

DRAFT

Town of Weare Finance Committee

Minutes of the Meeting of January 23, 2013

This meeting of the Finance Committee was held in the Conservation Committee Room of the Town Office and was called to order by the chairman at 7:03 p.m.

Present were Kate Cloud (chairman), Jill Dagenais, Gregg Elwood, Johnna Gryzwacz, Neal Kurk, Paul Marsh, Ike Shepard, Jeff Spring and Matt Whitlock. Also in attendance was Tim Redmond, Public Works director, Ian McSweeney of the Russell Foundation and Pam Shepard, Assistant Superintendent of Schools.

1. **Minutes:** on a motion by Johnna, seconded by Jill, the minutes of January 16, 2013, were approved as corrected by changing the date of the next meeting from January 16th to January 23d.

2. **Town warrant:** the Committee revisited Art. 16 (transfer station revolving fund), with Tim offering further explanation. No change was made in the Committee's recommendation. The Committee also revisited Art. 30 (purchase of Banks property), hearing from Ian, after which on a motion by Neal, seconded by Jeff, it voted 7 – 2 to RECOMMEND Art. 30.

3. John Stark warrant:

a. Art. 3 (operating budget): On a motion by Gregg, seconded by Ike, the Committee voted 9 – 0 to RECOMMEND the article. The John Stark board recognized the issue of declining enrollment and implemented a plan that balanced a quality education and property tax burdens.

b. Art. 4 (special education fund) On a motion by Gregg, seconded by Jill, the Committee voted 9 – 0 to RECOMMEND this article, which provides that 25% up to \$80,000 of any surplus on June 30, 2013, be placed in the special education expendable trust to cover the cost of any unanticipated increase in special education costs.

c. Art. 5 (buildings and grounds fund) On a motion by Gregg, seconded by Kate, the Committee voted 8 – 1 to RECOMMEND this article, which provides that 25% up to a \$60,000 of any surplus on June 30, 2013, be placed in the building and grounds maintenance expendable trust fund to provide funds for such purposes.

4. Weare schools warrant:

a. Art. 1 (roof bond) On a motion by Jill, seconded by Gregg, the Committee voted 8 – 0 – 1 to RECOMMEND this article.

b. Art. 4 (operating budget) On a motion by Jeff, seconded by Johnna, the Committee voted 7 – 2 to NOT RECOMMEND this article. In the face of continuing declines in enrollment, the Weare board determined not to reduce the budget but rather retain the present staff and reduce class size. The Committee cannot support a budget that does not reasonably balance the need for a quality education with the need for an affordable education.

c. Art. 5 (support staff union contract) On a motion by Gregg, seconded by Neal, the Committee voted 6 – 0 – 3 to NOT RECOMMEND this article. The true cost of this article is over \$151,000, not the stated \$4,958, as the ability to fund the contract without providing health insurance and simultaneously avoid payment of the Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”) penalty for not providing health insurance was too uncertain.

d. Art. 6 (calling special meeting) On a motion by Neal, seconded by Jill, the Committee voted 9 – 0 to NOT RECOMMEND this article, as it is an unfair “second bite of the apple” before a different electorate.

e. Art. 7 (special education fund) On a motion by Gregg, seconded by Neal, the Committee voted 8 – 1 to NOT RECOMMEND this article, as it provided that the first \$25,000 of any surplus this year would go into the special education expendable trust fund to provide for unanticipated special ed costs. The Committee thought the amount and purpose were reasonable and appropriate but felt that the failure to return any of the first \$25,000 of surplus to the taxpayers was not fair.

f. Art. 8 (technology equipment) On a motion by Jeff, seconded by Gregg, the Committee voted 8 – 1 to NOT RECOMMEND this article. This article raises and appropriates \$59,750 to buy technology equipment. If this purchase is essential for student education, it should have been included in the operating budget (Art. 4).

5. Town warrant review:

a. Art. 6 (operating budget) On a motion by Gregg, seconded by Jill, the Committee voted 8 – 1 to RECOMMEND this article, provided the police budget overtime line is reduced by \$10,000 to \$100,000 at the deliberative session.

b. Art. 17 (police cruiser) On a motion by Gregg, seconded by Ike, the Committee voted 8 – 1 to NOT RECOMMEND this article. The Committee believes that the police fleet is not well managed so that the number of new vehicles needed is unclear. There is likely to be sufficient money in the cruiser fund (\$10/hour from police detail work goes into this fund) to purchase one new vehicle this year.

6. **Overall discussion:** the Committee totaled the cost to taxpayers if all the articles it recommended were supported by voters. This came to \$17.37, an increase of \$1.95, or 11.3%, in the tax rate. This would increase the tax on a house assessed at \$250,000 by \$487.50. There was a general feeling that this was more than taxpayers could afford at this time, so the Committee will review its recommendations at its next meeting.

6. **Adjournment:** the meeting was adjourned at 11:27 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Tuesday, January 29th.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal M. Kurk, Secretary