenance account was already overspent by more than 3,000, would it make sense to request a higher amount for Fiscal Year 2017? Mr. Dobosz would like to wait another year to get a better sense of what's needed in each account.

- The Recreation Revolving Fund usually receives between \$65,000 and \$70,000 in program fees.
- Mr. Boutwell asked if anything was requested in the budget for maintenance of the Skate Park. Mr. Dobosz is hopeful that those maintenance needs will be minimal, especially for the first year, and noted that it won't need the same level of maintenance as other Parks facilities.

**Review Governor's Budget**

- Mr. Hanold's estimates show an increase of approximately \$60,000 in state aid in the Governor's budget, but little increase to Chapter 70 aid for the schools.

**Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements**

- Mr. Hanold asked Selectmen if any more action has been taken regarding the Lieutenant position. The Selectmen have endorsed the idea, and directed the Chief to proceed, and noted that Mr. Abbondanzio has input to share with the chief.
- Mr. Hanold asked where we stand on union negotiations. Nothing has happened. Mr. Hanold asked when it might occur. Mr. Nelson will follow up with counsel.
- Mr. Hanold noted that it would be much easier for the budget process if negotiations could be completed before the budget goes to town meeting.

**Next Meeting:**

- February 3<sup>rd</sup> – Police & Dispatch – Operating budget, other requests
- February 10<sup>th</sup> – DPW– Operating budget, other requests
- February 17<sup>th</sup> – WPCF– Operating budget, other requests
- February 24<sup>th</sup> – Capital Improvements

**Future Items:**

- Discuss how to handle process for the appropriation for WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund, use of revenues from solid waste process.
- Financial Policy regarding annual appropriations to Town General Stabilization Fund/OPEB Trust Fund
- Finalize revenue estimates

**Meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM**

**List of Documents and Exhibits:**

- Minutes of January 20<sup>th</sup>
- MMA notice regarding Governor's budget