

**Warrant Committee FY06 Meeting Minutes**  
**May 10, 2006**  
**7:30 p.m. CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
**COMMUNITY ROOM**

*Handout(s) distributed tonight are:*

- 1. FY07 Summary by department of final requested budgets dated 5/10/06, also attached is the proposed revenues to fund said budget*
- 2. FY07 Reserve Fund detail through 5/10/06*
- 3. WC Report to TM Draft*

Member(s) absent: Hofmann

Also present: Town Administrator Tom Younger, Assistant Town Administrator Jeffrey Conti, Town Treasurer Floyd Carman, Town Accountant Barbara Hagg, Fire Chief David Frizzell, Assistant Fire Chief Angus Davison, several townspeople that spoke later in the meeting.

WC Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

***Minutes of 5/3/06***

The minutes of the meeting was discussed and corrected. After changes, they were approved by the Committee.

**Reserve Fund Transfer Request**

Chief Frizzell and Angus Davison were present to discuss the transfer request for a \$138K to replace a fire truck with safety issues. This is a 1986 truck (20 years old) and had been identified as needing to be replaced during capital budget meetings. This request was for a combined pumper and a brush truck because of the urban forestland here in Belmont. The existing truck has an open cab that creates a safety issue for firefighters. Just recently the cab came apart from the truck and a temporary repair has been made that created more damage. More metal fatigue issues were identified during the repair. The refurbishing would be \$100K or we could move to a replacement. The CBC concurred with the decision to replace now rather than refurbish – an endless pit. The proposed solution is to have the CBC fund approximately half in the FY07 budget and the difference out of the Reserve Fund in the current year. Money was freed up because of the Homer Building being addressed by leftover Town Hall Building Committee and bonding of the upgrades for software licenses. It

takes nearly a year to prepare specs, order the truck and have it delivered. This funding would allow for this to be done completely in FY07. This qualifies as an emergency and unanticipated. There are available funds in the Reserve Fund of \$339,762. The BOS voted unanimously in favor of this truck. Member Callanan asked about sharing a truck – the answer from the fire officials is that there is an issue with timing because of the time to respond. Also used trucks were researched and this has been discarded as unworkable for a variety of reasons (lemons, age, etc). This would be a double duty pumper and brush truck. This would be a “woodland interface” truck that would meet both types of use. Heigham moved to approve the request to make up balance in the capital budget, Oates seconded. Unanimously approved.

## **Continued discussion of STM/ATM Articles**

Changes since the last meeting:

1. \$143K of leftover capital budget funds will be used for building maintenance
2. \$150K of Ash Landfill Stabilization will be used for engineering at the Ash Landfill site
3. \$10K was added back to the watering of the school fields
4. The Library is looking at their state aid for potentially opening on Sunday (and Saturday during the summer). Benton will remain closed. The Library Trustees are meeting within the next week. Member Hobbs asked whether they are pursuing the concept of closing the Library on Monday & Tuesday. TA Younger stated that this would be up to the Trustees to negotiate.

Article 4 – appropriations – approved

Article 11 capital budget – approved

Article 6 elected officials – 4% increase for the Town Clerk, 7% for the Treasurer (below the midpoint), Tom will speak with the Town Clerk regarding the %, request a recommendation from the General Government subcommittee. If the number is 4%, justify the reason for 4% vs. 3% for the Town Treasurer. The Treasurer increase is 4% for step and 3% for cost of living. Market values for Treasurers are higher than Clerks but proposals are not in line with this. There is no supervisor of the Treasurer or Clerk to do performance measures so it would be inappropriate for WC to measure performance. Unanimously in favor of all elected officials except for the Town Clerk.

Heigham motion to increase the current FY06 salary for the Town Clerk by 3% and re-sum the amounts. The new figure is \$74,608. This 3% is consistent with the pool for other managers in Town. Tillotson opposed, everyone else in favor.

\$168, 094 total for Article 6, Solomon abstained, everyone else in favor

Article 3 – source of funds – Heigham recommend we approve as a whole, Brusch seconded, Younger stated that turn backs will be reviewed after two years for closeout. This has been his policy throughout his career. Unanimously approved.

Article 10 will be discussed next week with the HR Director Diane Jenkins.

Article 26 will be reviewed this week again by the Board of Assessors and may not be brought to TM. Member Bruschi stated that this had been delayed because of WC concerns and the Assessors were going to make a presentation again but this has not been scheduled.

## **A Blueprint for Change – Short & Long Term Recommendations**

The WC will meet with the BOS (and the School Committee) to further discuss these short and long term recommendations. This will be presented to the TM as a blueprint for change. Current processes and funding are non sustainable and this issue must be addressed quickly. Some of these items have huge impacts: health insurance, regionalization (this would require legislation), and outsourcing. The BOS would like to meet with the WC to discuss this. The purpose of bringing this group together is to gather consensus on the issues, who will take the lead, the process or timelines for reporting back to the group, ownership of each issue & have everyone “buy in”. Is this what we want to talk about?

Member Callanan asked where the fire department would fit into this group. BOS Chair Solomon stated that Regionalization would not be in a short term issue.

Member Paolillo agrees that a broad based meeting to discuss the structural changes needed in the future is important. Member Allison has looked at the magnitude of these issues. Fire suppression budget is \$4M, a 15% savings would be \$600K, and perhaps 10% is a reasonable target or \$400K. Health care is the largest issue on the list with the possible exception of outsourcing on an aggregate level. Member White stated that one of the ways to reduce health care is to look at the real current cost of health care & this would drive the total. Chair Jones stated that when he was on the School Committee he recommended outsourcing school aid services and this would have an impact on health and retirement costs. Chair Jones would like to have a list for the TM.

An outsourcing study that would identify the potential largest savings or immediate savings to start is needed. We will continue to reduce services into the future unless other savings are identified. Member Widmer stated that successful completion of all these will still not nullify the need for operating overrides or cuts in services. There is no easy solution to the budget issues in this state. There are no immediate solutions and may be no immediate impact of these changes.

Health insurance, outsourcing, other means of trash pickup, regionalization, consolidation of certain departments, asset management plan, and revenue alternatives are the six topics that the BOS is looking at.

Roy Epstein, a citizen of the Town, is concerned with the structure of town fees for services. It requires rationalization and there is probably another \$200K of fees available. The fire department will help people who cannot get into their homes (lockout services), basement flooding etc are all provided at no cost to the citizens of the community. False alarm costs are only \$10 when a fire truck is sent out. There are 1500 calls per year and many of these are miscellaneous calls that are not fire suppression. We are competing with private tradesmen that

provide these services. In the trash department, leaf pickup is provided free of charge. Garden waste is only done by a small # of people and we are competing with private landscapers. Chair Jones stated that this is a worthwhile question to pursue. We need to tell the departments when to say no when there are continuing cut backs in services. Some delays may be necessary when citizens request services. Member Heigham stated that only existing fees were researched by the WC during the last time that fees were reviewed. Decisions on core versus non core services must be identified. If there are no operating overrides in the future, these really need to be researched. Prioritization is needed of all the items on the listing. Member Bruschi stated that adding new revenue should remain on the list even if the action item is referred to the TA. People don't vote for overrides if townspeople feel we are wasting the taxpayer money.

Member Paolillo also asked about PILOT payments. Member Callanan has looked at this issue and was requested by the new Assessing Administrator to delay this until the end of May before meeting with the Board of Assessors.

The WC asked that there be an update on the health insurance bargaining to the WC on a periodic basis and further, we would report results to TM on a fairly regular basis. School Committee Chair Gibson wanted to have reasonable expectations explained to TM regarding timelines. Member White stated that the drop dead date is really 7/1/07 and we can fairly set that as an expectation for results. Member Curtis does not want the bar set too low.

Member Widmer stated that there have been a number of structural changes that have been implemented over the past few years that should be told to TM.

John Owens, a Town resident, asked about the PW consolidation and the "savings" from this. But, there was a consolidation without layoffs even though there were redundant jobs. He continued to ask about the budget scrutiny and questioned where there was any weeding out of unneeded budget items. Chair Jones stated that this is reviewed at a number of levels. Member Bruschi clarified that the PW consolidation savings were gained by attrition and the decrease in contracted services by the better use of town personnel. The best thing about consolidation was the provision of better services with fewer people.

The seven areas for discussion will go to the BOS on Monday evening. Heigham moved that the 7 items be approved. Unanimously approved. This could be discussed at a joint meeting on June 7<sup>th</sup>. BOS Chair Solomon will confirm this with his Board.

There is a meeting scheduled at the CMS before the TM at 6:00 p.m. on 5/22/06 at 6:00 p.m. in the Faculty Dining Room. This meeting will go forward on an "as needed" basis. There will be no meeting of the WC on May 31<sup>st</sup>. There will be a last meeting of the WC on June 21<sup>st</sup>.

## **Other**

A draft of the WC Report was presented to members. The OCD office report will be written by Chair Jones. All changes must be sent to Chair by 3:00 p.m. tomorrow in order to be included in the final report.

Motion to adjourn by Member Heigham at 9:45 p.m.