

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Lois Stearns, Dan Campbell, Bernhard Porada, Tony Matteo, Sue Kaczinski and Bonnie L'Etoile

ALSO PRESENT: Deb Mero, Town Accountant; Bethany Walker, FINCOM secretary

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Stearns.

This meeting was video recorded.

- **MINUTES**

- Minutes from the March 5th, 2018 meeting were reviewed. L'Etoile requested a correction of name spelling for Mark Fortier (change from a "c" to a "k"). ***A motion was made by L'Etoile, seconded by Campbell and VOTED to accept the March 5th, 2018 minutes as amended. In Favor Votes:*** Stearns, Campbell, Porada, Matteo and Kaczinski ***Abstained:*** L'Etoile

- **MAIL**

- No Mail

- **COMMUNICATIONS**

- Stearns wanted to follow up on a question that L'Etoile had asked back in a previous budget meeting: How many town owned cell phones?
 - Stearns had received information from Town Administrator, Willie Morales, a print out of cell phones. After review and discussion of form, it appeared to be about 17, however, Stearns will confirm with Morales.
 - L'Etoile asked if there is separate billing or if one plan for all these phones. Mero believed it to be separate plans.

- **ACCOUNTANT BUDGET PRESENTATION**

- Mero presented the budget for her role as Accountant, traditionally, Mero would generate her budget according to her role here in Northfield and in Erving; splitting costs for some items (i.e. meetings and seminars) between the towns to lessen the cost to each town. Mero felt that the budget should be a real time figure to show what the actual costs are for this position.
 - Meetings and Seminars increased, as well as mileage
- Mero presented a request for additional funds for the FINANCIAL ASSISTANT (F.A.)
 - The current F.A splits her time doing the payroll on the accountant's side and payroll on the treasurer's side
 - Mero stated that they (herself and Brasseur) would like to shift the current F.A. to the tax collector roles and find a new person/F.A. to take on accounts payable.
 - These hours for the new F.A. for accounts payable combined with the current F.A. would be about 8 hours a week and Mero is requesting \$7000 for a budget.
- Mero stated in her budget discussion that her job description as accountant (as well as the tax collector and treasurer) are being reviewed and the Wage Classification Committee will be reviewing. Mero believes that her budget will cover the anticipated increase to wages without having to go into Reserves. Mero to update the omnibus for next week's meeting to show the salary change.
- ***A motion was made by Campbell, seconded by Matteo and VOTED unanimously to recommend Mero's accountant budget request.***

- **VOTE ON FINCOM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUDGET REQUESTS FOR FY19**

- FINCOM had a chance to discuss any issues on a request made by a department/committee/board. The following were read: Agriculture Commission, Assessors, Building Inspector, Conservation Commission, Council on Aging, Constable, EMS Enterprise, Farms Library, Finance, Fire, COG

Assessment, Board of Health, Highway, Historical Commission, Dickinson Library, Memorial Day, Open Space, Planning Board, Police, Recreation, Retirement System, Selectboard, Sewer Enterprise, Tax Collector, Town Clerk, Treasurer, Veteran's Memorial, Veterans District Assessment and Zoning Board of Appeals. Note: Alexander Hall has been removed since there has been no activity in this account since 2013 (in Selectboard accounts).

- *A motion was made by L'Etoile, seconded by Campbell and **VOTED** unanimously to recommend the omnibus budget with the exception of the Selectboard, highway and the schools.*
- Brief discussion on PVRs budget. Stearns mentioned that the Greenfield Recorder had published an article stating that there would be a 5.39% increase for Northfield, which converts to \$240,731. (Mero will use that figure as a placeholder in omnibus until it's confirmed). Thursday, March 22nd, the PVRs School Committee will be holding a meeting and will be voting on the budget. Discussed the potential scenario to correct the school lunch deficient

- **VOTE ON FINCOM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FY19 WARRANT ARTICLES WHERE NEEDED**

- FINCOM reviewed the Proposed Capital Articles for Annual Town Meeting to be Held on May 7th, 2018 document DRAFT dated March 5th, 2018, received by FINCOM on March 14th, 2018. Mero confirmed that what Morales had put for a source of funds was accurate and available.
 - L'Etoile asked about what kind of figure the FINCOM has available to make decisions. Mero stated that there is enough funds to cover all articles, put money into stabilization. Stearns stated that they need to keep in mind where they want to keep the tax rate.
 - Current stabilization figure is approximately 1 million dollars (1,024,000 plus interest).
 - Items R-V should be (1) article, per Matteo; at least that is how it was done in years past. P, Q and W should be separate, individual articles.
 - *A motion was made by Campbell, seconded by Kaczinski and **VOTED** unanimously to recommend all articles at this time except N (Fund Board of Health Stabilization) on draft proposal dated 3.5.18 received 3.14.18*

- **BUDGET REQUEST FORM DRAFTED BY MERO**

- Mero stated it doesn't have Mero's \$7,000 request, COLA figures and tuition and transportation for vocation school (approximately \$40,000). Other points to keep in mind PVRs could change. Mero increased street lights by \$1000, didn't want to level fund that figure
- Mero informed group that the New Growth figure is a good number now. 584,000 of the 600,000 is based on WMECO's reported new growth.

7:33 Campbell leaves meeting

- **VOTE ON FINCOM RECOMMENDATION FOR COLA FOR FY19**

- Stearns started discussion recommending a possible 2 or 2-1/2 % COLA. The COG is going with a 2% COLA
- L'Etoile would like to do a 2.75% COLA; Mero to refigure, appears it would be about \$33,000 for a 2.75% COLA
- *A motion was made by L'Etoile, seconded by Porada, and **VOTED** unanimously to recommend a 2.75% COLA*

7:43 Campbell returned to FINCOM meeting

- **PROPOSED POLICY ARTICLES REVIEW**

- FINCOM reviewed the Town of Northfield Proposed Policy Articles for Annual Town Meeting to be held on May 7th, 2018 document.
 - “A” Amending Tax Exempt Requirements, Requested by the Board of Assessors. *A motion was made by L’Etoile, seconded by Campbell and VOTED unanimously to support the exemption article.*
 - “B” Electrical Aggregation, Requested by the Energy Commission. FINCOM no opinion
 - “C” Establish Parks Committee Stabilization Fund, Requested by the Parks Committee. *A motion was made by L’Etoile, seconded by Matteo and VOTED unanimously that the FINCOM does not support this article requested by the Parks Committee if no money is being requested at this time.*
 - “D” Changing Annual Town Meeting, Requested by Council on Aging. FINCOM concerned about date change of this requested article and how it fits into the budget/warrant production timeline. FINCOM takes no position on this article.
 - “E” Changing National holiday name from Columbus Day to Indigenous People’s Day, Requested by Citizens Petition. FINCOM no position
 - “F” Eminent Domain, Requested by the Selectboard. FINCOM no comment
 - “G” Adopting MGL Ch.41 Sec 111M and 111N, Requested by the Board of Selectmen-EMS. FINCOM no comment
 - “H” Establishing a Historical Bylaw, Requested by the Historical Commission. FINCOM no comment
 - “I” Home Rules Petition, Requested by the Board of Selectmen. FINCOM no comment
 - “J” Solar PILOT Pursuant to MGL Ch. 59 Sec 38H, Requested by the Board of Assessors. FINCOM no comment
 - “K” Contingency Prop 2-1/2, Requested by the Finance Committee. Discussion that this article must precede omnibus. Stearns to confirm this is in the correct sequence.
 - This draft does not include the requested article made by FINCOM for stabilization OR the article requested by the Community Preservation Committee to increase the CPA from ½ % to 1%.

- **MISCELLANEOUS BUDGET DISCUSSION**

- The Selectboard meets 3/20/18 and 3/22/2018 to prioritize articles
- The Selectboard will join the FINCOM on 3/26 to finalize recommendations
- Stearns followed up with the proposal of the Town of Acushnet donating their used ambulance to Northfield’s EMS. Fortier has stated that the ambulance is not suitable for Northfield and will not be accepting.

- **NEXT MEETING**

- 3/26/2018 6pm with the Selectboard

A motion was made by L’Etoile, seconded by Campbell and VOTED unanimously to adjourn the FINCOM Meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:16 pm

Submitted by:

Bethany Walker

FINCOM Secretary

Approved On: Lois M. Stearns

Approved By: 3-26-18