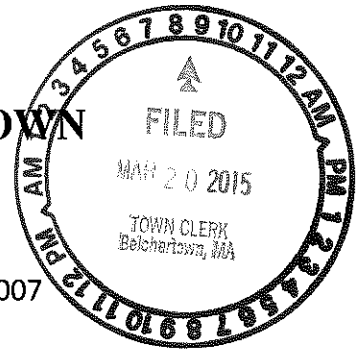




TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN

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, March 17, 2015
Time: 7:00pm
Location: Lawrence Memorial Hall
Present: Edward Boscher, Kate DeCou, Melissa Hurst, Lynne Raymer, Steven Rose
Guest(s): John Whelihan, Gary Brougham, Jill Panto, Brenda Aldrich, Ron Aponte, Karol Coffin, Edward Dunn, Michael Knapp, Dawn French, Richard Fritch

- Meeting called to order at 6:57pm.

Old Business

- None noted.

New Business – Board of Assessors

- Mr. Whelihan indicated that there were a few requests from the office of the Board of Assessors, primarily for a replacement vehicle. He stated that the current vehicle, a 2002 Trailblazer, was purchased used in 2007, for approximately \$13,000, and that it had about 58,000 miles at the time. Mr. Whelihan stated that approximately \$1,000 maintenance/repairs are now required annually. He stated that the vehicle may be able to make it through another year, but the frame on the vehicle is cracked.
- Mr. Whelihan stated that they would look to purchase another used vehicle. He indicated that the vehicle is used by him, as well as the assistant, when valuing properties. He stated that four wheel drive is important as they view new construction and would need to drive through mud and that they need to be up off the ground to view the properties.
- Ms. Raymer inquired about the longevity of purchasing another used vehicle. Mr. Whelihan indicated that this would be a more reasonable request given budget constraints. Ms. DeCou indicated that other departments have also been purchasing used vehicles. Mr. Rose inquired

about utilizing a used police vehicle. Mr. Whelihan indicated that they would want something higher up.

- Ms. Hurst asked why the Board of Assessors needs a town vehicle rather than using personal vehicles and seeking mileage reimbursements. Mr. Whelihan stated that they are out each day, going over rough terrain, and that it would be too much wear and tear on a personal vehicle.
- Mr. Whelihan also said that their copier is at the end of its functionality. He stated that it is ten years old and was purchased then for about \$5,000.
- Mr. Rose asked if they keep track of how close they monitor the proximity to the tax limit. Mr. Whelihan stated that they are sure to keep it below the limit and that he is a bit conservative on the assessments.

New Business – Budget Status Update

- Ms. Panto distributed a packet of materials including an updated Income Expense Summary Sheet dated 3/17/15, a sheet showing the calculations for the FY16 Levy Limit, and a “Financial Data” sheet showing new growth and debt exclusions from FY00 through the FY16 projection.
- Ms. Panto summarized the information, indicating that these numbers are presented without a sum for Free Cash or transfers from the Stabilization Fund. She indicated that local receipts and new growth estimates were increased. The Cherry Sheet numbers are based only on the governor’s proposed budget. Ms. Panto stated that the Cherry Sheet Offsets are greatly increased because of school choice. Ms. Panto stated that she produced the new budget projections with level funding for the School Department and Pathfinder. With these assumptions, but without requested personnel/hours changes, there is a deficit of \$244,726.

New Business – School Department

- Discussion of possible School Department budget. Ms. DeCou indicates that typically about 70% of the total Belchertown budget is “school-side” and 30% “town-side.” Mr. Knapp indicated that they have been meeting as a budget subcommittee and have a proposed budget that they will be presenting to the full School Committee. Mr. Knapp stated that approximately 50% of the School Department budget comes from Chapter 70 funds from the Commonwealth and 50% from the Town. Mr. Knapp indicated that they have two budget proposals – one level service and one needs-based. The level service budget is for \$27,334,363 – a 2.8% increase. Mr. Knapp stated that the needs-based budget is approximately \$783,000 higher as it includes needed expenditures, for example new textbooks.
- Discussion of decreasing class sizes (graduating about 200, while about 150 entering Kindergarten). Discussion of possible changes in Chapter 5 funding (No Child Left Behind). Discussion of loss of a \$95,000 Kindergarten grant (this is absorbed in the budget proposal). Ms. Coffin was told at a meeting she attended today that this grant was to seed the Kindergarten program, not fund it.
- Discussion the School budget does not include all school choice funds.

- Discussion of best way to address capital expenses. Mr. Knapp proposed that town officials meet for capital planning after the Town Meeting on May 11, 2015. Ms. Raymer requested the School Department's capital plan.
- Discussion of Belchertown spending in comparison to other Massachusetts towns. Mr. Knapp indicated that the per pupil spending is one of the lowest – 300 of 324. Mr. Knapp indicated that the average salary for teachers is higher than in Ludlow, but lower than South Hadley or Hampden Wilbraham. He stated that it is in the middle of the average salaries across the Commonwealth.

Other Business

- Subsequent meeting with the schools tentatively scheduled for Thursday, March 26, 2015 at 7pm.

Adjournment


- Meeting adjourned at 8:46pm.

Respectfully submitted,



 Melissa Hurst, Clerk

FINCOM Town of Belchertown (Endorsed by majority)



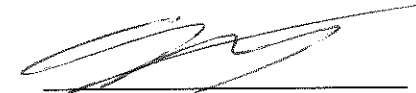
 Kate DeCou, Chair



 Lynne Raymer, Vice Chair

 Melissa Hurst, Clerk

 Steven Rose



 Edward Boscher