

Town of Great Barrington
Mason Library – Community Room
Great Barrington, MA 01230

Finance Committee Meeting

10/16/18
5:30 pm

Present: Janet Lee (chairing), Michelle Loubert, and Anne O'Dwyer. Also in attendance in audience were Town Accountant, Susan Carmel, Selectboard Member Ed Abrahams, and Sean VanDeusen, Dir of Public Works. Town Manager, Jennifer Tabakin was not available to attend.

Called to order at 5:30 PM

Approve minutes of 09/25/18

Voted to approve. All approved.

Opening comment: Michelle Loubert commented that the Selectboard packet info provided last night was excellent and she would like to see the Finance Committee follow such practices

Reserve fund transfers.

\$15,000 for Consultant Firm for Town Manager Search. Michelle Loubert pointed out that the presentation of the consulting firm was very good, and the meeting was run very well. Noticed that cost was \$12,000 + \$3,000 other expenses. Previous town manager search cost more than current proposal, so general consensus of the Selectboard is that this is a good investment. Discussion of the expense of consultant ensued. Janet Lee and Anne O'Dwyer both asked if it would it make sense to do a search ourselves. Michelle Loubert pointed out that the objectivity and transparency of a search is important. Also, she recognizes that the search committee is comprised of lay people. The Selectboard will appoint the search committee, and not clear if any Selectboard members will be on the committee. Also, the consulting firm has presented a timeline.

Michelle Loubert made a motion to approve the transfer; Anne O'Dwyer seconded, and all voted in favor.

\$15,000 to Replace AC in Town Hall server room. – Gilmore was the only co. that bid (most are too busy): for \$11,000. Sean's request includes a contingency amount – up to \$15,000. Will need to order the AC unit, and will take 2 months to arrive. Michelle expressed appreciation for the information that Sean provided in the bid. Also, having difficulty to get people even to come to do jobs. Motion made to transfer \$15,000 from reserve fund to pay for the cost of the AC repair. Michelle Loubert noted it would be helpful to show in agendas what the request amount is – so that taxpayers know what the amount that is going to cost.

Anne O'Dwyer made a motion to approve the transfer; Michelle Loubert seconded, and all voted in favor.

Susan Carmel has made a new transfer authorization form. All were very pleased

Update from Town Accountant

Susan Carmel reported that tax bills have been sent out.

Janet Lee asked about staffing. Susan Carmel observed that there may be a couple openings in the police department.

Fire Department Study Presentation. Michelle Loubert expressed concern that she had heard that it will be presented on 10/23, but does not see it on the Selectboard Special Meeting agenda for 10/23.

Conflict of Interest, OML, and Ethics training

Janet Lee reminded the committee members that completion of the online Conflict of Interest and other trainings is due December 1, 2018.

Committee Updates

Next Steps – met on October 2, 2018. Still deciding to go with MSBA or not, renovation or not. Will draw on expertise of committee for meetings, and the official start of public meetings will begin on October 30, 2018. Excellent presentations at BHRSD committee, but there are some things Michelle Loubert will want to bring to the Finance Committee.

Janet Lee asked about attending BHRSD finance committee meetings, if it would be acceptable (her husband is employed by the BHRSD). Michelle pointed out that the FC person in attendance is not there on the committee, but it is an open meeting, and any of us can be there as an observer (as a citizen and as a member of the FC). PTA is no longer fundraising for field trips; also there are concerns re: substitute teachers. So, any member of the GB FC can attend an open meeting. Anne O'Dwyer suggested at the GB Finance Committee should consider following the schedule of the BHRSD Finance Committee: getting reports from departments before budget requests, not after budget requests.

Next meeting of the BHRSD FC is two Thursdays from tonight (10/25).

Michelle Loubert again complimented the Selectboard and Town Manager Jennifer Tabakin's work at the Selectboard meeting last night.

For next meeting: Emailing threads can get overwhelming and confusing. Also, should ask Jennifer Tabakin if we (Finance Committee) can hear from some larger departments (those that get more funds) to come in front of us sooner during budget season, rather than after the budget is proposed.

The Housatonic Water Company. Selectboard discussed this in great detail – Michelle Loubert was in attendance and updated the FC members on the meeting.

Adjourned at 6:30

Next meeting on Tuesday November 20th at 5:30

Respectfully submitted,

Anne O'Dwyer

Minutes Approved: FC Meeting Nov 27, 2018

