

Finance Advisory Committee Minutes 01/25/17

FinCom & Selectmen FY18 Budget Hearing January 25, 2017 Meeting Minutes

Present: *FinCom Members*; Chairman Marshall Carroll, Susan Murphy, Bruce Golden, Vicki Divoll, Adam DeBettencourt, Eric Glasgow, Rob Hannemann, *Selectmen*; Chairman Doty, Bill Rossi and Jim Malkin. Others: Tim Carroll, Melanie Becker, Diana DeBlase, Ellen Biskis, Ebba Hierta, Janet Weidner, John Flender, David Norton and Ben Retmier.

At 7:00 PM Chairman Marshall Carroll called meeting to order in the Selectmen's meeting room.

#610 Library

Library Director Ebba Hierta along with Trustees Board Member Janet Weidner presented the budget for FY18. Ms. Hierta distributed explanation materials for the proposed budget and where funds are coming from. Ms. Hierta said the budget increase is primarily due to the position re-grading of all but the director's salary. Ms. Murphy asked if having the positions re-graded raised our pay for the library employees to rates comparable to other island towns. Ms. Hierta agreed they were comparable rates.

Ms. Hierta explained that she has also added an additional day of pay for the Circulation Assistants staff time totaling \$8,000.00 for the year. This should allow for the library to continue offering adult programming. Chairman Carroll asked who did the adult programming last year. Ms. Hierta said she did, as a volunteer. Ms. Hierta said she has always works more than the hours she is paid for but can no longer continue to do that.

Ms. Hierta said the CLAMS dues actually went down this year due to editing out some services that our community was not using.

Chairman Carroll asked if the Library would consider getting an exemption of the State 20% of the library budget purchasing requirement. Ms. Hierta said she participated as a board member on a State wide committee to try to get that change made. Ms. Hierta said this board met once a month in Worcester Massachusetts for six months but unfortunately she failed to get that change. Chairman Carroll asked if not being certified would be an option for us. Ms. Hierta listed many reasons why that would not be a good change. Ms. Divoll pointed out that all of the other island towns fully fund the required 20% annual increase but Chilmark Friends of the Library raises money to help cover this expense.

Chairman Doty supported the addition to the budget to support the programs at our library. Chairman Carroll thanked Ms. Hierta and Ms. Weidner for presenting the library budget.

#220 Fire Department

Fire Chief David Norton presented the proposed FY18 Budget. The Committee reviewed the changes in this budget. Mr. Norton made a correction to this budget changing the postage line #5344 to \$75.00 rather than the typo of \$750.00. This budget has a 1.30% increase from last year with the correction in the postage.

Chief Norton reported that there have not been any major serious fires this year to date. There have been quite a few car accidents, and small brush fires. The emergency call volume is up;

#220 Fire Department Continued...estimated 90% are faulty alarms in unoccupied homes. Discussion turned to the Town Bylaw fine system for repeated false alarms. Chief Norton has not issued fines to date.

Mr. Malkin said the Selectmen have recommended that the Fire Department enforce these fines numerous times. There was discussion of a percentage of the fine amount be part of Chief Norton's income, to offset the time and money on responding to these alarms at all times of the day and night.

Chief Norton discussed a capital plan creating and developing more water sources for fire suppressing purposes. The proposed warrant articles for the Fire Department:

- Raise and appropriate \$25,000.00 to the stabilization fund to replace fire apparatus
- Raise and appropriate \$10,000.00 to upgrade the current communications (microwave)
- Take from available funds \$5,600.00 for new 4.5 SCBA tanks.

Chairman Carroll thanked Chief Norton for his presentation.

#230 Tri-Town Ambulance

Tri-Town Ambulance Chief Ben Retmier presented this budget. Town Accountant Ellen Biskis asked to make some changes to the spreadsheet before we continued as she received some insurance figures that change the amount to line #5272. Ms. Biskis said line #5272 should be reduced to \$20,000.00 from \$34,000.00. The figures that adjusted this are from Insurance and workers comp insurance. Ms. Biskis said the assessment total to Chilmark now is \$281,348.34 a total of 6.86% increase from last year. Ms. Biskis said this is because the collections are lower and reflect that.

Chairman Doty is the Chilmark Selectmen representative on the Tri-Town Ambulance Committee. Chairman Doty said Ben Retmier has been doing a really good job as Chief of this department and the budget was at a 1.5% increase basically. Mr. Doty said the insurance and workers comp. data was put into this budget after our review. Town Treasurer Melanie Becker said the Cape Cod Municipal Health Group estimated the health insurance rates to increase by 11%. Ms. Becker said an employee of TTA may file for a family plan this coming year so the finance team is budgeting for that increase to this department. Ms. Biskis explained also the lower revenues are not really lower; when they hired on Alison Graczykoski last year she excelled in redeeming past revenues so last year's revenues were higher than expected which drove up the budget % increase.

Chief Retmier responded to a question from Ms. Divoll concerning revenues and how they are managed. Chief Retmier said 80% of the revenues go to offsetting the Tri-Town Ambulance budget and 20% goes into the Ambulance replacement stabilization fund. Chief Retmier said there is an estimated 400 calls for EMT/Paramedic annually.

Chief Retmier said that the recommendation for this coming year is to purchase 2 new ambulances; funds will come from the ambulance replacement stabilization fund to cover both purchases. Chairman Doty said on average the up island ambulances (one at a time) would be out of commission primarily with major electrical issues monthly.

#230 Tri-Town Ambulance Continued...

Chief Retmier said the additional ambulances will be the identical layout and size as the newer ambulance that is housed in West Tisbury. Having standardized interiors will allow responders to do their job smoother without having to adapt to different interior setups. Chief Retmier said a new ambulance will serve the town up to 10 years before we need to replace it. Discussion turned to revenues for ambulance responses. Chief Retmier estimated that TTA charges (bills) \$2,000.00 per ambulance run. He reported that most insurance companies will pay a good portion of that but Medicare and Medicaid will reimburse an estimated \$300.00 only. There was 407 ambulance calls in 2016 and 111 of them were moped accidents. Chief Retmier said that our roads are not appropriate for moped use.

Chairman Carroll thanked Chief Retmier for his report.

#491 Cemetery

Chairman of the Cemetery Commission John Flender presented this budget. Mr. Flender said he has added administrative assistant budget line to cover the hours that Jennifer Christy is putting in for the Cemetery Commissioners. Mr. Flender put \$4,043.41 into this budget to cover 2 hours a week for this administrative work.

Mr. Flender recommended considering buying more land to add to the Cemetery. Mr. Flender did not think they would be running out of space anytime soon, but it's a good to look ahead. Mr. Flender asked that the FinCom and Selectmen consider a two tier pricing schedule for year-round residents of Chilmark and second home owners.

Chairman Doty said the Selectmen received the resignation of the Chilmark Cemetery Superintendent Jen Morgan last night and will advertise for this position. Mr. Flender explained that Ms. Morgan had worked fulltime in Edgartown as the Cemetery Superintendent and when they did away with that position the few hours a week that we employed her did not make it affordable to live here and she has moved north.

Chairman Carroll thanked Mr. Flender for his presentation.

#199 Comfort Station

Tim Carroll presented this budget. Mr. Carroll said this is a contracted department and this will be going out to bid this next month and we may have some changes once we receive the bids. Chairman Carroll recommended adjusting the tipping fee line. Tim Carroll increase budget line #5294 up \$1,000.00 bringing the total to \$8,000.00. Chairman Doty said the Town made improvements to the bathrooms and it worked ok for this past summer. The Selectmen have not moved on to replacement of the Comfort Station nor doing any major renovations till the Planning Board Menemsha Master Plan report is in. Chairman Doty said an addition of an outdoor shower would be an improvement.

Tim Carroll said if there are funds available after we receive new bids they would install an outdoor shower on the North East exterior of the Comfort Station building. Mr. Carroll said Vineyard Land Surveying is working on a plan.

#541 Social Services / Accountant revisions

Town Accountant Ellen Biskis said she revised the Social Services budget to include the debt service on the Center for Living Building.

Mr. Glasgow said since we are on the topic of Social Services he wanted to say that when he heard that the First Stop program only got 400 hits on their website he needed to know when to say no. That number is extremely low and maybe it's a service that we don't support. Discussion turned to the process of how to cut costs to our budget. Mr. Malkin recommended being direct and asking questions. Mr. Malkin also explained that the FinCom can recommend not supporting a budget.

Ms. Divoll said the FinCom should be prepared to speak about any of the budgets there are questions about especially ones we don't recommend. Ms. Divoll said we should assign a FinCom member to speak of each topic prior to the Annual Town Meeting. Consensus was that this recommendation will be done at Annual Town Meeting.

Accountant Biskis said she would like to respond to minutes from the other night; a question by Chairman Doty about free cash.

Ms. Biskis distributed a handout of the history of free cash going back to 9/15/2000. Ms. Biskis described this undesignated fund balance as "owners' equity". Ms. Biskis said warrant articles, deficits, encumbrances all affect the free cash. Ms. Biskis said her figures are conservative (as the State advises).

Chairman Doty asked to have an excess appropriation figure. Ms. Biskis said it will be on the summary sheet.

With no further items for discussion Mr. Glasgow moved to adjourn. Ms. Divoll seconded the motion. **SO VOTED: FinCom; 7 Ayes, Selectmen; 3 Ayes**

FinCom/Selectmen Minutes respectfully submitted by Diana DeBlase

Approved 02/06/17

Document list (in addition to the Budget Binders):

- Hand out by Accountant with history of Free Cash
- Tri-Town Ambulance run report sheet
- Fire Department Warrant Articles for April 24, 2017 ATM