

**Finance Committee
Minutes of March 23, 2015**

Present for the Finance Committee meeting was: Chairman Louise Tremblay, Helen Hamel, Ed Pitta, and John Zimini. Also present were: Ann Vandal, Assistant Town Manager/Finance, Linda Wright, Town Accountant and Recording Secretary Samantha Carver. The meeting was held at 62 Arlington Street, 2nd Floor conference room.

Absent: Bob Corey, Gerald D'Avolio

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed Police Chief Richardson, Deputy Chief Dave Chartrand, and Fire Chief Dave Brouillette.

Ms. Tremblay stated the Chiefs were invited in to discuss their budgets and give the Finance Committee an understanding of them.

There was a discussion on the function of the Finance Committee and it was discussed by Mr. Zimini that the finance committee can recommend cuts or add on to budgets being presented. The Finance Committee is a check and balance system.

Chief Richardson began the discussion on his budget and stated that they do not have the manpower they use to have in 1998. They use to have seven detectives and now they have three. They have thirty eight total personnel as opposed to forty-four in the past and three of those are out on long term sick leave. Chief Richardson stated they don't have the manpower to do anything extra and currently they just respond and answer calls without the follow up needed on a lot of those calls. Due to this shortage his staff has to a lot of their follow up on overtime. The moral issue at the police department is mainly due to manpower issues and personnel being forced over on another shift due to shortages.

Deputy Chartrand continued the discussion on filling the overtime with Supervisors and Superior Officers due to shortages on the shifts which drives up the overtime costs. He discussed officers leaving the department for higher pay. Ms. Vandal noted to the Chief that the budget shown is staffing 41 officers.

Mr. Zimini asked about getting any transfers from other departments. Deputy Chartrand stated they occasionally get a transfer however the officers that transfer out of Dracut to Lowell start out making \$23,000 more. There was a brief discussion on the Quinn bill how that use to be an incentive for the officers however that is no longer provided. Ms. Tremblay read about a transfer coming in from Chelmsford and asked if we have received that person yet. Deputy Chartrand stated we have.

The Committee asked what their overtime was at the Police Department and it was reported \$600,000.

Fire Chief Dave Brouillette echoed the same sentiment as the Chiefs of Police whereas staffing is low and it effects his overtime budget as well. He talked about the staffing levels aren't what

they should be at the stations and it is not a safe way to operate. The overtime budget at the Fire Department is \$440,000 contractually. Mr. Pitta stated he doesn't know how Dracut functions with such low staffing.

The Committee thanked the Chiefs for coming in to discuss their budgets.

The Committee reviewed the rest of the public safety portion of the budget. There was a brief discussion on the Building Department and whether any thought had been given to outsourcing this function to save money. Ms. Vandal stated they are looking into outsourcing as a possible cost measure in several areas.

Ms. Tremblay stated for the next meeting they will ask Mr. Buxton of the Department of Public Works and the School Department to come in to discuss their budgets.

Minutes

Mr. Pitta made a motion to approve the minutes of March 9, 2015 as presented. Ms. Hamel seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Zimini questioned whether there had been a change in the makeup of the Committee. Ms. Tremblay stated that it was learned that Ms. Green was working as an employee of the School Department which according to the Town Bylaws Chapter 4 – Finance Committee “no elective, appointed Town Officer or Town Employee shall be eligible to serve on said Committee”.

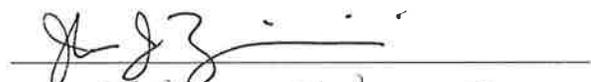
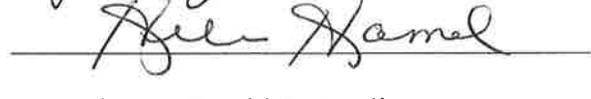
Adjourn

Mr. Zimini made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m. Mr. Pitta seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

FINANCE COMMITTEE



Absent: Bob Corey



Absent: Gerald D'Avolio