



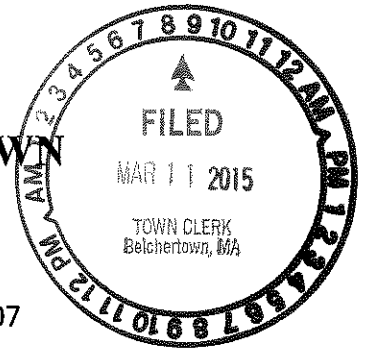
TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN

Finance Committee

Lawrence Memorial Hall

2 Jabish Street, P.O. Box 670

Belchertown, Massachusetts 01007



Kate DeCou, Chairman
Lynne Raymer, Vice-Chairman
Melissa Hurst, Clerk
Edward Boscher
Steven Rose

Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, February 24, 2015

Time: 7:00pm

Location: Lawrence Memorial Hall

Present: Edward Boscher, Kate DeCou, Melissa Hurst, Steven Rose

Guest(s): Jill Panto, Brenda Aldrich, Ronald Aponte, George Archible, Council on Aging (Bill Korzenowski, George Dion), Animal Control (Ann Fenton), Clapp Memorial Library (Sheila McCormick and trustees – Barbara Sullivan, Denise Smith, Christine Walker, Kevin Weiss)

- Meeting called to order at 7:03pm.
- Ms. DeCou requested a clarification be made in the minutes for the January 18, 2015 meeting Ms. Hurst distributed previously via email for review as to the amounts requested by the Lakes Committee. Ms. Hurst will contact Leeanne Connelly for clarification and will distribute revised minutes prior to the next meeting.

Old Business

- None noted.

New Business – Budget Status Update

- Ms. Panto distributed a document for the FY16 Budget Process – Preliminary Financial Information. She explained that the State Revenue numbers have not yet been received and she thinks that it would be a few more weeks. Ms. DeCou noted that Gary Brougham reported to her that there may be beginning numbers from the governor's office tomorrow.
- Ms. Panto indicated that the balance in the Stabilization Fund is \$2,130,653. A total of \$346,990 is available in Free Cash. Local receipts are fairly flat, School Building Assistance has been reduced because of the pay-off of Swift River Elementary (was a debt exclusion which impacts the debt levy), and ambulance receipts are expected to be up slightly. Ms. Panto indicated that

the information provided does not include the Pathfinder assessment. She indicated that there would be two or three additional refinements during the budget process, but there is no “windfall” coming. Mr. Aponte asked if the projected income includes new growth. Ms. Panto indicated that it does. Mr. Rose stated the goal of not having a 2% automatic tax rate increase at some time. Ms. Panto also indicated that some of the income is due to the ongoing debt exclusion for Belchertown High School.

- Discussion of the snow removal overruns. Ms. Panto indicated that the deficit is \$60,500 to date, but not all invoices have been received. She postulated that the ultimate deficit would be approximately \$100,000 for this item.

New Business – Senior Services and Council on Aging

- Mr. Korzenowski provided the Finance Committee with a packet of materials, supplemented by a similar packet provided by Ms. Panto containing the FY16 budget request voted by the Council on Aging. The Council on Aging is requesting, separate from their 2016 Projection provided by Ms. Panto (total of 481,661.00), funding for a needs assessment, hour increases for the Outreach Assistant and Senior Center Aide positions, and a capital request for a 14 passenger van.
- Mr. Korzenowski discussed the projected increases in the 60+ population in upcoming years, stating that the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts projects an increase from the current 3,285 individuals (21% of Belchertown residents) to 6,073 (38%) in 2030. Mr. Korzenowski indicated that he thinks the Town needs to think about how to serve the influx into this age group. He explained that the Council on Aging has wanted a needs assessment completed for the past two years, including requesting the funds last year, but that there was no funding available.
- Mr. Korzenowski explained that the Council on Aging is essentially a mini-social services agency, providing the seniors with help as to fuel assistance, MassHealth, food (Meals on Wheels and frozen weekend meals), transportation, supportive day program, etc. He explained that they have hit their maximum capacity in some areas, such as in-town transportation. He also stated that the one dedicated office worker is at maximum capacity.
- Mr. Korzenowski indicated that the Council on Aging is requesting that two staff positions (Outreach Assistant and Senior Center Aide) be increased from 19 hours to 20 hours. He indicated that it is difficult to keep staff in the non-benefited positions and that when those positions are empty, there is additional stress on the other staff because services still need to be provided.
- Ms. DeCou asked about the amount of funding needed for the needs assessment. Mr. Korzenowski explained that the cost for the assessment could be obtained after the information/scope of the assessment is determined.
- Ms. DeCou asked if the reason for requesting the additional hour of staffing for the two positions is so the staff for those positions would have benefits and Mr. Korzenowski confirmed.
- Ms. DeCou inquired about the funding for the passenger van. Mr. Korzenowski stated that the Council on Aging is going for a grant from the state’s Mobility Assistance Program and that the

20% match that the town would pay is approximately \$15,000. He explained that the money was fundraised for the purchase of the current van.

- Mr. Boscher asked if the projected population increases are aggressive. Mr. Korzenowski said that all projections had similar figures when they were cross-checked. He indicated that these projections do not contemplate assisted living or additional housing.
- Mr. Rose stated that he is a proponent of the Senior Center, but is cynical of paper studies unless they are useful for obtaining additional outside funding. Mr. Korzenowski agreed generally, but indicated that there is additional weight when the analysis is provided by an outside source so it is not seen as self-serving information.
- Mr. Dion said that previously it was difficult to get financial outlays for anything, then the town had to increase the infrastructure for police, fire, etc. and that now it is time for the seniors. He stated that the seniors would benefit from a larger or newer Senior Center. Mr. Dion said that the woman who assists the seniors with their taxes has to work in a cubby hole. He said that there is difficulty utilizing other town spaces because it is under the control of another department. He also detailed the limitations and difficulties using PVRTA transportation, particularly for medical appointments as oftentimes the appointments do not end on time and the PVRTA leaves and then may not come back for hours.
- Mr. Korzenowski indicated that he and the staff could complete the needs assessment in-house, but was told that a professional needs assessment would be expected. Ms. DeCou indicated that she approves of a needs assessment being completed, particularly to detail the ramifications of growth in a number of areas. She stated that the needs of the seniors are complicated and that she thinks that the situation as to the seniors and their services is equivalent to the school increases. Mr. Dion stated that if the assessment is completed in-house and they see that a lot of money is needed, then there would be a question of the legitimacy of the assessment. Mr. Boscher indicated that regardless there would be some skepticism as the Council on Aging would have paid for the study.
- Mr. Aponte raised the question of an assisted living facility seeking to build in the town and if there would be synergy between the facility and the Council on Aging, such as utilizing the facility's space and if that was possible, if it would be an interim step to buy time before expanding the Senior Center. Ms. DeCou indicated that it is important to address the growth now, particularly with the planning now for the assisted living facility. Mr. Aponte reported that he believes the Grantham Group may have research regarding seniors in the area.
- Mr. Korzenowski indicated that there have been difficulties for the Council on Aging to access other town spaces, like the schools, giving the example of how the computer labs would be ideal spaces to work with the seniors to help them renew their prescription plans annually for Medicare. Mr. Boscher inquired as to some of the roadblocks are. Mr. Korzenowski reported that they are working to address and rectify these and he is speaking directly with the head of the school committee about this issue.

New Business – Animal Control

- Ms. Panto provided the Finance Committee with the 2016 Projection for Animal Control (total of \$55,125.00). Ms. Fenton explained that the pound had been inspected by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources Division of Animal Health and the inspector did not like the status of the facility. She explained that they had recently shut down the facilities in two other local towns. Ms. Fenton provided the Finance Committee with copies of the notes from the inspection dated 11/20/14, email to Ms. Fenton from Michael Cahill, the director of the Division of Animal Health, dated 11/21/14 regarding the “glaring infractions of the state building code” and advising that the town request an inspection from the building inspector and electrical inspector, Inspection Report of Stephanie Funk, 11/19/14 email of Mr. Cahill containing the standards for municipal pounds, and what appears to be an estimate from Max Boch regarding Animal Control Building work (total \$74,000). She circulated photos of the existing pound, explaining that the fabrics had to be removed from the back area per the inspection. Ms. Fenton explained that much of the major repairs that would need to be done to the existing building are not possible because then the entire building would need to be brought up to code. She indicated the Department of Agricultural Resources’ statement that the site is dangerous for staff and the animals. She provided plans for the proposed new pound drafted by Max Boch. She stated that the intended site of the future pound would be at the old pig building on George Hannum Road by the wastewater treatment plant.
- Ms. Fenton explained that a group is starting a new non-profit, the Belchertown Animal Rescue Committee (BARC), whose goal would be to fundraise for the new pound. Ms. Fenton provided copies of the BARC mission statement. She said that BARC is intending to raise \$100,000 and that one resident is donating \$500 to help launch the group.
- Ms. Fenton explained that there have been budget increases specifically because of the condition of the building. She explained that there is propane heat and that they have to use a space heater in the front area.
- Mr. Boscher asked if the estimate she provided was for refurbishment of the existing building or for a new building. Ms. Fenton indicated that it is for a new building. Mr. Boscher asked about the longevity of the proposed new building and Ms. Fenton said that it would last for a long time. Ms. DeCou asked if the town could gain assistance from the Department of Agricultural Resources. Ms. Fenton indicated that the Department of Agricultural Resources has not followed up and they do not want to bring additional attention to the site at this time. She said that residents are also not pleased with the facility when they come to pick up their animals that have gotten loose.
- Ms. DeCou inquired about the \$75,000-\$100,000 to build the pound and about fundraising by BARC. Ms. Fenton stated that the first fundraiser is planned for April 2015. She stated that there is a lot of support for the Belchertown Animal Control and that there are even “friends” on Facebook from out of state.
- Mr. Rose stated that when they toured the facility last year, there were no dogs on the premises. He asked about how many animals reside at the pound. Ms. Fenton stated that there are two cats there, serving as mousers. She explained that most animals are not on the site for long as it is

typically the residents' animals that are at large. She explained that the residents pay a fine and the dog is returned. She said that there are sometimes strays or dumps and that they need to be kept for seven days.

- Ms. DeCou asked about the staffing levels for Animal Control. Ms. Fenton stated that she is at \$25 hours per week and there are two assistants on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Ms. Fenton distributed the Dog Officer/Animal Control Officer job description. She explained that she worked 6.5 years paid for 25 hours per week, but in actuality she was working over 40 hours, but she had to take on a second job. She explained that she is now only available from 9am to 2pm and that afterwards she is not accessible until midnight. She requested an increase from 25 hours to 40 hours each week. Ms. Fenton indicated that she anticipates that without her hours increasing, the wages of the other staff would increase. She also indicated that she is no longer available to attend trainings as they are almost always full days. Ms. DeCou inquired how much the increased hours would cost. Ms. Fenton indicated that she did not know. Ms. Panto extrapolated that Ms. Fenton's hourly rate is \$20.73. Mr. Rose indicated that it would cost an additional \$16,170 to bring up her hours. He asked if the part time staff wages would decrease. Ms. Fenton indicated that they would and she would try to determine those amounts. Ms. Fenton indicated that she has to take time off from her other job to attend advisory meetings and for this Finance Committee meeting.
- Mr. Aponte inquired into the possibility of obtaining grants. Ms. Fenton stated that BARC is looking into grants and that they would have a better chance of success. She stated that the newer pounds were built through fundraising.
- Mr. Rose requested statistics on the numbers of strays. Ms. Fenton said that they would be provided, but clarified that they do not just get calls about stray domestic animals, but also wildlife, and that they must respond to all calls.
- Ms. DeCou asked for a written request/summary and projections of the assistants' responses. Ms. Fenton said that this will be provided and that all the calls go to the staffs' cell phones.
- Ms. Aldrich stated that she is aware that Animal Control receives a lot of complaints as copies are sent to the Board of Selectmen. Ms. Fenton confirmed that there are a lot of complaints and a lot of associated paperwork.

New Business – Clapp Memorial Library

- Ms. McCormick provided the Finance Committee with the Clapp Memorial Library FY16 Budget Request, similar but not identical to the Budget Request provided to the Finance Committee by Ms. Panto (difference in the 2016 Projection sheet). On the 2016 Projection for Clapp Memorial Library provided by Ms. Panto, it states a total of \$415,625.00. Ms. McCormick stated that they have three things they request this year in addition: 1) reinstatement of five service desk coverage hours lost due to the compensation study (went from 25 hours to 20 hours), 2) increase hours of custodial staff, and 3) restoration of \$6,000 for materials that the library voluntarily lowered last year.

- Ms. McCormick stated that the circulation desk is single staffed for 12 hours each week and that it is difficult for one staff member to check in and out materials, answer phones, assist with faxes, etc. while also processing interlibrary loans, which she indicated is a high volume of work for one person. Ms. McCormick indicated that they are lucky that they have experienced staff, though coverage is difficult when the staff has vacation/sick time/continuing education.
- Ms. McCormick discussed the Wisconsin Public Library Standards and referencing a sheet from the proposal entitled "Service Targets for Clapp Memorial Library," which are based on municipal population, noting that Belchertown only reaches the Basic Level in one of nine categories (audio recordings held). She explained that of comparable libraries, only six have smaller collections, but 30 have lower circulations.
- Ms. McCormick requested that the custodial staff be increased 7.5 hours per week. She stated that the time allotted currently (7.5 hours) is only sufficient for vacuuming and trash removal, but the building's woodwork, ornamentation, etc. take a longer time to care for due to age. She said that the custodian is able to do small repairs when possible. She stated that there has been a toll on the building over the years.
- Ms. McCormick indicated that last year, the library voluntarily lowered the funds expended for materials and that they are now seeking restoration of that \$6,000. She explained that there are also materials expenditure requirements for state aid. She requested that the total allocation for materials be \$65,386, which she states would be what the projection would be if the \$6,000 in funds were restored.
- As to the state of the Clapp Memorial Library building, Ms. McCormick indicated that the town does not own the building. She said that there are a lot of expenses for the building and that an architecture firm from Connecticut is to perform a prioritized assessment for the next ten years. She indicated that the library participated in Valley Gives Day, raising \$5,000 for elevator repairs.
- Ms. McCormick stated that the library serves a huge sector of the community, including a lot of seniors. Additionally, Ms. McCormick stated that the library received a two year, \$15,000 grant administered by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners for service to teens and tweens. She said that they have formed a Teen Advisory Board and that the teens are very enthusiastic. Ms. Hurst inquired about the reception of the teen services, such as later hours for midterms and finals, tutors, etc. Ms. McCormick indicated that these were well received and the teens have asked that they continue. She said that Clapp Memorial Library serves as the library for the Kindergarten as there is no library at Cold Springs School. Mr. Boscher asked about the interactions between Clapp Memorial Library and the school libraries. Ms. McCormick stated that the school libraries have a different mission, but that Clapp Memorial Library supports them as well. Ms. McCormick said that the Youth Services librarian visits the schools and provides the summer reading programs. Ms. McCormick said that she met with the librarian at Belchertown High School about the study hours for teens and the teen board. Ms. McCormick also referenced the long-term plan, which she provided to interested members of the Finance Committee.

- Ms. DeCou asked if the materials request increase is included in the budget totals and if the staffing increases was not included in the budget totals. Ms. McCormick confirmed Ms. DeCou's understanding. Mr. Rose asked if the recent salary study created more steps for employees. Ms. Panto indicated that it does, as well as cost of living adjustments. Mr. Rose later asked about the interplay of the steps created by the salary study and longevity. Ms. Panto stated that they are separate issues. Mr. Rose asked about the maintenance costs of \$3,513.27 in 2015 as the town does not own the building. Ms. McCormick explained that there have been furnace, elevator, plumbing issues, etc. and that this amount is just a fraction of the repair costs. Mr. Rose asked about the same projections for the 2016 budget for heating oil. Ms. McCormick indicated that the lower oil prices helps, but she believes they will expend the \$9,000 allocated for oil in the 2015 budget.
- Ms. Sullivan called the Finance Committee's attention to page 2 of the FY16 Budget Request as to the statistics of library usage, indicating that it is one facility that supports all ages of town residents. She indicated that the staff has been able to cover some of the gaps, but that this would only work for so long. As to the maintenance, Ms. Sullivan stated that some of the costs now are because ongoing maintenance had not been done.

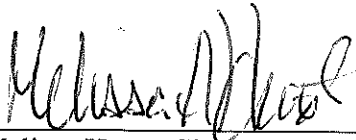
Other Business

- Ms. DeCou stated that the new superintendent of schools, Karol Coffin, had requested to meet on March 17, 2015. Mr. Rose asked about the purpose of the meeting. Ms. Aldrich stated that it is for opening talks about the budget with the superintendent and the school board. Ms. DeCou indicated that under former Finance Committee chair Paul Silva that it was more productive to speak with them before full meetings to begin the dialogue. Mr. Rose indicated that sometimes former chair Mr. Silva would have the chairs of the respective boards/committees meet earlier as it may be more productive. Ms. DeCou indicated that if the purpose of the meeting needs a larger group, another date would need to be chosen.
- Ms. Panto indicated that the Finance Committee will be meeting with the Fire Department on March 10, 2015, then the Police Department and Department of Public Works on March 19, 2015. Ms. Panto indicated that the Information Technology Department does not feel that substantial changes need to be made at this time.
- Ms. DeCou indicated that she would update the Finance Committee about the possible meeting on March 17, 2015. She also stated that the Pathfinder meeting usually occurs in March and to expect an email regarding the date.

Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,



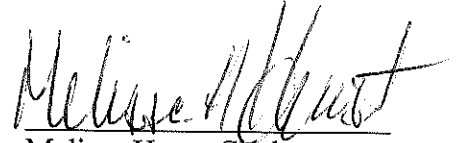
Melissa Hurst, Clerk

FINCOM Town of Belchertown (Endorsed by majority)




Kate DeCou, Chair

Lynne Raymer, Vice Chair



Melissa Hurst, Clerk



Steven Rose

Edward Boscher