



**FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**Town of Grafton**  
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GRAFTON, MA

Saturday, March 15, 2008

Public Meeting of the Finance Committee

8:30 A.M.

Finance Committee public meeting was called to order at 8: 34 A.M. with the following committee members present.

**Finance Committee members present:**

Fred Churchill, Don Davison, Sandy Merrill, Doris Metivier, Gary Murray (left at noon), Sue Robbins (left at 1:58 P.M.), Dave Ross (arrived at 8:35 P.M.)

**Finance Committee member absent:**

Bob Foley

**Others present:**

Public Citizens, Volunteers and/or Employees of the Town of Grafton are present in the audience to speak to a particular budget and/or be present for the public meeting:

- Walter Kuras
- John Bouchard
- Bob Rodak
- Phil Gauthier
- Peter Adams
- Steve Risotti
- Toma Duhani
- Beth Thurlow

Town Administrator Natalie Lashmit

**Grafton News bill in the amount of \$80.00**

Motion: Gary Murray moved that the Finance Committee approve payment to The Grafton News in the amount of \$80.00 as presented.

Seconded: Don Davison. All in favor. Motion carries.

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**Departmental review of the following budgets:**

- Together We Can

Debbie Trapasso is present to discuss the budget.

There was a discussion regarding the balanced budget concerns for FY09.

Debbie stated that she is concerned, and that Together We Can is willing to take a budget cut to support the FY09 budget.

- Veterans Services

The budget has been refigured but the bottom line of the budget is the same.

- Engineering Department

There will be basic increases but no new staff.

The \$2,000.00 for in-state travel will be needed.

Supplies have cost approximately \$1,500.00 to date.

Cuts may be needed as the budgets are finalized.

**Highway Department**

Marginal increases are expected in the budget to reflect cost increases.

(see hand out)

The Board of Selectmen has requested the Highway Department perform more “in house” work for the Town.

There was a discussion regarding crisis mode vs. preventative maintenance mode.

There was a \$25,500 increase in the salaries division and it was eliminated for FY09.

Salaries correction was requested from Beth Thurlow for 52.2 weeks in FY09.

Overtime

Wages/Seasonal/Permanent

The Personnel Advisory Board will be meeting on March 26, 2008. The Personnel Advisory Board supports the positions of Superintendent of Highways and Assistant Director of the Department of Public Works, but did not approve the requested remaining positions at this time.

Non- energy pertains to water and sewer.

Repair and Maintenance

Traffic signals

- Diesel and Gasoline

will be removed from the DPW budget and become its own budget in the amount of \$13,000.00.

- Sanitation

The proposed FY09 budget does not include the Pay As You Throw concept.

The Board of Selectmen will be reviewing the use of this concept for the Town of Grafton.

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Pay As You Throw will result in a \$25,000 reduction in tipping fees.

The cost of bags will be \$1.50-\$2.00 per bag.

Shrewsbury will be using a \$0.75 per small bag and \$1.50 for large bags.

The Town Administrator stated that the Finance Committee will be notified of the upcoming presentation for the Pay As You Throw concept.

- Snow and Ice

The budget will remain at \$150,000.00.

There was a discussion regarding a salt vs. salt and sand application to the roads.

Continued Departmental Reviewed:

- Streetlights
- Cemetery and Parks
- Farnumsville Fire House
- South Grafton Community House

The budget can be lived with.

Painting the building is the project for this year.

Vinyl windows were installed in the past.

Wooden window with an aluminum lining.

- Municipal Center

There are concerns regarding fuel, energy and radon.

There is concern over the energy figure for all departments.

A review of all of the budgets to determine if there is a need to create one budget for energy and review the adjustments needs to scheduled.

Fred Churchill noted the need to avoid underfunding, especially in the energy cost areas.

- Stabilization

Any cuts from the budget should create a savings to be placed into Stabilization.

- Department of Public Works

Deficiencies of the garage and the need for a new facility  
By May Town Meeting 2009 the feasibility study will be completed.

under site work

\$250,000 to raise the buildings

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The existing DPW site will require a great deal of cleanup if this land(Upton Street property) ever needs to be sold.

Sue Robbins stated concerns over the DPW project and where the funds are coming from.

A Separate office needs to be created/reconfiguration of the office for consistency. This is a work flow issue and the Town Administrator recommends the structural change in the office.

Toma Duhani is present to discuss the proposed FY09 budget with the Finance Committee

Team building and team morale is necessary

Morale boosters:

Jackets and/or t shirts

New emblems on the vehicles

Cost for emblems on the trucks is coming out of the maintenance and repairs for equipment.

Repairs and maintenance of the facility is for the structural changes in the office.

The Town Administrator noted that rumor control is difficult.

Fred Churchill defended the need for the department head to take his initiative.

- Capital Budgets

The first three projects under the Chapter 90 funds will be achieved.

The North Street project is estimated at 3 million dollars.

State funds will be provided as long as the Town does the design.

There is no guarantee that state and federal funding will be available.

Not on the tier ranking

The Dams

6 month inspections on the dam

Needs to be completed by end of December 2008

Survey and design will cost approximately \$360,000.

A recent letter came from the state to design and survey the dam.

It was suggested placing this item on the warrant.

### **Recreation**

Betty Wright and members of the Recreation Commission are present to discuss the proposed budget for FY09.

Self sufficient

The Personnel Advisory Board has approved an increase in steps.

Nancy Billings made a request for the full time position in the Recreation Commission.

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**Town Administrator updates**

MORE Grant has been received.

Snow and Ice expenditures: compare like towns with best practices

- **Collector/Treasurer**

Karen Gauthier is present to discuss the status of the current budget and the proposed FY09 budget of the Collector/Treasurer's Office:

Retirement and Pensions

Worcester County Retirement

Large sum in 2009

Over \$1 million in 2010

Medicare/FICA

Five teachers are planning to retire in FY09 to date.

Layoffs:

Savings in the School Department

There was a discussion regarding different certifications, retirees, and grant positions.

Medicare and FICA

Leave the figure as is and the transfer request will have to handle the remaining.

Group Life Insurance

Group Health Insurance- hopefully okay with the figures.

Debt Service

Principal debt payments through 2014

(see hand out)

Feasibility study is not reimbursed until the project is well started.

**Debt Exclusion**

There was a discussion regarding debt exclusion.

The bonding goes out up to the full amount.

When you receive state reimbursement, it goes directly to the general fund.

The taxes do not change to the general household.

**The public meeting of the Finance Committee resumed at 12:29 P.M. following a break for lunch.**

- Nelson Library

Skip Currier is present to discuss the library.

There has been a discussion regarding indoor bathrooms, snack bar, and storage for the parks for recreational participants.

Skip discussed the history of Nelson Park with the Finance Committee.

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- Emergency Management

Ray Mead reviewed the budget for Emergency and Management.

Provides training for Police and Fire Departments

- Ambulance (unclassified)

Ray Mead, Chairman of the Ambulance Committee, is present.

Alert Systems is being used. It is based out of Station 1 and will be transferred to the new station.

Station 1 has been suggested for use by Alert Systems (Ambulance—the current ambulance contractor). Station 1 will need a renovation for office space and bathroom update.

- Library

The Town Administrator had requested a 0-2% increase in budget presentation. Classification changes are requested for employees due to the job description changes.

MMA will classify and then it will have to be approved at Town Meeting.

The budget needs to change to reduce the impact of the overall FY09 Town budget.

Energy costs

There is a CWMars assessment increase. It will level off through a 5 year time frame.

Fuel charges vs. Unilities

There was a discussion regarding the use of energy management.

- Assessors

Jennifer O'Neill is present.

There was a discussion regarding utilizing a warrant article approach to place \$45,000.00 into the Assessor's for the required property valuation process.

The real estate data is separate from the Town's software and stays fully functional when the rest of the town's system goes down.

Hardware issues, lack of software education exist.

**Continued Departmental budget review**

- Board of Health
- Town Accountant

The decision has not been made regarding the software choice for the town.

- Cable Oversight

Bob Hassinger is present.

Charter cable amount due the Town is based on \$.50 per subscriber.

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There is an IT Committee and Bob Hassinger is a member of the committee.

- MIS/GIS budget is increased.

There was a discussion regarding the use of Verizon vs. Charter.

**Citizen request**

Mark Durfee, public citizen and volunteer for the Town requested information regarding the Building Inspector and building receipts.

- Conservation

Needs 52.2 weeks for salaries for the proposed FY09 budget

**Continued Departmental budget review**

- Historical District Commission
- Historical Commission
- Hassanamesit Woods Management Committee

**Adjournment**

Fred Churchill moved the Finance Committee adjourn the public meeting.

Seconded: Sandy Merrill. All in favor. Motion carries.

The public meeting of the Finance Committee adjourned at 2:17 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Fiacco