

Selectboard & Finance Committee FY21 Joint Meeting Minutes

Town Hall, 334 Main Street

Great Barrington, Massachusetts 01230

Tuesday, February 11, 2020, 5:30 pm

- I. Call to Order, Chairman S. Bannon called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm., those present from Selectboard were, K. Burke, B. Cooke, E. Abrahams, L. Davis, and from Finance Committee were, Chair A. O' Dwyer, T. Blauvelt, M. O' Connor, W. Curletti, M. Loubert and Town Manager M. Pruhenski, and Finance Director S. Carmel.
- II. Audit Report FY 2018: Tom Scanlon from Scanlon & Associates, LLC presented the FY 18 Audit Report. He referred to the Management Letter and the Audit report FY18. He said there had been some difficulties in the audit and identified certain deficiencies in internal controls that are material weaknesses. He said deficiencies in internal control exist when management or employees don't detect or correct misstatements on timely basis. Internal controls were detected in the Tax Collector's office and during the audit the likely existence of fraud was discovered, which is most often created by opportunities resulting from deficiencies in the internal control provisions. As a result, Town management took immediate steps by increasing control measures. He also recommended that the Town familiarize and educate itself to ensure proper implementation of the GASB Statements since over the last couple of years, GASB has been active in developing new standards. He found that Chapter 90 (State Aid to Highway) Grant expenditures have not been submitted for reimbursement in a timely manner. He recommended that the Town implement strict procedures to rectify that going forward. In regard to Capital Assets, Town did not keep adequate records. He recommended that Town implement procedures to ensure that Capital assets are accounted for. Also recommended to establish procedures to Document Reconciliation between Town Meeting votes and Expenditure Subsidiary ledger. T. Blauvelt asked about internal controls going forward. T. Scanlon replied that it had improved significantly from previous year. Capital Projects should be broken out. Capital assets and depreciation drives it down. Suggested at some point adopting an OPEB Trust and treating it as a Stabilization Fund. FY 18 was a transition year. We want accurate information going forward in reconciling the Town budget. Governmental finance is complicated, Capital assets include depreciation which is not in the budget and which drives it down. The Town Financial team is working hard to get things organized. Looks like using Free Cash to lower property taxes. He is not a big believer of this style. He said the FY19 Audit will be done by summertime (2020).

- III. Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad (SBAS). Bill Hathaway addressed the request of the SBAS. He said that he sent a proposal to the Town Manager asking the Town for funding. T. Blauvelt wanted to know why he is asking for \$147,000 when the original request was \$132,000. Mr. Hathaway said that he met with the Fire Chief and the Town Manager and they asked if another firefighter could be added to the schedule. Mr. Hathaway gave a picture of how often the ambulance services were requested and the cost of responding and the loss of revenue. In 2019, 3 - 4 times a month they were called for mutual aid (@ \$433.53 per run, and 6-10 runs to hospital, need to be able to keep one vehicle in Town for accidents, etc. (@ \$248.00 per run, totaling \$23,808.00 a year. In kind value, totaling \$45,158.00, expected revenue. He went over the costs of a firefighter, housing truck / ambulance at the Fire Station, Lee or New Marlborough respond most often. He staffs 5 people per day. T. Blauvelt asked how much he is asking from all eight towns. He said he was asking \$228,000. for year one. S. Bannon asked why SBAS was losing money on 911 calls. Mr. Hathaway said that 80% of the time one truck is on standby. He has 14 full time employees, 7 days a week, 2.5 trucks. 1.5 million for training, trucks, and the staff. Mr. Hathaway said they will need a new truck next year. S. Bannon would like to see the SBAS balance sheets. The Ambulance Budget is 1.3 million dollars. S. Bannon requested that Mr. Hathaway comes back next Tuesday to give a revised presentation.
- IV. Reserve Fund Transfer Request - Legal / Finance Committee. M. Pruhenski spoke on the need to transfer the \$ 70,000 from reserve fund to pay for the legal fees. S. Carmel, referred to correspondence stating that there are 3 areas needing payment, Rest of River, Town Counsel, and the Town's Labor Attorney. The Rest of River invoices on hand for November and December total \$28,000, and anticipating another \$16,000 for a total \$44,000. It was a heavy legal year on the Rest of River, which was never budgeted for. The meditation was in-depth and productive and saved a great deal of litigation. The towns will be reimbursed from Rest of River monies, but that could be a couple of years. M. Loubert made a request to review it next Tuesday. A. O' Dwyer wanted to know the anticipation of legal fees going forward. S. Bannon said he would review it at the next Budget Meeting. The Town Manager said that it's difficult to anticipate future legal costs.
- V. FY 2020 Budget Review - Police Department: Chief Walsh spoke on the Police Department budget. No major changes in his budget. Would like a normal year for staffing, still down one officer. Three officers were added in July, which offices are now attending the Police Academy. There are continued overtime hours to pay out since he doesn't have enough staff. The Department received a grant to help with overtime. (K. Burke left Meeting, at 6: 58pm.)

b. Emergency Management - It's a small budget, no shortfalls. c. Animal Control - no questions. Chief explained the need for two cars, one canine car. Usually following the 2 - 1 - 2 for car replacement, this year needs a new canine car, two again this year. It is a different kind of car, lasting about 5 years.

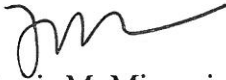
d. Budget Wrap - up: S. Bannon - the Finance Committee will make the recommendations to the Annual Town Meeting. Proposed Town Budget items:

a. Selectboard Town Manager -. Selectboard salaries to raise by \$1,250. / per Selectboard member. A. O' Dwyer made motion to increase Selectboard salaries to \$ 1,500./per member, M. Loubert seconded, All in Favor, 5 - 0. S. Bannon asked to pass; no vote on Selectboard Salaries. 2. Legal Fees – E. Abrahams made a motion to raise the legal by \$10,000. to go back to \$90,000. B. Cooke seconded, All in Favor 4 -0. The Finance Committee, W. Curletti made a motion to increase legal, T. Blauvelt seconded, All in Favor, 5 - 0. 3. Travel Training: to give 3 members the opportunity for training in Boston in January, instead of 2, increase of \$ 3,600. E. Abrahams made motion to accept the recommendation, B. Cooke, seconded, All in Favor, 4 - 0. Finance Committee, T. Blauvelt made a motion to accept recommendation, M. Loubert seconded, All in Favor, 5 - 0. b. Public Relations, Finance Committee, T. Blauvelt made a motion to Fund PR increase to \$12,000., second W. Curletti, All in Favor, 5 - 0. E. Abrahams to fund by \$12,000, B. Cooke seconded, All in Favor, 4 - 0. c. Finance Committee - none. d. Town Accountant – none. e. Technology – none. f. Assessors – none. g. Collector / Treasurer, couple of recommendations - two additions, \$ 4,000. for OPEB valuations that has to be done. Finance Committee M. Loubert made motion to approve recommendation to increase, W. Curletti seconded, All in Favor, 5 - 0. Selectboard E. Abrahams made a motion to add \$4,000, B. Cooke seconded, All in Favor, 4 - 0. The Fire District will equal out, just a new line in the budget. h. Town Clerk - nothing, i. Conservation - nothing. j. Planning - nothing. k. ZBA - nothing. l. Planning / Economic Development and Planning - nothing changed. m. Buildings and Grounds - nothing. n. Police - nothing. o. Fire Department, Chief Burger spoke of his budget. He has enough staff - overtime increased there are more employees, with more employees, he can respond faster to Fire emergencies. It looks like a \$37,000 increase, but it's only a \$7,000.00 increase to the Town; and the additional amount is what Sheffield contributes as part of the MOU agreement. p. Veterans - requested an increase to a total of \$500.00 per month for the rent increase. Selectboard member, E. Abrahams made a motion to increase the Veterans budget of \$500.00., B. Cooke, seconded, All in Favor, 4 - 0. Finance Committee member, T. Blauvelt followed Selectboard motion, W. Curletti, seconded, All in Favor, 5 - 0. Emergency management - nothing. r. Building Inspection - nothing. s. Animal Control officer - nothing. t. Highway - overtime line of \$ 14,000. Increase of \$ 4,000. E. Abrahams made motion to approve, B. Cooke seconded, All in Favor, 4 - 0. W. Curletti followed, T. Blauvet seconded, All in Favor, 5 - 0. u. Health Department, - nothing. v. Community Services - E. Abrahams made a motion to keep

the level funded from last year's amount, L. Davis, seconded All in Favor 4 - 0. T. Blauvelt to go with Selectboard's recommendation W. Curletti seconded. All in favor 5-0.

- VI. Next Meeting: Chairman S. Bannon stated to start with Stabilization Fund / Capital Fund, Special Articles, Ambulance, Reserve Fund.
- VII. Media - no comments.
- VIII. E. Abrahams made a motion to adjourn, B Cooke seconded. The Finance Committee followed, T. Blauvelt made a motion, W. Curletti seconded, All in Favor. The Meeting adjourn at 8:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Jamie M. Minacci
Recording Secretary