

December 11, 2017 7:00PM Joint Finance Committee Meeting and Selectmen's Meeting

Present: Don Chabon, Chuck Cardillo, Terry Flynn, Danielle Fillio and Finance Committee: Jay Bikofsky, Jim Balfanz, Mary Boyce, Diane Heady-Ruess, Neil Holden, James McMenemy and Steve Shatz

Don welcomed everyone and noted that they will begin with a joint meeting session with the Finance Committee to discuss the Tri-Town Health funding issue, a report on SBETC Elderly and Disabled Transportation, discussion on the Town Garage Replacement project, and discuss the Special Town Meeting scheduled for January 22nd. Following this the Finance Committee will adjourn to a separate meeting and the Select Board meeting will continue with discussion of the accountant position and Appointment of Ad Hoc Committee to review Town Finance Department and a Six month review of Town Administrator.

With that Don called the Select Board meeting to order and Jay called the Finance Committee meeting to order.

Jay started with meeting minutes from 9-11-17 which had been forwarded to all members present. Jay asked if the Finance Committee were all in favor, Jim Balfanz approved, Steve seconded; the vote was unanimous. Dona asked if the Select Board were all in favor; the vote was unanimous.

First on the agenda was Tri-Town Health funding. Dr. Charles Kenny began that he was present at the request of the Stockbridge Board of Health. Jim Wilusz brought to their attention that Tri-Town was behind on scheduled inspections in all three towns. The department inspects commercial food service establishments for permitting on a scheduled, demand and spot basis. The department also supervises the safety and security of our septic systems. The department has developed an acute shortage of staff. This shortage has led to a six month back log in the inspections and permitting. This shortage will require a new inspector to be added on.

Jim Wilusz, certified sanitarian and Director of Tri-Town Health Department stated that they are looking for an immediate issue to secure a new inspector in the middle of the fiscal year. Tri Town is the agents of the Board of Health. There have been increasing amounts of permits and inspections, codes are changing, regulations are changing; all increasing the burdens on the Board of Health's. The DEP no longer helps with septic systems. They only have one, 35 hour/week, inspector doing inspections in all three towns. That inspector has been out on family medical leave for four months and it is unclear if that individual will return. While trying to keep up, they are about 600 food inspections behind. The immediate need is to ask Stockbridge for its portion of \$4,795.00; an estimate of what they need to advertise, hire and retain an inspector through June. Hope is that as they derive the FY19 budget there will be conversation to dive deeper into the detail. Jim continued to say that as everything is budgeted to the penny, they so not have back up plan. They cannot function without an inspector.

Jay Bikofsky asked with respect to the overall program, what is the participation of Lee and Lenox and there is the concern that while they understand the issue, but it brings difficulty to the Towns and the idea of an agreement of backup coverage in a crisis.

Jim said that the budget is currently based on a population percentage. He will be going to both Lee and Lenox with a similar ask. As far as an agreement, being the oldest health district and when Jim took over he was told that there was an agreement but no one can find it. The original amounts will be addresses in the municipal agreement and they will need to look at the numbers for all three Towns which are too much for one inspector. The salaries versus job duties are not adequate.

Steve Shatz asked how it would be funded and Danielle said with a reserve fund transfer. He also asked that when they come back with a budget, if they would at that time be able to show the anticipated fee increases from 2012 and what the budget would look like and Jim said yes. He said that in the inter-municipal agreement; what type of changes in the formula, other than population base, were they discussing. Jim said that they are looking at more of services provided versus population for all three Towns.

Jay asked if they are exploring schools with public health training programs for internships, residencies, graduate students. Jim said that with MCLA, BCC and Amherst he does get some help form college students and are trying but there is not a large pool of qualified applicants. He added that they sometimes get internships but there are many things that a college students cannot do, there are limitations.

Jim Balfanz asked about the four month leave and wondered why it took four months to allow the program to get out of control. Jim said that he did not know how long the employee was going to be out. He realized that they were getting behind but looking at the data realized how far behind they were.

Chuck asked about fee comparisons and he said that they are very comparable to other municipalities. They will be asking for an increase of fees in February to offset the costs.

Charles Kenny addressed the issue that the respective boards of health do not have a resource to fund, that he was hoping that it might set up a paradigm of shared services to look into and recognize issues in the future.

Diane Reuss asked when Jim says "fall behind" does he mean only for new permitting or everything. Jim said it is a mixture, but the largest gap is with the routine inspections. She asked if he could mainly zero in on the ones of need first. He said they are triaging based on need the best they can but that food service is bound by state requirements. Diane asked if he could see them catching up and Jim said yes and he said he would need at least 26 weeks to make up the gap, if hiring a trained employee.

Neil Holden asked about turn over if they could set up an arrangement that after training they must stay on for a certain amount of time. Jim did not have the answer for that but it could be talked about.

Don made the motion for the Select Board to vote to recommend that the Finance Committee approve the transfer of \$4,795.00 and do a reserve fund transfer as indicated. Chuck seconded, the vote was unanimous.

Neil Holden moved to approve the reserve fund transfer of \$4,795.00; Jay seconded, the vote was unanimous.

Don stated that next Danielle would give a report on SBETC Elderly and Disabled Transportation proposal. She began that the group came in with a proposal to see if the Town would be interested in getting there services that would be available for anyone 55 years and older and anyone who has a disability. Currently the COA only provides services for seniors and does not cover the disabled or personal services, only medical and shopping. This service would allow this population to call the dispatch for any type of ride. Their vans are wheel chair accessible which would also be a help and they provide two day services to Pittsfield which the Town does not have. It would be a cost for the Town and she would bring up at budget season and was just looking for questions at this time. It would cost around \$8,000 and would cost the individuals \$10.00 per ride. Steve questioned if there was an idea of need and Danielle said that Liz, the COA director, said that she could not keep up at this time. The fee is based on eligible seniors and currently there are 763 eligible seniors; not including those with disabilities.

Jay question that the Town purchased a new van a year ago for the elderly transportation and looking into this it should be looked at if there would still be the need to keep that vehicle or down size it. Danielle said that they would need to speak with Liz. Mary Boyce said that the Cabulance is available for disabled and Danielle said that it may be but it is extremely costly. Danielle noted that the Town does have members who are disabled who are not seniors and have no other way to get places.

Currently the service is based out of Great Barrington and cover Alford, Egremont, Housatonic, Clayton, Hartsville, Mill River, New Marlborough, Southfield, Monterey, and Sandisfield. They have been providing the service for 20 years and people do use it. Mary Boyce asked about checking into the West Stockbridge van to see how much they would charge and if this is only for one day a week. Danielle said that she believed that you are set for one day but did not have all the answers but was just fielding questions and interest for the budgeting process. She said that another option is that they could do a trial year and fund it with a Special Article funds for one year only. They did do a pilot program but overlapped when Liz was out so was not good timing, but she did ask for numbers on those. Danielle will pursue it for the budget process and contact West Stockbridge.

Don next addressed the Town Garage Replacement project to see if a design could be agreed on. Mike Kulig, Berkshire Engineering, presented three options. They first looked at a four bay highway garage to serve the existing the DPW, and vehicles but not the harvester; at around \$200 per square foot. This

option leaves the need for another spot for the Talbot Center; along the property line but the expense as a standalone would be over \$200,000. He would want to know if the Town felt this was a possibility before moving forward further on that design. Another option was moving the existing Talbot Center but the challenge would be the need to bring it to code which would bring it close to building a new one; if it would even survive the move.

Jay asked about the current need of the Talbot Center. Lisa Thorne, the current coordinator said that there is a great interest and widely used. She said it is very popular and is needed for many folks and considered a luxury for some. Don added that the Town finances for the interest of the people as well as for need. Many would like to see it continue if possible.

Steve asked about the project cost for the four bay model with the Talbot Center; around 1.2 million for the four bay plus \$100,000 spent and \$100,000 remaining, with no demolition and removal bids; with an added \$200,000 for the Talbot Center. In total they are close to 1.5 million for the 4 bay garage and 1.9 million including construction contingencies' for the five bay model.

With this, the harvester will remain outdoors and Jim Balfanz said this does not allow for growth and should not be for ancillary use.

There was a question on the dog pound and Mike said that it will be incorporated in the garage.

Jay said that we have a critical need to store the Town equipment; the Talbot Center is nice but not a critical need. He suggested going with the five bay garage to house our equipment and look at the Talbot Center later. He said that the Federal Reserve is raising rates and the problems are that it needs to be funded with short term notes. He felt that the building should not be delayed.

Terry asked Mike if the building could be moved so that the swap shop could remain where it is.

He said that they could look at it more closely to see if that would work.

Neil Holden asked if there were any way to support the current garage to keep it in use for another ten years.

Jim Balfanz asked about moving the building more towards the road (Rt 102) and Mike said it would expand out into the flood plains but there are ways.

Keith Rafferty asked the months the Talbot Center is open. Lisa said that it is closed January, February, and March. Keith suggested that the harvester be housed and the Swap Shop takes over that space in the summer when it is at the lake. Lisa thought that was an interesting thought and it would actually double the space of the Talbot Center or could it be shared space with the harvester.

Steve agreed that the rates are going up and we cannot afford for this equipment to remain out doors. A decision needs to be made soon, and overly studying this runs the risk of spending more money. The condition of the garage has been known for over a year and we are no closer to a real plan.

Chuck mentioned all of the codes that would need to go into a new Talbot Center and the extra cost.

Don would like to really look into relocating the existing structure and did not see the threat of moving it to a new foundation. He would like another opinion to move it and preserve it if possible.

Steve said that the next agenda item is the Special Town Meeting and the garage will be discussed there. He asked if the Board would be willing to consider two articles; one the build the highway garage and the other to build the Talbot Center; so that they are separate votes and the fortunes of one are not tied to the fortunes of another.

Mary Boyce said there she felt it was possible to move the building. She also stated that she would like to see the Center to continue.

Jim Balfanz stated that he agreed with Steve on having the two articles with full size plans to look at on January 22nd.

Terry said it seems clear that the sentiment is not to have the Talbot Center in the Highway garage but he would like to keep it somewhere.

Lisa asked if it were possible to keep the Talbot Center where it is, would there need to be any cost to the Town.

Terry asked if Mike could look at looking at this possibility and Mike said that he would.

Ginger Schwartz asked Lisa if she had considered private funding or moving the Talbot Center into the Town Hall building

Jim Balfanz said that it could not be done because of its functions and traffic. Ginger added that as it is not a government issue should private funding be looked into.

Kate Fletcher added that the Talbot Center is a community center and hopes that people will support it.

Jim Balfanz supported keeping the Talbot Center where it is and accommodates the new garage. Mike said that there are options but the garage may need to be closer to the flood plain but it would take months more for permitting if moving into the flood plains. Mike said that he would see what they could do in a timely fashion.

Chuck said that they should have one article for the five bay highway garage. Terry agreed.

Jim Blafanz agreed to having the Special Town Meeting for the garage on its own and a separate article for the Talbot Center, possibly for the May Town Meeting.

Don asked Mike if before they meet next, give them the possibility of re-adjusting the garage and keeping the Talbot Center where it is.

Steve said that the action to be taken by the Special Town Meeting is to approve the borrowing of State notes or if it becomes \$2 million project, it will become a Bond. If you go to the meeting for the bonding authority to have a five bay garage and the Talbot Center, you get the financial authority, then it is up to the Select Board. Steve suggested doing the worst case, outside number.

Terry said that if Mike can let them know the options in a week, they can then do what Steve proposed.

Jim asked about the decision about two articles and Steve said that it does not need to be decided now. All members of the Finance Committee and Select Board were in agreement.

Don stated that they are looking at January 22nd for the Special Town Meeting.

The Finance Committee adjourned to their own meeting and the Select Board meeting continued.

Don said that the first item on the agenda was the accountant position and that the retiring accountant advised the Board that she would not be returning as of today.

Danielle said that when Elaine announced her retirement, she was asked by the Board to look into getting an accounting firm to fill in on a temporary basis. Not many firms do this but she found Erik Kinsherf's accounting firm out of Cape Cod who does work this way. His employee Barbara will be coming on Thursday with interview questions. She said that they have also been told that there may be a couple of part time accountants with municipal experience who may be interested in filling the position full time. The two scenarios are to use the accounting firm until we find someone or do we want to advertise. She stated that there is a shortage of municipal accountants in Massachusetts as well as a shortage of Treasurer/Collectors.

Don continued that the Ad-Hoc committee is looking at the position but for Danielle to post the accountant position, advertise it and bring in the firm. Danielle asked if the posting would be for interim of full time and Don said full time.

Terry said that this then would derail what was agreed on as the purpose of the committee.

Don said that we will need an accountant and Terri said that we need an interim accountant while they look at the financial side of the Town offices and asked to read the charge he had for the committee.

Terry read: This Study Committee: The charge would be to keep its primary focus on the position of Town Accountant, to conduct the job search for the position of Town Accountant, review all

applications, and select finalists for the Select Board to consider. Number three, to review and adjust this new job description for the position of Town accountant and as part of this process, consider the interaction of the Town Accountant with other offices, including Clerk, Treasurer and Collector. To comment on any possible changes in the methods currently used by the Town Accountant. To present to the Select Board any significant observations and recommendations concerning the offices mentioned in number three above, and more specifically, to present reactions to the following options: maintaining our current organization, combining Town Clerk and Town Accountant, and reorganizing under a Financial Manager. Six, to keep the Town Administrator apprised of its progress, and sometime before or shortly thereafter, December 25th, touch base with the Select Board concerning target dates. Seven, to weigh in on the recently proposed idea of placing an article before the Annual Town Meeting to make the Finance Committee an elected committee; Terry said that he added this at Don's request. To inform the Select Board of any necessary changes in these instructions.

Terry said that this was the charge he came up with from their previous discussion. Don said that he brought up the idea of the Financial Manager and between then and now and looking into it further, that it is the function of large cities, and typically small towns have what we currently have and some combine Collector and Treasurer. Terry added that they also at times combine Clerk and accountant. Danielle said that they are currently doing that as Terri Iemolini is filling in for the accountant. Don would like the committee while reviewing the processes, the functions and do screening, but they need to move forward with these positions, fill the accounting position and concerning the Collector/Treasurer they should ask for the special act as it is standard. He would like the committee to look at efficiencies and Town spending. Terry added that David McCarthy has a very carefully laid out process to take a very thorough, expeditious look to interviewing a series of people for the Town offices and other departments to take a careful look at the job description of Town Accountant before they go out and hire on a permanent basis. While doing this the committee would be getting input by interviewing employees in the Town Office structure and getting a review of the financial side of the Town government. He did not feel that there is a rush to hire if Danielle can get someone in on a temporary basis. Terry said that current job descriptions were outdated. Terry said that they have a committee ready to go ahead and would like to have them do their job and ultimately do the search. Don asked Terry's view on the Collector/Treasurer and Terry felt that they should move ahead with the special act. He said that with the Town Accountant position they have a chance to take a careful look at it. Chuck asked how long the position would need to be posted in house. Danielle said it would be posted ten days in house and at least fourteen days after before advertising to the public.

Don had no issues with the committee meeting, reviewing things, and interviewing for the accountant position. Chuck said that there would be a three week advertising period and two more weeks where the committee could still be working on their charges. Terry said that they would be advertising without a final job description. Don's concern was the amount of time the process will take.

Danielle said that the accounting firm was coming out on Thursday and asked if she could continue that way. Chuck said yes and that he would recommend that they appoint the committee, give them a night

to meet, and come in on December 18th to discuss options. Don would like to see the job posted but Terry and Chuck asked for a week but agreed that it needed to be done in a timely manner.

Terry made a motion for the Select Board to appoint the following people to a Finance Study Committee; Dave McCarthy, Chairman, Christine Rasmussen, Neil Holden, Michael Pelle, and Jorja Pilling.

Don wanted to add that they will discuss the charge of the committee and determine their function next week. The Board would like the committee members to come in on the 18th also.

Terry made a motion for the Select Board to appoint the following people to a Finance Study Committee; Dave McCarthy, Chairman, Christine Rasmussen, Neil Holden, Michael Pelle, and Jorja Pilling. The Committees charge will be discussed at the December 18th meeting. Chuck seconded; all were in favor.

Next the Board moved onto the six month interview of the Town Administrator Danielle Fillio.

Don began by stating that performance evaluations are never easy, most people try to avoid them, but the purpose is to get better, to get us all on the same page and not to beat somebody up. Performance discussion should be on going.

Don said that when they appointed Danielle they had come out of a difficult time for the Town, they first appointed Danielle first temporarily and then permanently. For Don personally it was something of a leap of faith but he knew Danielle and that she understood things but still had some questions at the time. He revisited some of these items. The first thing he was curious about at the time was the depth and breadth of Danielle's knowledge. He knew she was familiar but his question was did she know the content, the depth, the employee hand book, contracts, bylaws, and procedures. Don discovered that not only did she read these things but she knew the contents, she was able to apply them, she had strategies for accomplishing and improving them. He found that her depth and breadth of knowledge was greater and better than he had anticipated. He had question that Danielle had been using Town Counsel a lot so he asked Ray if they were all using him too much and he said no and with a new Board and new Town Administrator it would be expected. Don also mentioned that he found her responsive, helpful and available. Don said that Danielle is on top of things and keeps up with details and deadlines. In addition Don mentioned that her orientation was toward leniency in dealing with disciplinary situations but described her leadership as a good start; confident and that in time she will solidify her authority and have an easier time supervising.

Don said that in managing bosses, they are not an easy lot but she maintains communication and keeps them all informed. She tries to work out differences and stands up for her beliefs, she is not a push over, she knows when to back off, and does not hold grudges.

In sum, Don said that she is as good as anyone can be and he could not think of anything she should do differently. He added that she tries not to be political as Administrators should administer and he has asked that she not get involved in political things and she agreed with that. Don thanked Danielle said that he looks forward to many years.

Chuck said that he worked with Danielle while she was Jorja's Assistant and knew that she could do the job when they appointed her. He knew that she had some things to learn but felt that she was the right person for the job and stands behind that decision, 100 percent. Chuck said that during the budget season she did well on streamlining the budget and is very good with follow-up, details and deadlines on for contracts and biddings. He added that it does take a while when being promoted from a worker to a boss as there is often resentment from workers in the beginning, but she has worked it out well and has a very good working relationship with everyone in the building; she is kind and very helpful. He stated that he was very pleased with her first six months.

Terry read a statement that he agreed with the positive comments made by Don and Chuck but would be discussing his evaluation with Danielle individually because he did not believe it made sense to evaluate anybody at a public meeting unless an employee requests it or unless there's a show-cause hearing that requires it. He said that Danielle has performed in a very conscientious, energetic and creative way and she has shown a genuine concern for doing the right thing. He said that his decision to have a one-on-one discussion with Danielle did not imply anything negative and he wouldn't want anyone to take it that way.

Don asked Danielle if she wanted to say anything. Danielle stated that she was very excited to be in this position and that she does enjoy it. She said that there is always something new every day and that it's never the same thing, which she likes. She said that she would like to get into a financial management class as municipal management is so diverse that no matter how hard she sits and tries to learn, there is much more to do. As she is working with their financial advisor from UniBank, as well as other Town Administrators, they are working on coming up with Financial Forecasting for this year's budgeting process.

Charles Kenny added that he was very happy to see the improvements with the website. Danielle said that on the new web site there is a tab specific to Agendas and Minutes. Secondly he was wondering if Danielle was encouraged to be on top of any potential grants available. Danielle said that there are two grants that she is currently looking at; one is a grant available for up to \$200,000 to update the visioning software, DOR required for Assessors, which she is working with Michael Blay on. There is also a grant through Berkshire Regional Planning, a Brown Fields Grant, which they are looking into for cleaning up the spills for the East Street Della garage so to get it back on the tax rolls.

With no further items on the agenda, Don moved to adjourn; Chuck seconded, the vote was unanimous.