

NORTHFIELD FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 11, 2021 6:00 PM
VIDEO CONFERENCE VIA ZOOM

PARTICIPATING FINCOM MEMBERS: Lois Stearns, Dan Campbell, Jack Spanbauer, Bernhard Porada and Sue Kaczinski

ABSENT FINCOM MEMBERS: Tony Matteo

ALSO PARTICIPATING IN VIDEO CONFERENCE: Andrea Llamas, Town Administrator; Barbara "Bee" Jacque, Selectboard Member; Beth Walker, FINCOM Secretary, Police Chief Robert Leighton (6:14pm-6:29pm) and BNCTV

*The FINCOM meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm by Stearns
This meeting was broadcast live*

Stearns read the following statement as per the agenda:

"Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, MGL, C30A. s20, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Town of Northfield Finance Committee will be conducted via remote participation. These minutes will be posted on the Town of Northfield Website as soon as possible after the meeting"

• **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- Two sets of minutes from the November 9, 2020 meeting were reviewed (one regular session and one executive session)
 - *A motion was made by Campbell, seconded by Spanbauer and **VOTED** unanimously to accept the November 9, 2020 minutes as presented.*
 - *A motion was made by Spanbauer, seconded by Campbell and **VOTED** unanimously to accept the November 9, 2020 executive session minutes as presented.*

• **FINCOM BUDGET REQUEST FOR FY22**

- Brief discussion on budget (wages, dues, meetings and supplies)
 - *A motion was made by Spanbauer, seconded by Campbell and **VOTED** unanimously to level fund the FINCOM budget except for the COLA portion of wages*
- Brief discussion on the Reserve Fund
 - *A motion was made by Campbell, seconded by Porada and **VOTED** unanimously to keep the Reserve Fund at \$45,000*

• **POLICE BUDGET PRESENTATION (6:15pm)**

- Chief Leighton presents the FY22 Police Budget; highlights the areas of increase
 - Wages line item shows an increase of \$40,525.71 (\$31,398.44 is an additional cost for the School Resource Officer position and \$9,127.27 is a 1.7% COLA & 2 step increases that fall in this year). Town fully funds SRO position and district then reimburses 50%.
 - COLA was automatically put in since the Police Contract calls for no less than 1.7%
 - No capital requests for FY22
 - The new Hybrid cruiser is almost ready

Campbell leaves meeting 6:25pm so the FINCOM can discuss the COLA for all employees

• **FY22 COLA**

- Stearns states that typically they use the SSA percentage increase as guidance for the COLA. SSA this year is 1.3%
- Discussion brought up by Spanbauer to have 1.7% across the board for all employees; all FINCOM members present in agreement
 - *A motion was made by Spanbauer, seconded by Porada and **VOTED** to have the FY22 COLA at 1.7%. In Favor Votes: Porada, Spanbauer, Kaczinski and Stearns **Abstained:** Campbell*

6:29 Leighton leaves meeting and Campbell joins back in meeting

- **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE**

- Financial amounts for FY22 --not presented.
- Free Cash, per Llamas, aggressively working hard on cleaning up numbers
- Capital Requests, per Llamas, all departments have turned them in.
 - Llamas also reminded the FINCOM that there is still \$472,221.80 available for certain projects (this is from the sale of the cell tower).
- Schell Bridge Project
 - The Right of Way portion is still in the works. Two abutters have been contacted and conversation has started, and one abutter has not yet responded.
- Llamas has been working on FEMA and CARES ACT submissions

- **COMMUNICATIONS**

- 12/31/2020 Account Balances (sent out)
 - Spanbauer inquired about Highway Bridges and Rails & Oil and Stone nearing the end of their respective budgeted amount; typically these accounts are where transfer requests pull funds from
- Invitation to participate in Ad Hoc Collaborative Committee
 - Selectboard is looking for (1) member of Planning board, (1) member of FINCOM, (3) Public members, (2-3) Moody members and (2-3) members of Thomas Aquinas College to form this committee. Heath Cummings will be the Selectboard member representative.
 - Porada suggested that instead of a FINCOM member, that a member from the Board of Assessors would be more beneficial to this committee.
 - *A motion was made by Porada, seconded by Spanbauer and **VOTED** unanimously to politely decline the invitation for the Ad Hoc Collaborative Committee and encourage the Selectboard to have a member from the Board of Assessors join instead.* Llamas will advise the Selectboard of this vote.
- CONSCOM chair called Stearns regarding the budget. CONSCOM wants to add back in secretary wages line item account and find their own secretary instead of using the Boards Clerk; CONSCOM prefers to have their own secretary specific to their committee.

- **REPORTS OF MEETINGS ATTENDED AS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FINCOM**

- Stearns: attended via Zoom a School Budget Subcommittee meeting that included the 4 FINCOM chairs; next meeting is 1/14/2021
- Stearns: The Chief of EMS wanted to discuss with Stearns and Llamas the rate of pay for certain positions and future services for Northfield EMS. Stearns wanted Chief to discuss more openly with all of the FINCOM members. Chief is concerned about the rate of pay is not comparable to other communities. Chief also was approached by the town of Erving to do a portion of Erving EMS calls.
 - Discussion on the agreement between Northfield and Bernardston and the potential to add in Erving.
 - Spanbauer suggested reviewing the town meeting vote that established the EMS enterprise fund
 - Porada wants Llamas to let the Selectboard know about the concerns the FINCOM has about the lack of funding coming in from Bernardston. Review the expiration date of the MOU
 - Stearns stated that Chief of EMS will be in to discuss budget on February 1, so questions and concerns can be addressed. (Llamas will not be at this meeting. Campbell will not be at this meeting)

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- Porada: on December 2, 2020 he attended a Public Safety Complex meeting. Bids were taken for the emergency repairs for the concrete. The bid that was accepted was \$25,200; Llamas wants to move forward with this project but has not seen any paperwork on it. There was a possible sight, wetland areas were flagged. Property is pending report. Ultimately a potential site must contain more than 1.5 acres. Llamas would like to meet again soon

- **NEXT MEETING**

- 1/25/2021

A motion was made by Campbell, seconded by Porada and VOTED unanimously to adjourn the FINCOM meeting

Meeting adjourned at 7:59 pm

Submitted by:
Bethany Walker
FINCOM Secretary

Approved On: _____

Approved By: _____