

## **Harwich Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

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*Thursday, December 14, 2017 at 6:30pm*

**Harwich Community Center, Rm 5  
100 Oak St., Harwich, MA**

**Members Present:** *Jack Brown (Chair); Dana DeCosta; Jon Chorey; Laurie Gillespie Lee; Mark Ameres; Edward McManus*

**Members Absent:**

**Others Present:** *Charleen Greenhalgh, Assistant Town Administrator; Carol Coppola, Finance Director; Anita Doucette, Town Clerk*

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm by Mr. Brown.

**Meeting Minutes** – On a motion from Dana DeCosta, seconded by Mark Ameres, the meeting minutes of November 9, 2017 were approved unanimously.

**Introduction of new Recording Secretary: Sarah Manion** - *Jack Brown*

**Reserve Transfers** – No discussion

**Discussion of 12-11-17 Joint Meeting of BoS, FinCom, Capital Outlay Committee** – *Jack Brown*

DeCosta wishes to ensure that that bid process is formalized. It should be clear to the Selectmen that projects should not be scaled back due to a shortfall in the estimate. It is important to consider the expectations of the voters; Does the project budget and plan actually reflect the needs/desires of the voters?

Chorey is disappointed by the Saquatucket harbor bid process. Accuracy of bid process is very important. To be off by millions is not acceptable. Town residents voted for certain provisions which were pared down. Fire station is a good example where correction is required.

McManus adds that this issue is a recurring issue in the town. References Community Center ball field example where the final product did not reflect the envisioned project due to budget issues. There are often estimates; however, when the bid comes up short, funding re-approval is required to ensure the project is done properly.

Gillespie Lee believes there should be an estimate process before the warrant process.

**Chair's comments:**

- I. A motion is needed to institute a process moving forward. The Finance Committee needs to insist on estimates in-hand for proper deliberations.
- II. Concerned that there isn't a process to deal with situations where the estimate isn't accurate or delays were incurred, etc. The finance committee needs to ensure a better process to ensure accuracy. Monomoy is an example of a process that went quite well - \$2 mill under budget. We need to infuse rigor to understand where in the process errors occurred.

On a motion by Dana DeCosta, seconded by Mark Ameres, the Chair is asked to go to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to request an improved process for acquiring finance estimates on large projects lacking an official bid by the time of town meeting. No abstentions, none opposed, approved unanimously

### **Additional Discussion:**

DeCosta does not believe that projects under \$50k should be included on the Capital Plan as they're not considered capital projects. The project list can be made clearer and shorter by setting this limit.

Chorey believes that as a courtesy, financial figures for town projects should be passed by the committee for their awareness when a contract goes before the Board of Selectmen.

Reference made to the pet cemetery.

- In response, Greenhalgh explained if a project is over \$50k, it goes to the BOS for signature, per the Charter. If under this, the Town Administrator has authorization to authorize the contract and the funds.

Reference is made to certain projects included in the project list for which the Town is also seeking state grant funding. It is clarified that while the State may provide some funding, the Town is expected to show proactivity in the planning and funding process. Without this demonstrated commitment from the Town, State funding could be delayed or not allocated.

The Fleet budget allocation was also discussed including the possibility of a fleet reduction to reduce cost.

Coppola led committee through a discussion of the Debt schedules + authorized/unissued debt + proposed debt charts:

- 1<sup>st</sup> chart breaks out total debt by dept/category
- 2<sup>nd</sup> chart provides a stacked display with existing, authorized and proposed debt
- 3<sup>rd</sup> chart adds in tax impact on a home est. at \$350k

Comments/Questions on the charts include:

- Clarification that the charts only reflect known debt expenditure projects.
- The charts are confusing due to the trend line

- These charts only reflect tip of the iceberg. Many projects in the next 7 years aren't reflected. Provides example of Wrentham who does great job of projected use and budgetary planning. The charts feel less useful in this context.
- Ameres suggests separating out tech school and Harwich schools as we have control over one and not the other Capital plan is about debt management; however many irrelevant projects are included which are covered under revenue management.

### **Discussion and possible vote on Elected Officials Salaries** – *Dana DeCosta, Laurie Gillespie-Lee*

FinCom was tasked to look at the elimination of benefits for elected officials and the salaries for said officials. Where does the town of Harwich want to go moving forward? This should be a recommendation from the FinCom rather than the BOS since they're part of the elected official salaries and should not be recommending their own salaries. What does the FinCom recommend for this proposed budget? The Committee needs to start putting numbers together.

It is suggested that DeCosta/Gillespie Lee put together a draft budget recommendation. – come back with draft position next month.

Gillespie Lee has been researching other Cape towns to understand the landscape but needs to compile the data but ultimately, this will be support documentation and the recommendation needs to be made from the committee.

Town population figures is seen to be irrelevant given that the responsibility and task of the jobs remain the same.

It is suggested that whatever recommendation is made, it be made unanimously.

### **Saquatucket Harbor Landside Financial Update** – Carol Coppola

The landslide contract was signed and works will be moving forward. The septic contract has been awarded and will extend into April 2018 because of paving that needs to be completed. The final tie in isn't expected until after paving is completed. Some portions of the project were over budget but she cannot speak to that.

### **MMA Annual Meeting & Trade Show** – January 19 & 20 – FinCom Attendees List

Dana, Jon and Mark are planning to attend.

Attendees asked to report to FinCom on salient details.

Next Meeting January 11th, 2018

Adjourned at 7:45pm

Respectfully Submitted,

*Sarah Manion*