

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Meeting Date: 7 February, 2008

### CALL TO ORDER

The Meeting was called to order at 7:02 P.M. in the First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall. Mr. Morton chaired the meeting.

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Brian Morton (Chair), Kay Moran (Vice Chair), Marilyn Blaustein, Alice Carlozzi, Douglas Slaughter, Andrew Steinberg.

### OTHERS PRESENT

John Musante (Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director), Nancy Pagano (Senior Center Director), Roy Rosenblatt (Community Services Director), members of the public

### COMMITTEE AGENDA

1. Budget Reviews
  - a. Community Services
    - i. Senior Center
    - ii. Human Services (including Human Service Funding Committee feedback)
2. Member Reports
3. Minutes
4. Miscellaneous

### COMMITTEE ACTION

Moran moved to accept the Minutes of the Meeting held on January 31, 2008 as corrected. The Motion was seconded by Slaughter and approved with 5 in favor and one abstention (Steinberg).

Moran moved to accept the Minutes of the Meeting held on January 28, 2008 as corrected. The Motion was seconded by Slaughter and approved with 6 in favor.

Moran moved to send Paul Bobrowski a communication to thank him for his service on the committee, regrets that he is resigning, and the committee's best wishes. The motion was seconded by Blaustein and approved with 6 in favor.

### DISCUSSION

Pagano presented the budget for the senior center. She began by describing the demographic trends such as increase in the elder population, the number of elders struggling financially, the growth of food programs and the need for home delivered meals. The Senior Center's budget has decreased as the demand for its services has increased. Pagano described new grant-funded initiatives, staff changes, and cuts that are proposed for FY 2009. The Program Coordinator position is reclassified and the salary is now paid entirely by the formula grant from the state. The

Senior Center staff oversees scheduling and rental of space at the Monson building, which generates \$27,000 income for the town. She described the consequences of the budget reductions.

Steinberg asked how the formula grant is determined and whether the possibility has been explored to regionalize any of the services provided by Senior Center. Pagano said that we deliver meals to Pelham, and that the cost is offset by a payment of 91¢ for each meal that is delivered.

Moran asked about examples of assistance the Senior Center receives from other town departments and provides to other town departments. About one-third of the time of the Senior Center administrative assistant is allocated to scheduling use of the Monson Building and Bangs Center. In addition, the Senior Center oversees the tax work-off program and is the liaison for the Kanegasaki sister city program. The Senior Center also works with the health department with the flu clinic and other health programs and works with the Veterans Agent on benefits to elder Veterans. They coordinate with human services and with the police department and sheriff on the SALT program. They work with the fire department on the smoke and carbon dioxide detector program. The police department assists the senior center to provide security for the Bangs Center.

Rosenblatt presented the budget for Community Development which is largely overseeing the Community Development Block Grant. Eighty percent of the Director's salary and ninety percent of the assistant's salary is from the Community Development Block Grant. He described the progress on activities supported by the previous grants including Main Street affordable housing and child care tuition assistance. Modifications were required to the program that supports first-time home buyers from low- and moderate-income households. The original plan had to be changed to comply with CDBG regulatory requirements so that the housing would remain affordable. This will require Town Meeting action. The work is proceeding to renovate kitchens at Chestnut Court. A major initiative of the 2008 grant will be to renovate the North Amherst School, which is the site of the Amherst Survival Center and the Head Start program. The cost will be approximately \$275,000, if we can obtain a variance for some of the handicapped accessibility requirements.

Several members of the committee asked about the use of CDBG funds to support grants to human services agencies. Rosenblatt confirmed that CDBG funds cannot be used to support a program funded in the last year and that there must be a year without Town funding before a service is supported with those funds. Musante observed that in addition to the transition issue, the Town must address the philosophical issue about what is the best approach to meeting human services needs. Rosenblatt addressed the issue of priorities.

The committee discussed the North Amherst School and our commitment to the programs located there. In addition to the programs, the Town has a commitment to the building which is an important part of a village center and is fortunate to have this means to maintain it. The committee discussed other work that has already been done to maintain this facility.

Member reports – Steinberg and Morton reported on the meeting of the Budget Coordinating Group and the plans for the February 11 forum. Slaughter and Moran reported on the meeting of the Joint Capital Planning Committee. Moran reported about the Library Budget Forum on February 2, Steinberg on the Select Board budget meeting of that afternoon, and Carlozzi on the Regional School Committee meeting.

Minutes – The draft minutes were reviewed, corrected and approved for the meetings of January 28 and 31. It was agreed that the member drafting minutes should exercise discretion about whether to record abstentions by the member who did not vote and whether to record the reason.

Miscellaneous – The committee recognized Paul Bobrowski’s resignation with a motion and the reassignment of speaking assignments for the annual Town Meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Steinberg  
Acting Clerk