

Town Council Finance Committee

Feb 17, 2015
Meeting Notes

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Betsy Markowicz
TOWN CLERK GROTON, CONN

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Frink at 6:05pm.

Roll Call

Members Present: Councilors Antipas, Cerf, Frink and Watson.

Also present was Town Manager, Mark Oefinger. Councilor Moravsik arrived at 6:50.

Calendar and Communications

None

New Business

1. Referral 2015-0040 Budget – Finance Committee Discussion

- a. City / Town Highway Budget – Frink distributed the April 10, 2014 Proposed FYE City and Town Highway Comparison for highway maintenance costs and brought up the issue of recreating the same figures for 2016 if needed. This is the document that may potentially be used to establish annual City highway funding. Several solutions were presented for this; (1) Town PW establishes the totals for CC10355 and CC10356 each year; (2) We use the 2014 figures and increase them by a percentage to-be-determined. Further discussion of this item will be taken-up by the Committee of the Whole.
- b. Oct 1, 2014 Grand List – Cerf began a discussion on the Grand List information that was disseminated by the Town Manager on Feb 13. Oefinger provided highlights; The GL dropped 2.2% from the previous year. The demolition of Pfizer Bldg 118 was responsible for 2.1% of that and represents about .5 mills. Personnel Property decreased 8% and motor vehicles fell slightly by .8%.
- c. OPEB contribution for 2015 – Cerf began a discussion on the magnitude of the OPEB contribution for FYE 2016. She proposed reducing the contribution based on her belief that our OPEB funds were well above the norm for other communities and we could therefore cut back. Oefinger remarked that the magnitude of OPEB funding is up to the Town Council and that he recommends staying the course. Also that our OPEB investments had a good year and that the contribution he will recommend will be less than last year.
- d. Town Budget for FYE 2016 – Frink began a discussion on the overall FYE 2016 Town Budget and that the Board of Education Budget was the biggest challenge. Oefinger indicated that the BOE budget was reported to be up by 3% for FYE 2016. Watson recited the percent

increases and decreases for the Town budget over the last 5 years with a net increase of about 0.5%. Oefinger reminded the members that Town staffing is down 30 personnel over the last 10 years. Understanding that members should wait for the public hearing on the budget before coming to any conclusions, the following specific areas were mentioned for attention during the budget process;

- i. We need to have a better understanding of the Town's Special Education programs and funding. This subject was brought up during the visit by the State Legislators.
- ii. The BOE proposed CIP budget for FYE 2016 is very large. The scope of work probably cannot be done in one year. Asbestos removal at multiple schools for example.
- iii. The Fund Balance should be discussed at the beginning of the Budget review process.
- iv. The BOE receives Grants that are not indicated in the budget. The Town lists (most) Grants in the budget financing plan for each Cost Center. Should the BOE list Grants in their financing plans as well.
- v. The effect of Teacher salary increases on the BOE budget.
- vi. The ratio of teachers to all other BOE employees.
- vii. The ratio of teachers to students.
- viii. The need to include education performance metrics and trends in the annual BOE budget process.
- ix. The need to have an accurate estimate of how the FYE 2015 BOE budget will end-up. Recalling that last year there was a year-end 'windfall' that the BOE used to purchase student technology early in the following FYE.

2. The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm.