

**MINUTES ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
APRIL 30, 2008**

Meeting called to order at 7:05 PM by Chairman Wilson with Beverly Lund, Bob Barnes and Dave Holdcraft in attendance. Due to the lack of a quorum, the Chair called Alternate Ross Ackerman to ask him to attend the meeting. Mr. Ackerman arrived at 7:30 PM. Selectmen Ronald Dackson and Rudy Heller arrived at approximately 7:45 PM after being contacted by the committee.

**AMENDMENTS TOWN MEETING WARRANT**

Due to the fact that it will be necessary to change a number of figures in the warrant that was mailed to the voters, amendments will be prepared for the meeting. The cuts were made after the warrant book was sent to the printer.

The warrant books were received and mailed to the voters this date.

**DEPARTMENT HEAD MEETING**

Mrs. Wilson advised that the Selectmen had scheduled a department head meeting for Tuesday, May 6 at 7:0 PM in the Town Hall and all departments had been invited. The budget will be presented to those present. Ms. Lund has posted an Advisory Committee meeting for the 6<sup>th</sup> in case votes needed to be taken at the meeting. It appears that it will not be necessary to hold the Advisory Committee meeting on Wednesday, May 7.

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MOTIONS**

A memo from the Selectmen was summarized advising the Committee that they had agreed to have the Committee present all the motions for the meeting and to take the Committee up on their offer to prepare the motions and the Selectmen wanted the motions for the May 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. Ms. Lund will attempt to get the motion ready for that date.

**NEW BUDGET PROCESS**

Mrs. Wilson and Mr. Holdcraft advised those present of the new process for budget preparation for next year that is being suggested by the Selectmen. This was discussed at the Selectmen's meeting on April 29. This process would have the Town Accountant plugging in the figures from the budgets submitted by the department heads, boards, committees, etc. to the ATM spreadsheet. The spreadsheet as prepared by the Town Accountant would then be submitted to the Advisory Committee who would then call in the department heads to review the budgets submitted. The Advisory Committee would then work with the department heads, etc., make budget cuts, prepare a balanced budget and give it back to the Town Accountant to run a final spreadsheet.

Mrs. Wilson stated that the Selectmen had planned to attend the meeting and she had planned to talk about this issue but the Selectmen were not present.

Although some of the members were not in favor of this process, it was the consensus of the members to put this off until after this year's Annual Town Meeting is concluded.

Mr. Ackerman arrived at the meeting.

### **APPROVAL MINUTES – APRIL 23, 2008**

Mr. Holdcraft moved; Mr. Barnes seconded to approve the minutes of April 23, 2008; so voted. Mr. Ackerman abstained.

### **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING BUDGET**

Mrs. Wilson advised that she has been working with the Secretary to attempt to balance the budget so that the meeting can be completed in one night. A solution had been found to go into Town Meeting with a balanced budget and it was hoped that the Selectmen would be present tonight so that both the Selectmen and the Advisory Committee would be in agreement and could present the balanced budget at the Department Head meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

The Committee contacted Mr. Dackson and Mr. Heller to ask that they come to the meeting. Both Selectmen arrived and the meeting continued.

### **BUDGET CUTS**

The current variance in the levy limit calculation is approximately \$100,667. This figure will have to be reduced to come up with a balanced budget.

Mrs. Wilson advised that the School Business Manager has indicated that the School budget could be cut an additional \$70,000 by the use of School Choice Funds. Everyone is in agreement that it was better not to use these funds to balance the budget and that they should be left for use by the schools, all felt that with the financial constraints the funds could be used this year. However, next year will be another issue that will be dealt with at that time.

At town meeting last year the remaining Free Cash balance of approximately \$42,000 was transferred to the Stabilization Fund. If this had not been done, these funds would have been available to fund the operating budget this year. Although the Committee agrees that Stabilization Funds should not be used to balance the operating budget, the additional \$42,000 would not have been available if not for free cash.

Based on these facts, the following changes were suggested:

**Article 23** – The funding of the additional \$30,000 for highway construction, reconstruction and improvement of town roads, bridges and sidewalks is also being raised and appropriated. The Committee is suggesting that this be reduced by \$15,000. There is currently \$127,949 in Chapter 90 funds available for road work, \$13,200 for road and street repair and maintenance in the Highway Expense Budget, Community Development Block Grant Funds have been awarded to the Town for work in the center of Town and an additional \$500,000 available if the STRAP grant is approved by the State. If it is determined at a later date and the final state aid, local receipts and new growth figures are increased, this account could be revisited for additional fund.

**Article 44** – The funding of the Master Plan in the amount of \$10,000 is currently being raised and appropriated. These funds could be transferred from Stabilization. This is a one time expense once the entire cost of preparing the plan is funded.

**Article 48** – The funding of the Mill Street Clean Up in the amount of \$5,000 to be raised and appropriated is also a one-time project and will not become part of the operating budget once all the work is completed as required by DEP. These funds could be transferred from Stabilization.

**Reserve Fund** – There is currently \$25,000 in this account and the Committee is suggesting this be reduced by \$1,000.

Of the \$42,000 in Free Cash that was transferred last year to the Stabilization Fund only \$15,000 would be used if this plan is approved by the voters.

The approval of the above would bring the bottom line variance to a position \$333 as follows:

Overage		\$100,667
Deduct:		
School	\$70,000	30,667
Highway Construction	\$15,000	15,667
Master Plan	\$10,000	5,667
Mill Street	\$ 5,000	667
Reserve Fund	\$ 1,000	333+

Once the balanced budget is approved a town meeting could be held prior to setting the tax rate, the cherry sheets and all other receipts would be known, the overlay surplus could be certified by the Assessors and appropriated by town meeting and any adjustments could be made based on the final levy limit calculation.

Mr. Dackson and Mr. Heller were in agreement with this plan of action and individually agreed to support it at the meeting on May 6<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Holdcraft moved; Mr. Barnes seconded to approve the above recommended changes/amendments to the original recommendations; so voted. Ms. Lund will prepare

the motions based on this action. A copy of the amended levy limit calculation and ATM spreadsheet will be sent to the Town Accountant for final approval. If any changes are necessary, they can be discussed at the May 6<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Mr. Heller agreed to talk to Mr. Chaffee about this reduction in the Highway Construction Article.

Mr. Dackson and Mr. Heller left the meeting.

### **NEWSPAPER RELEASE**

The possibility of putting out a press release regarding the budget and financial situation of the Town was discussed. However, reporters will be present at the meeting of the 6<sup>th</sup> and information will be provided to them at this time. Mrs. Wilson will prepare an introduction explaining the process that has been used to present at the meeting of the 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **OVERHEAD PRESENTATION**

Ms. Lund advised that she had not met with Mr. Burnham but would be doing so in the next week to put together the presentation.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Lund moved; Mr. Barnes seconded to adjourn the meeting; so voted. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly A. Lund, Secretary

Date approved by Advisory Committee: May 6, 2008

Date submitted to Selectmen: May 7, 2008