

**Amherst Finance Committee Minutes**  
**Thursday, January 12, 2017, 4 PM**  
**Town Room, Town Hall**

**ATTENDANCE:** Marylou Theilman (Chair), Joseph Jayne, Bernie Kubiak, Tim Neale, Janice Ratner, Anurag Sharma. Absent: Steve Braun.

**SELECT BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Alisa Brewer, Connie Kruger, Douglas Slaughter, Andrew Steinberg, James Wald.

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Paul Bockelman, Town Manager; Sonia Aldrich, Comptroller; Claire McGinnis, Treasurer/Collector; David Ziomek, Assistant Town Manager; Amherst Media.

Joint meeting of the Finance Committee and Select Board was called to order at 4:05pm.

**AGENDA AND DISCUSSION**

1. Joint meeting of the Select Board and Finance Committee with the Town Manager and Finance Director to hear an overview of the FY18 Municipal Budget Proposal, with questions from board members and answers.

**Presentation, Questions, and Discussion of Town Manager's budget**

Paul Bockelman presented the Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2018 and thanked the Select Board for all their hard work and challenges in FY17 with the loss of John P. Musante. The FY18 budget will continue to move the Town of Amherst along a prudent financial path established over decades of strong fiscal management. This budget sustains core town services. Increases in the budget were made to cover benefits, payroll requirements, and departmental expenses. No additional staff positions are proposed.

Sharma inquired about the town's strategic partnership with UMass as it pertains to the 7.8% increase in local receipts. Bockelman pointed out the additional \$100,000 from the fee in lieu of the hotel/motel tax that we can now budget for from UMass. Theilman asked about the status of non-taxable housing at UMass as it pertains to students enrolled in Amherst schools, some of whom need substantial support from the English Language Learner Program. Brewer acknowledged that the town has not spoken with the University about non-taxable housing. Kubiak inquired about the funding of the OPEB Trust Fund. Bockelman pointed out that they have increased the budget by \$100,000 per year up to \$400,000 for FY18. Sharma wanted to know the Town's current tax rate. Bockelman said it is 21.83%. Sharma wanted to know why the town's tax rate is higher than other surrounding towns. Bockelman highlighted the robust public services that Amherst provides its citizens vs. surrounding towns. Ambulance, leisure services, full time police and fire, all well trained. Theilman asked how many years it would be before Amherst was at a tax rate of \$25/\$1000 assessed valuation. She stated that is one of the issues brought out at the Regional Assessment Meetings. Steinberg wanted an update on the Health Claims Trust Fund. Bockelman pointed out that by switching to HMO from PPO would

lower cost and the town has a strong fund balance. The town has had zero increases in the healthcare trust fund cost in the last few years.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm

Joe Jayne, acting clerk

Documents used: Town of Amherst Proposed Budget Fiscal Year 2018.