

# **WEARE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**

## **JANUARY 17, 2018**

1. The Weare Finance Committee met on Wednesday 17 Jan at 7pm at the Town Offices. Members present were Lori Davis, Bill Anderson, Neal Kurk, Keith Erf, Ellen Dokton, and Gregg McDowell. Also present was Town Moderator John Foss.
2. Administrative. Moderator Foss advised the committee of the resignation of member Travis Corcoran. He further advised that the committee would still be allowed to conduct business as long as a majority (5) of remaining members were present.
3. Town Business. The purpose of the meeting was to conduct a preliminary review of 2018 draft warrant articles. The committee discussed each draft article and made preliminary recommendations.
  - a. Town Budget. (\$6.08M) The proposed budget of \$6.08M represents a 6.6% increase over the 2017 operating budget. The default budget of \$6.00M represents a 5.1% increase over the 2017 budget. The Board of Selectmen amended the default budget to reflect concerns our committee expressed on 3 January. However, no changes have been made to the proposed budget. The Committee believes a 6.6% increase is not warranted and would present an unnecessary burden on taxpayers. The Committee is seeking a more responsible proposed budget (\$5.88M) with a 3% increase. It is noteworthy that the 2017 budget, which was reduced by \$106K at deliberative session to \$5.71M, was for all practical purposes the same as the 2016 \$5.69M budget. Additionally the Board of Selectmen have indicated there is more unexpended funds available this year than last to help reduce the tax impact. It is therefore the sense of the Committee that additional cuts could be made in the proposed budget. (NOT RECOMMENDED 0-6)
  - b. Non Union Pay Raises (\$42.3K). Article would provide an average of 3% wage hikes to this pool of employees. The Committee believes this article requires further discussion. Discussion noted that voters approved 3% raises for these employees last year. Despite cost of living not increasing at a 3% rate per year, the Committee has concerns that a similar warrant article appears every year. If raises are going to exceed COLA then either the rate should be reduced or the article should appear in alternate years. (RECOMMENDED 3-2-1)
  - c. Government Building Capital Reserve Fund (\$36K). Article would add funds to said account in event of unexpected emergency repairs in town buildings. The account currently has \$60K in it. Town has many older

structures prone to unplanned maintenance needs. Thus an account is warranted. How much is needed is the question. It is the consensus of the committee that the \$60K currently in the account, with unexpended reserves in the town operating budget, is sufficient for this year. (NOT RECOMMENDED 2-4)

- d. Police Cruisers . Two. (\$89.1K). This article continues the planned replacement program for frontline cruisers. Three(3) were purchased last year. The Police Chief has indicated all cruisers would be used for patrol and not work to home use. Last year we supported the long range plan for 3 and 2. Committee was unclear this year whether 5 or 4 cruisers were needed to meet current patrol operations; was the fifth cruiser only needed to support 24 hour ops if an additional officer position was approved? Concern was also expressed that the funding would be taken from last year's unexpended balance. While this was done last year, and supported by the Committee, there was sentiment expressed that this year's purchase should be raised by taxes with unexpended fund balance returned to the taxpayers. Article requires further review by the Committee. (NOT RECOMMENDED 0-6)
- e. Additional Police Officer (\$41.5K). Article would add an officer position. Cost reflects only half a year. Although not in the article language, the Police Chief's intention is to increase patrolling to 24 hour coverage when all positions are filled. However, we have had two vacant positions for over a year. It is the sense of the Committee that we should work on filling our current vacancies and before we look to add positions. (NOT RECOMMENDED 0-6)
- f. Fire Department Vehicle Special Revenue Fund. .Ambulance reimbursements provide this as a funding source for fire vehicles purchased or leased by the town. Article would expand use of these funds to include equipment as well as vehicles. Approval to withdraw funds would still require warrant article approval by the voters. Committee had some concern that in the short term it would be easy to approve purchases that have no tax impact. When the time came for a major purchase, such as a fire truck, there would be insufficient funds to reduce a one time tax impact. There is also some concern that regulatory/law changes at the State level may impact future funding levels for ambulance reimbursements by insurance companies. The sense of the Committee is that there are sufficient checks and balances (Board of Fire Wards, CIP, Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee) to ensure funds are managed with due consideration for large planned purchases. (RECOMMENDED 5-1)
- g. Plow Truck. (\$185K). Article would provide Highway Truck Capital Reserve Fund with an additional \$185K to replace a plow truck with a fully

equipped 10 wheeler. The Public Works Director has made a strong case that the town needs to replace one truck per year to meet town demands. The cost of the new truck partially offset by \$30k currently in the fund. No issues here for the Committee. (RECOMMENDED 6-0)

- h. Backhoe. (\$95.3K). Article would purchase the backhoe presently under lease. Eighty percent of last year's lease costs are being allowed by the vendor to reduce the purchase price. The Public Works director has made a strong case for the need for this equipment. No issues here for the Committee. (RECOMMENDED 6-0)
- i. Road Reconstruction (\$480K). Recurring warrant article for maintenance of town roads; \$expect \$278K from the state with the remainder raised by taxes. Even with a one time supplemental of over \$200K last year, we are still falling behind with road maintenance. No issues here for the Committee. (RECOMMENDED 6-0)
- j. Public Works- Part Time Driver. (\$6.3K) Article would allow the Public Works Director flexibility to meet demands for plowing. Truck mechanic currently has a designated plow route. With an aging fleet, plow trucks frequently require repairs which take him off the route and reduce efficiency of operations in the winter. Adding this per diem or part time help would keep him off a designated route and improve operations. No issues here for the Committee (RECOMMENDED 6-0).
- k. Bridge Improvement Maintenance Trust Fund. (\$105K). Second year of four to establish town matching funds for 3 red listed bridges/culverts in town. Funds need to be raised and ready when state funds are offered. No issues here for the Committee. (RECOMMENDED 6-0)
- l. Bolton Park Pavilions. (\$60K). Article would provide construction of two covered open air pavilions at Bolton Park. There have been various proposals for Bolton Park over the years, including field expansion levelling, and parking. The Committee would like Parks and Rec to develop an overall plan for Bolton Park which could then be used to evaluate individual projects consistent with a long range plan. (NOT RECOMMENDED 0-6)
- m. Old Town Hall Bell Tower. (\$49.7K). Funds would be added to the Government Building and Maintenance Fund for repairs of the bell tower on the old town hall. Consensus of the Committee is that maintaining this structure is important in preserving the historical character of the town. Last year a similar article without specifics failed. The Committee was seeking an article with more specifics. We now have that. Though there is concern over whether this is the right place to start with repairs to

the old town hall, there is no disputing that such repairs are needed. (RECOMMENDED 5-1)

- n. Library Planning and Engineering. (\$25K). Library Director has proposed this as first of four installments to lay out plans for the future of the library; e.g. space needs, location, function. Consensus of the Committee is that the Library has access other funding sources to survey and establish what the town wants in its library. The town has historically not supported planning and estimating projects prior to their approval; the most recent example being the highway garage. (NOT RECOMMENDED 0-6)
- o. Cemeteries . Perimeter Maintenance. (\$10K). Recurring item to conduct wall and perimeter repairs on town cemeteries. Would be appropriate to determine how much is currently in the Capital Reserve Fund. No other issues. (RECOMMENDED 6-0)
- p. Cemeteries- Interior Improvements (\$20K). No tax impact; funds to be withdrawn from cemetery trust fund. No Committee issues. RECOMMENDED 6-0)
- q. Fireworks. (6.5K). Annual article to provide fireworks for Weare Patriotic Celebration each summer. Historically supported, but an article that is really up to each voter whether they feel it is appropriate to be raised thru tax dollars or private fundraising. (RECOMMENDED 4-2)
- r. Forest Management. (\$30K). withdraws money from the town forest account without tax impact to manage town forests. No issues for the Committee. (RECOMMENDED 6-0)
- s. Conservation Commission Land Purchases. (\$150K). No tax impact; would allow the Commission to withdraw, with Selectmen approval, said amount for the purchase of new town forest land, should such opportunity present itself. No issues with the Committee. (RECOMMENDED 6-0)
- t. Tax Deeded Property Sales. Would allow the Board of Selectmen expanded authority to dispose thru auction or sealed bid all tax deeded property. Such sales are currently size restricted. Sale of larger parcels must be approved by the voters. It is the consensus of the Committee that things are working fine now. When it comes to larger parcels, the Committee feels all residents should have a say. Such sales and subsequent development can have an impact on the historical character of the town. (NOT RECOMMENDED 0-6)

#### 4. Schools.

- a. Weare. Teachers rejected the contract proposal so there will be no warrant article for Weare teachers this year. Proposed budget is \$15.3M; the default \$15.1M. Both are slightly below last year's approved budget. Primary reason is a few teachers retiring at the upper pay scale. It is the sense of the Committee that the board worked to keep its proposed budget lower in anticipation of a teachers' contract also being on the ballot. That did not materialize. The committee will further review and make recommendations at our next meeting
  - b. Stark. Chairman Lawson of the Stark School board will be attending the 24 Jan meeting to discuss budget and teachers' contract issues for Stark.
5. Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 9:29pm. Next meeting is Wed 24 Jan 7pm at the town offices.

Bill Anderson  
Secretary

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