

# Pepperell Finance Committee

Minutes  
March 19, 2009

## MEMBERS

Present: Diane Gaspar (Chair), Burke Bero (Vice-Chair), Christopher DeSimone, Stephanie Cronin, Jeanne LeBlanc, Christopher Johnson and Theresa Walsh (Town Accountant)

George Zacharakis has been newly appointed by the Board of Selectmen and will be sworn in before the next scheduled meeting.

Guests: Debra Spratt – Director; Lawrence Library  
Patrick McNabb – Board of Selectmen

## OPENING

Diane Gaspar called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm

## INFORMATION

Diane Gaspar mentioned an article in the Lowell Sun about the Pepperell police and DPW unions saying 'no' to opening wage negotiations. The library union asked for a clarification on cuts before voting.

Ms. Gaspar suggested that the Fin Com go through the departmental budgets again looking at labor costs with a possibility of cutting 10% off hourly wages. Also look at cutting one patrolman from the police budget. The DPW is already losing an employee. Must dig deep to find cuts to close the gap. It is possible that the community Center will have to be closed to all but paying customers.

Terry Walsh confirmed information from Bob Hanson that shutting off the street lights would only save about \$16K (out of the \$40K budget) due to cost of leasing the poles.

The current budget shortfall of \$479,989 does not take into account the possible savings from the retirement fund. If the State votes to defer towns' payments, and it does so after Pepperell Town Meeting, then any cuts/layoffs taken at Town meeting would stand until (and if) they were changed at Special Town Meeting in the fall.

Ms. Walsh stated that her information network doubts that extra State funding (from meal and room taxes) will come through.

## DISCUSSION

### Street Lighting (100-42400)

- The Town leases the poles from the utilities, yet receives back little 'rent' from other services (like cable).
- Chief Davis is not 'dead set' against turning off the lights.
- Years ago there were certain lights turned off and they were never turned back on (poles eventually removed).
- Motion made to turn off ALL lights, thus reducing the budget by \$16,000 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (5) No (1 - LeBlanc) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

### Community Center (100-63200)

- Sue Difillipo (Custodian) has already reduced her hours. She does a great job and we would hate to lose her.
- The Rec. Board is expected to move a higher number at Town Meeting.
- The Custodial position is fully funded by the Town, and \$8,200 of the Program Director's salary is funded by the Town.
- Motion made to reduce the salary line by \$8,200 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (6) No (0) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

### Police (100-21100)

- A previous Fin Com vote recommended the layoff of a part time police clerk (\$14,500). Chief Davis chose to make that dollar cut from his overtime budget instead.
- Just a few years ago the staffing was sixteen officers. We currently have seventeen officers after a patrolman recently quit.
- The budget reduction of one patrolman (\$57,000) would net about \$38-39,000 after benefits.
- Motion made to reduce the police force by one patrolman with accompanying benefits (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (6) No (0) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

### Highway (100-42200)

- A previous Fin Com vote reduced personnel by one employee (3/5<sup>th</sup> time DPW)
- Budget is already \$46,000 in the hole due to salt and plowing.
- Terry Walsh cautioned against cutting the overtime budget because FEMA looks at that number for reimbursement costs.
- Motion made to reduce the budget by \$42,000 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (6) No (0) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

### Library (100-61100)

- Discussed reduction in hours for \$14,208 (one hour each page -2- and two hours for all other employees).
- 2 pages are \$6,600.
- Budget has already lost computer money (\$1,800) and will be losing cleaning money.
- Possibility of tapping into Trust fund to support the budget.
- Average union salary is \$20/hr, yet no one is full time.
- The equivalent of an average staff position is \$26,875.
- 10% of the budget is \$22,000.
- Motion made to reduce the budget by \$22,000 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (4) No (2-DeSimone, LeBlanc) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

### GIS (100-14200)

- Motion to reconsider previous vote to reduce GIS budget from \$20,000 to \$0 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (5) No (1-DeSimone) Abstain (0) – motion carries.
- Motion to reinstate the Town's contribution to the GIS budget at \$8,000 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (3) No (3-DeSimone, LeBlanc, Gaspar) Abstain (0) – motion does not carry.
- Motion to reinstate the Town's contribution to the GIS budget at \$5,000 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (5) No (1-Bero) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

### Council on Aging (100 -54100)

- Burke Bero made a bold suggestion to zero out the entire budget as it does not fall under essential items. He stated that we can no longer ignore the huge gap in the Town's budget.

- Chris DeSimone stated that he totally disagrees with Burke as to the importance of services provided by the Senior Center (Meals on Wheels, home visits and social interaction). “What are you going to do, take away service to the elderly?”
- Diane Gaspar agreed that it does fill an important function, but “is it something we can afford?”
- Motion to reduce the budget by \$17,000 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (6) No (0) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

#### Parks (100-65100)

- Terry Spaulding works 70% for Parks and 30% for Cemetery.
- 10% cut to the bottom line is \$8,600
- Motion to reduce the budget by \$8,600 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (6) No (0) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

#### Stipends (various)

- Inspectors get reimbursed in addition to permit fees.
- Motion to reduce all stipends by 10% (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (6) No (0) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

#### Town Report (100-19500)

- Motion to reduce the budget from \$3,000 to \$0 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (6) No (0) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

#### Selectmen (100-12200)

- Motion to reduce the budget by \$930 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (6) No (0) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

#### Town Administrator (100-12900)

- Is this a good time to reduce this budget when Bob is leaving August 1<sup>st</sup>?
- Since Mr. Hanson is an appointed position any cuts would affect the Administrative Assistant.
- Chris DeSimone restated his opposition to making cuts in By Law employees’ wages when the union employees are not taking the same hits.
- Motion to reduce the budget by (10%) \$4,700 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (5) No (1-DeSimone) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

#### Accountant (100-13500)

- Motion to reduce the budget by (10%) \$3,778.80 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (5) No (1-DeSimone) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

#### Assessors (100-14100)

- A Wages/Hourly employee will be leaving.
- Motion to reduce the budget by (10% of salary and wages) \$3,778.80 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (5) No (1-DeSimone) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

#### Legal (100-15100)

- Motion to reduce the budget to \$20,000 (Chris DeSimone) and seconded (Burke Bero) – Yes (6) No (0) Abstain (0) – motion carries.

### **MEETING SCHEDULE**

- Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> – Joint meeting with the BOS and Department Heads
- Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup> – Regular Meeting

### **CLOSING**

Ms. Gaspar moved to adjourn at 10:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Jeanne LeBlanc