

Minutes of the Board of Finance Budget Review Meeting
March 24, 2008 – Police Station Conference Room – 7 p.m.

Members present: Justin Donnelly, Joseph Sangiovanni, David Tagliavini, Dennis Kreps, Joanne Sullivan, Sam Fuller, alternate Tom Frenaye
Absent: alternate, Jim Lennon
Also present: First Selectman Scott Lingenfelter, Selectman Brian Fitzgerald, Treasurer Christine Davidson, Director of Finance Deborah Cerrato

Chairman Justin Donnelly called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Correspondence: The Chairman noted that Selectman John G. Smith had submitted a two page letter dated March 24, 2008. This letter had been sent to members via email, and hard copies were available. The letter had comments regarding the IT budget and the Youth Services budget.

Citizen Comment: None

Budget Review

IT – Information Technology – Deborah Howe and Dan Beaudoin were present. Mr. Beaudoin reviewed the IT budget by line item, noting that the proposed budget had been reduced to a 3.5% increase, for a total of \$264,504.

The WAN and Internet Costs were noted at \$60,180. A part-time position will be eliminated. Contracted Services has been greatly increased to cover the transition from the old ADMINS service to the new MUNIS package. It was noted that the WAN and Internet Costs would not have as large of an increase in the next fiscal budget. The Chairman addressed the concerns of John G. Smith, as documented by his letter.

Social Services - Chairman Ernie Petkovich was present and he complimented all four Directors; Paula Pascoe, Denise Winiarski, Janet Frechette, and Peter Black on their dedicated service to the community. He spoke in favor of the increase in the Emergency Aid Association (EAA) contract with the Town. This partnership is very beneficial to the residents and a great bargain for the town. He strongly supported the requested new social worker for Youth Services. He noted that this is the third year that this new position has been requested. Youth Services will have more responsibility as the State is now saying the towns, not the juvenile courts, are responsible for young persons up to the age of 18. This is a big change. Chairman Donnelly noted that this is another instance of where the State mandates, but does not fund. Mr. Petkovich reported that the Board of Selectmen had approved of this new position.

Youth Services – Director Peter Black was present. It was noted that his budget report and background material were included in the budget book. A new page titled Distinction between Youth Service Providers was distributed to the members. Mr. Black briefly reviewed his budget request. He noted a chart which reflected his activity over the past four years. The request for a new social worker is due to the demands of the Youth Services bureau continuing to increase in actual numbers, case complexities and requirement for services. There has been an increase in the demand for services and this is exceeding the resources to meet this demand. The Board of Selectmen has approved this new position; total budget for Youth Services is \$94,465. There is a safety issue involved. Mr. Black really needs a second social worker to provide a safe social environment both for the social workers and the clients they serve. In response to questions, Mr. Black noted the distinctions between the School Social Worker, EEA, and the Youth Services Bureau. There is no duplication of services; the three agencies work well with each other and provide the best possible service to its clients. Mr. Black reported that the Town receives a \$14,000 Youth Services Bureau grant which is included as general fund revenue in the budget. These funds do not go directly to his budget. Two other small grants (total approximately \$8,000) fund the various programs and are not definite grants on an annual basis.

MiniBus – Director Denise Winiarski was present and reviewed her budget. The requested budget was supported by the Board of Selectmen. She explained in detail what the MiniBus service offers to the residents of Suffield. Riders range from plus eighty year residents to much younger disabled persons. This is a vital service to Suffield residents.

Senior Center – Director Paula Pascoe was present and reviewed her budget. She noted that her budget was an operational budget; her programs were either funded by various grants or by fees charged to the

participants by instructors. When asked about the number of participants she reported tallying approximately 565 different individuals served. An average weekly attendance is about 360. Her budget reflected a 1.25% increase and was supported by the Board of Selectmen. A brief discussion was held regarding the submitted budget for FY 09/10.

Social Worker – Emergency Aid Association (EAA) – Director Janet Frechette was present. She introduced David Colangelo, Vice Chairman of the EAA. It was noted that the Town of Suffield and the EAA signed a memorandum of understanding effective Oct. 1, 2003 whereby the EAA delivers social services to the residents of Suffield. The current memorandum of understanding extends this agreement through June 30, 2012. The EAA is requesting that Suffield increase compensation to \$4,867 per month (\$58,400 per year). This increase will help off set the additional costs associated with the hiring of a part time Social Services Coordinator. Since Town functions now account for 40% of the total payroll, the EAA is asking the Town to assume \$12,800 of the increase. There is a dramatic increase in the need for critical social service consultations. This increase reflects the Town paying for its share of services. EAA is not asking the Town to pay a pro-rated share of any other operating expenses, such as rent, utilities, etc. The Board of Selectmen agreed to the increased monthly compensation for EAA. Ms. Frechette detailed services of the EAA and the detailed the services available under the memorandum of understanding.

Health & Social Services – The First Selectman briefly reviewed the list of organizations which received funding from the Town. Some of these, such as North Central Health District charge on a per capita basis. The Board of Selectmen approved this budget as submitted, and it reflects a 3.89% increase.

Town Counsel – The First Selectman briefly reviewed this budget; he noted this budget was down 12.79%. This budget is down because of a reduction in legal fees, due to lack of litigation.

Town Hall – The First Selectman briefly reviewed this budget; budget reflects a 2.82% increase.

Finance – Director of Finance Deborah Cerrato reviewed her budget. She noted that the contracted service line item had increased from \$5,000 to \$20,000 in order to fund the OPEB actuarial study. This study will need to be completed bi-annually. She reported that the Board of Selectmen did not support her request for a new staff person, a Purchasing Clerk. This is the third time she has requested this new staff. In response to a question, Ms. Cerrato stated there is a procedure for Purchase Orders; but this procedure is not always followed. Many times, the purchase order request also has the invoice attached. Chairman Donnelly stated that is not appropriate. For orders over a \$1,000 a purchase order must be completed and sent to the Finance Office; then the item purchased is obtained, and then the invoice is sent to the Finance Office for payment.

Mr. Fuller stated that hopefully after the budget is completed, we can set aside some serious time to look at the audit and address the problems listed. Mr. Kreps stated we have to accept the Audit report first and we should have a budget for next year that allows us to having the necessary staffing. The Board considered a special meeting with the auditors. Mr. Lingenfelter stated that a meeting will be held later this week attended by the Chairman of the Water Pollution Control Authority, the First Selectman, Chairman of the Board of Finance, Director of Finance, Ed Basile, Julie Nigro and the auditors to come up with a game plan of how to address the recommendations of the auditors. The First Selectman suggested a tri-board meeting; Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and the WPCA, the Treasurer, to discuss issues, to make sure that everyone is working on the same page. The Treasurer, Christine Davidson stated that she feels the WPCA did not take the issues seriously, that there is a definite “disconnect” between information getting to all the appropriate parties. Mr. Donnelly stated that the BOF is responsible for the WPCA. Ms. Davidson said that the BOF and WPCA must work together and agree on the solutions and proceed forward. Chairman Donnelly agreed there is a real disconnect between the BOF and the WPCA. Mr. Donnelly stated that he has no doubt who has the responsibility and the overall authority over the WPCA. The Board of Finance does; and even the WPCA counsel Don Holtman wrote a letter some 12 or 13 years ago where he indicated that. And Mr. Donnelly has a copy of that letter. Mr. Fitzgerald noted that the Board of Finance reviews and approves the WPCA budget and it is carried with the Town Budget to Town meeting.

Revenue – Non property tax and State Aid – Ms. Cerrato noted that most of the figures were provided by the various departments. After careful scrutiny by the Treasurer, the revenue from interest (invested income) was reduced from \$500,000 to \$450,000. Ms. Cerrato noted that the calculation for rent from the cell towers was

included in Tab 3, and she also noted that projects not requested to be continued, return the funding to the general fund. There were two such projects as noted in Tab 3; for a total of \$65,919.68.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Bobbie C. Kling, Secretary to the Board of Finance
Bf.M.MARCH.24.08. FINAL