

MINUTES

**Joint Budget Meeting, Selectboard and Finance Committee
Town Hall, 334 Main Street Great Barrington MA 01230
Tuesday February 6, 2018 at 6:00pm**

PRESENT

SELECTBOARD

Sean Stanton
Steve Bannon
Dan Bailly
Ed Abrahams
Bill Cooke

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Walter Atwood
Eugene Curletti
Janet Lee
Ann O'Dwyer

I. Call to Order

Chair, Sean Stanton called the meeting to order at 6:00PM. Chair, Will Curletti called the meeting to order at 6:00PM

II. FY19 Budget Overview

Jennifer Tabakin briefly listed the changes of the budget presentation in this meeting from the previous January 29th FY19 Budget meeting. Ms. Tabakin changed the consultant line in the Town Manager's budget from \$9,000.00 to \$10,000.00, the Town Clerk's budget line was amended to correctly reflect what Ms. Ryan requested for the upcoming elections, and the Council on Aging budget was changed to include \$45,000 for SBETC.

a. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

i. Departments

1. Town Accountant

Jennifer Tabakin said it was recommended that the Town switch audit firms and money was placed in the Accountant's budget for that contract to go out to bid. Jennifer Tabakin said it is cost effective to hire a part time person for about once a week to enter in accountant data into the Munis system. Dan Bailly asked if it would be more cost effective to appoint a senior part of the Senior Work off program or an intern to do this data entry. Ms. Tabakin said that this is position would require certain skills and she is open to finding a qualified senior but this will be a long term position and an intern would not be ideal. Sean Stanton asked the Town Manager to change the title of this position to clerical from consultant.

MOTION: Walter Atwood moved to change the Town Accountant budget line from Consultant to Clerical. **SECOND:** Janet Lee **VOTE: 4-0**

MOTION: Steve Bannon motioned to change the Accountant budget line from Consultant to Clerical. **SECOND:** Dan Bailly **VOTE: 5-0**

2. Technology

Jennifer Tabakin said this section of the budget includes three categories; funds for computers, funds for the IT consultant- John Shannon, and funds for the Servers and Software. Jennifer Tabakin said Munis needs to be upgraded but we cannot do this until we have upgraded our Server. Ms. Tabakin said she is inquiring about estimates from Munis to put the software onto a cloud based Server and cost comparing between the different kinds of Servers. Steve Bannon asked to change the line that John Shannon is paid from to become a separate Consultant line. Jennifer Tabakin said there is an internal "Technology Team" with staff from different departments who have prior tech experience. This task force is working towards the best scenario for a new town server.

3. Planning Department

Chris Rembold, Town Planner. Mr. Rembold said there is an anticipated increase of \$2,000.00 for the BRPC Brownfields program. BRPC provides grant assistance to locations around the county in need of remediation and Great Barrington in particular has benefited greatly. Great Barrington locations like Saint James Church, Rising Mills, Powerhouse Square, and the New England Log Home Sites have received funding from this program.

ii. Boards and Committees

1. Finance Committee

2. Conservation Commission

This budget includes office supplies, funds for a board secretary, and the salary for a Conservation Agent.

3. Historic District Commission

YTD the Historic District Commission has spent \$1,500 in FY18. Jennifer Tabakin suggested that they consider spending what they have in their FY18 budget before allocating more for FY19.

4. Various Boards/Commissions

The Ag Commission used their funds to hire the Conway School to develop a pollinator friendly planting plan for some public spaces in Great Barrington.

5. Board of Appeals

Clerical line is reduced for FY19, this does not alter any salary it just reduces the allotment for FY19 to be more in line with the actuals.

b. PUBLIC SAFETY

i. Fire

Chief Burger, Fire Department. The Fire Department responds to structure fires, carbon monoxide calls, haz-mat and oil spills, lost hiker calls, emergency response calls, and also requires volunteers to commit to regular trainings in order to better serve the community. The FD does public outreach at local events to gain interest in volunteer firefighting and they teach classes at the High School on safe driving practices in regards to the dangers of distracted or drunk driving. In the past year the Great Barrington Fire Department had three volunteer firefighters graduate from the Fire Academy. Chief Burger said the number challenge to his department is staffing. The Fire Department currently has 24 active firefighters. Chief Burger said the average response time for a structure fire is in between 10-15min and the recommended response time for a community of our size should be to have ten volunteers on the scene within ten minutes. Chief Burger said his recommendation is to have four full time paid firefighters, staffed for 24/7. Chief Burger said the Fire Department is conducting an independent study to show the type of staffing the Great Barrington Fire Department needs to adequately respond to all the different types of calls. Chief Burger said a big goal is to decrease the burn out rate of the volunteers and hiring full time staff would reduce the responsibility on the volunteers. Jennifer Tabakin recommended that the Fire Department hire two full time employees in July and then wait for the results of the staffing study to hire the remaining two employees. Sean Stanton asked if the full time employees are paid \$50,000 a year. Chief Burger said he has budgeted \$50,000 per year plus insurance for three full time employees. Steve Bannon asked Chief Burger if he thinks they will need more than just two-three full time staff at the Fire Department. Chief Burger said that he does think the department will need more staff eventually but the revenue generated from increased inspection fees will offset the costs for additional staff. Chief Burger said during the day the department would have three employees on, the chief and two others. Dan Bailly said that he cannot approve a permanent 10cent increase on the tax rate at this point. Mr. Bailly said that he appreciates all that the Fire Department does but this is a hard budgeting year and the school's proposed budget is likely to come in high. Sean Stanton asked if the extensive training requirements could be linked to lack of volunteer commitment. Chief Burger said that it is not a strict requirement that each volunteer show up for trainings every single week. The way they structure the training requirements is based on proficiency, some volunteers need more training in certain areas than others. Ann O'Dwyer said making a decision now seems to be premature if we are still waiting for a recommendation from a study. Jennifer Tabakin said the study contract is going out for bid soon, once it is awarded it should be completed 6-8weeks after we receive the proposals. Chief Burger anticipates the report to be completed by July, 2018. Steve Bannon asked if Chief Burger anticipates the three full time firefighters to be picked

from existing volunteers. Chief Burger said he does want to pick volunteers to be hired full time because they have already put in training and the dedication.

ii. Police

The union negotiations salary increases are reflected in the FY19 Police budget. Cara Becker, Police Department Administrative Assistant. Ms. Becker said the Police Department is diligently trying to find creative ways to offset the budget for FY19. Ms. Becker said she has found several grants she intends to receive funding from.

iii. Emergency Management

iv. Weights & Measures

v. Animal Control

c. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Sean Van Deusen, Department of Public Works Superintendent. Mr. Van Deusen described the repair and maintenance projects for the upcoming year. The hazard tree removal budget line is increased for FY19 to reflect what was expended in FY18.

III. Citizen Speak Time

Andy Moro, Housatonic. Mr. Moro said he has a problem with the ambulance squad, he said the responsibility will fall onto the volunteer firefighters. Mr. Moro said that that the volunteers will stay home if they know there are full time fire fighters on duty.

IV. Adjournment

On a motion made by Steve Bannon, seconded by Dan Bailly, with a unanimous vote the meeting adjourned at 8:30PM.

Respectfully Submitted



Rebecca Jurczyk

Recording Secretary