

**Town of Great Barrington
FINANCE COMMITTEE
Meeting of Tuesday, April 16, 2019
MINUTES**

The meeting of the Great Barrington Finance Committee was called to order by Chair Blauvelt at 5:30 p.m.

In attendance: Finance Committee members Blauvelt, O'Dwyer, and Loubert were present. Members Curletti and Lee were absent.

Select Board members Abrahams and Bannon were present as well as Town Accountant/Financial Coordinator Susan Carmel.

Citizen David Magadini was present.

No members of the press were present.

No one was present to take the minutes. Therefore, Loubert recorded the meeting.

Two agenda items were addressed: the transfer from the Reserve Fund of \$25,000 for additional legal fees and \$10,000 for an additional salary expense for the Town Manager transition. Although the agenda noted \$20,000 and \$15,000 respectively, Carmel stated that the agenda numbers were estimates and, after further research, the new figures presented were more accurate.

A motion was made by O'Dwyer to transfer \$25,000 from the Reserve Fund for the purpose of additional legal fees. Loubert seconded. Discussion commenced. O'Dwyer referenced the FY19 budgeted amount for legal fees of \$55,000 what has thus far been expended. O'Dwyer requested more clarification on the amount expended as well as what needs to be expended. Carmel explained that some detail presented to the Finance Committee reflected the major legal cases handled by the town law firms (Valerio, Dominello & Hillman and KP Law) and not the general legal work the firms perform.

Loubert informed the meeting that she reviewed each individual statement submitted by each law firm and made available to the Finance Committee. She requested clarification as to the duties and responsibilities of the two law firms. It was pointed out by Bannon that VDH handles labor law issues while KP Law handles municipal/administrative law issues for the town. Bannon pointed out that simple labor issues are sometimes referred to KP Law, but if the matter is more in-depth, it is referred to VDH.

Loubert stated that she found the invoices acceptable and supported the transfer request of \$25,000.

O'Dwyer found the request reasonable as well. She felt that increased legal fees should have been anticipated when the Roger Road purchase failed at the 2018 Special Town Meeting which makes up a considerable amount of this request. O'Dwyer asked, for FY20, did we anticipate any increased legal fees? The response was no and that the legal fees line was level-funded at \$55,000. Bannon stated that projections are "optimistic" with regard to the legal fees required for FY20.

There was no further discussion and Chair Blauvelt called the vote. The vote was unanimous to approve the \$25,000 transfer for legal fees.

Addressing the second item on the agenda of the transfer request of \$10,000 for the Town Manager transition. Blauvelt asked if this was in anticipation of the incoming town manager working with the outgoing town manager.

Bannon said it is anticipated that the incoming town manager will start before July 1. The transition period is still not established.

Loubert made the motion to approve the transfer request of \$10,000 for the Town Manager transition. O'Dwyer seconded the motion. Discussion commenced.

O'Dwyer confirmed that the request would be coming out of the Reserve Fund and what was available. It was confirmed that \$70,000 remains in the Reserve Fund prior to today's transfer requests. Carmel pointed out that from the original \$100,000 reserve fund line, funds were transferred for the consultant in the Town Manager search as well as work required with regard to the town server. The server work, per Carmel, would commence within the next month and the cost is coming in lower than the transfer amount requested.

Loubert asked if the \$10,000 request was calculated based off the salary for the position. Bannon stated yes. The \$10,000 represents salary only; no benefits are tied to this request. Loubert asked when the new town manager would begin. It was stated by Bannon that this is still under negotiation but hopefully, prior to July 1. There may be 30 days "overlap" between the incoming and outgoing town manager.

Blauvelt asked about two positions that are currently vacant and if unused salary from those positions could be used for the \$10,000 request. Carmel stated that that cannot be done until the end of the fiscal year at which time this can be done between departments; said transfers requiring approval by both the Select Board and Finance Committee.

Carmel reminded the committee that any unused funds are turned back to free cash at the end of the fiscal year.

There were no further questions and Blauvelt called the vote. It was voted unanimously to approve the transfer request of \$10,000 for the Town Manager transition.

Citizen Speak: Mr. David Magadini made the suggestion that the Finance Committee meetings be televised. Select Board member Abrahams offered to check with CTSBTv on the feasibility

and cost to do so. Abrahams also mentioned that the same question came up with regard to taping Planning Board meetings, so he will look into it.

Mr. Magadini also stated that he heard that the Town Clerk is limited to two town meetings per year. He did not feel this was in the best interest of the people of the town. He feels that citizens should have the right to call a town meeting whenever it is felt it is necessary. This should be included in town funding. He also asked what the town contributes to the BRTA (public transportation). Carmel pointed out that every municipality is assessed an amount as their contribution to the public transportation. Great Barrington's amount this year is approximately \$5,000.

Mr. Magadini was thanked by the committee for his comments.

Loubert brought forward future agenda items for consideration. She requested a discussion on how, when, and what information the Finance Committee wishes to receive; perhaps develop a similar information packet procedure such as that of the Select Board. This would help in the Finance Committee being a more effective committee. Secondly, with transfer requests, having proper documentation to support those requests. Third, hold a discussion on welcoming and mentoring new members to the committee. Bannon pointed out that the mentor process is used by the BHRSD School Committee and Select Board; mentoring for a year or so. Finally, the correspondence received by Finance Committee members from a citizen.

Loubert asked when we would meet in May so that the full committee could hold a discussion. Blauvelt pointed out that we would not meet again until after the election.

O'Dwyer said an on boarding procedure is a good idea not only for this committee but all committees and boards. Maybe an orientation to town government. Carmel pointed out that the state offers some training. However, Loubert pointed out that this on boarding would be at the local level, welcoming new members and discussing the simple things such as where to go to get mail.

Then next meeting of the Finance Committee is anticipated to be on May 21, 2019.

Blauvelt stated he wanted to discuss at the next meeting Tyler Technologies Citizen Transparency program which he used in the past and found most helpful. It is no longer in use by the Committee, and Blauvelt would like to reinstate it.

Bannon said it would be a good idea maybe in June or July to let Carmel and incoming town manager Pruhenski know what will be discussed so they could prepare.

With no other business to be addressed, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 5:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michelle Loubert", written over a horizontal line.

Michelle Loubert, Finance Committee Member

Approved: May 21, 2019 meeting of the Finance Committee