

## Minutes of the March 9, 2023 Finance Committee

Members	Absent	Other
Shaun Galliher	Candy Galeucia	Bob Graves, Town Administrator
Heather Brown		Earl Peck, Select Board Chairman
Jim Chivers		
Bonnie Conner		
Mary Rice		
Sara Baumann		

The meeting was opened at 6:37 pm.

Chairman Galliher and Bob Graves went over some of the concerning budget items.

Permitting is seeing a large increase. This is the program that allows permitting on line and is used by our building inspector, Paul Greene. It does streamline the process and is increasing in costs to maintain. We currently have an annual agreement through Berkshire Regional Planning.

One major one is the Salaries of the staff, Police Department and Highway. The Committee discussed one big increase in the requested Police Officer Salary account. The Chief proposed several options in an effort to retain our department officers. This is a State wide problem with many Towns offering high incentives to attract and retain officers. Chief Rathbun is also asking for a new contract as hers expires in June of this year. The Committee discussed the possibility of adding the 5<sup>th</sup> full time officer and the benefits that could be realized with that addition, such as covering for vacations, sick time etc. without adding to the overtime of the current officers.

The Committee discussed Highway salaries and our Superintendent Jamie Callahan. He has gone above and beyond on Highway and also has the responsibility of the Water/Sewer departments. We are currently lacking someone to head that department. Although it does fall under the Highway, it is a separate department with a lot of responsibilities that Jamie has taken on.

Bob and the Committee discussed staff salaries and Bob's recommendations for increases.

Other accounts discussed were; fuel currently trending over, heating (stable, Town Clerk expense, website, IT account, Dalton Communications, County Sheriff, Fire Department, permitting, Animal Control Officer (combined with Animal Inspector), Code Red and others.

Bob reported that Dave Prickett, DPC our consultant for Water/Sewer, presented options for increasing the Water/Sewer fees this year to build our surplus accounts. Several major projects are in the works to maintain our systems and have funds available for any emergencies. The Water Sewer Commissioners will be meeting to discuss these options along with the Water/Sewer Committee and Bob at future meetings before any decision and vote is taken on the increases.

Highway Equipment is in rough shape and we will need to purchase some necessary equipment this year. Jamie has been keeping our Committee up to date on those issues and we do recognize his situation and needs. Earl Peck reported that the Select Board has reviewed Jamie's request for a 550 Truck and they think an 850 would be better suited for the job. It is a bit heavier duty and would be more versatile and possibly last longer in the long run. That is an ongoing discussion at this time.

The Committee discussed the Transfer Station and the possibility of purchasing a used baler to cut down on the volume being picked up therefore saving some money on hauling.

Bob reported he is still waiting for the Insurance quotes.

Chairman Galliher also reported that the School Committee will be at our next meeting to discuss their current budget proposal.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 8:18 pm, the motion passed unanimously. The next regular meeting of this Committee is Thursday, March 16, 2023 at 6:30 pm in the downstairs Community room at Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary A. Rice, Secretary