

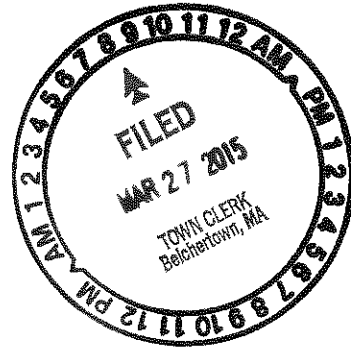
# TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN

## 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: Thursday, March 19, 2015  
Time: 7:00pm  
Location: Lawrence Memorial Hall  
Present: Edward Boscher, Kate DeCou, Melissa Hurst, Lynne Raymer  
Guest(s): Gary Brougham, Jill Panto, Brenda Aldrich, Ron Aponte, George Archible, Chief Francis Fox, Sergeant Bruce Jenks, Steven Williams, Lori Allen, Kristin Balabni, Beth Crosby

- Meeting called to order at 7:02pm.
- Ms. Hurst distributed the minutes from the March 10, 2015 and March 17, 2015 meetings.
- Ms. Raymer moved to accept the minutes of the March 17, 2015 meeting. Mr. Boscher seconded. Minutes were accepted 4-0-0.
- Ms. Raymer moved to accept the minutes of the March 10, 2015 meeting. Ms. Hurst seconded. Minutes were accepted 3-0-1.
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### Old Business

- None noted.

### New Business – Transfer from Reserve

- Ms. Panto presented a request for transfer of \$3,500 from the Reserve Fund to Unemployment to pay ongoing approved claims as upon the FY2015 budget process, the Town was unaware of the layoffs to come.
- Ms. Panto indicated that the present balance for that appropriation is -\$2,800. The unemployment costs are due to staffing changes at the Fire Department and Maintenance.
- Ms. Hurst moved to transfer \$3,500 from the Reserve Fund to Unemployment. Mr. Boscher seconded. Transfer was approved 4-0-0.

### **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 – Police Department**

- Chief Fox indicated that the Police Department has been working with one less officer for five or six years. He indicated that there were 102 more incidents, that these were more severe in nature, and required more follow up. There were also 54 more motor vehicle accidents and 479 more traffic citations. Chief Fox indicated that the town has seen five fatal accidents in the past two and a half months. He also stated that under the Department of Justice statistics, a town of comparable population should have 27 full time officers, while Belchertown has 17. The remaining officers serving are auxiliary and reserve officers. He indicated that Belchertown has become a “training ground.” He also stated that the department is okay for overtime currently, but they have had a disability retirement, one officer in the academy, and two officers on maternity leave. Chief Fox stated that they need an entry level officer and a dispatcher.
- Chief Fox requested funding to hire another full time dispatcher. He explained that calls for service have increased, particularly now that the dispatch for 911 and fire is also through the Police Department. Additionally, the Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) protocols require the dispatcher to remain on the line. Mr. Brougham and Ms. Panto explained that the Fire/911 calls had previously been going through Amherst, for which the Town was paying a stipend and that when this relationship ended, the funds were not redirected to the Police Department. There are now four full time dispatchers and four part time dispatchers.
- Chief Fox stated that there is a state mandate for 40 hours of in service trainings for reserve officers, but that this does not include CPR, taser, etc. He stated that there is a grant for specialized training for full time and reserve officers, but the grant covers the overtime, but not the training fees.
- Chief Fox indicated that the department needs a new fingerprint machine. The Police Department fingerprints for arrests, employment, gun permits, etc. He stated that the current machine is out of date. He stated that the purchase price is \$25,000, or it could be obtained through a four year lease at \$7,200/year, which includes the warranty and service for one year. The machine would be owned by the department after the end of the lease. The current machine is seven or eight years old.

- Chief Fox stated that he is requesting digital in-car cameras, indicating that the previous cameras had been obtained through a grant, but there is now a wireless format. Four of the nine vehicles have the current cameras. Chief Fox said that they cannot get parts for the older cameras. He said that the department needs five more cameras to fully equip the fleet. The newer format cameras have been installed in the newer cruisers.
- Chief Fox requested the purchase of additional cruisers. He stated that in FY15, the department purchased one new cruiser and leased one K-9 vehicle. He stated that in FY14, one cruiser was purchased. He said that each new cruiser costs \$42,500. He explained that the department buys the new SUV style as Crown Victoria models are no longer being manufactured and the other sedan style is too small once it is outfitted with equipment. Additionally, Chief Fox stated that it is more difficult for the sedan style to get around the town in inclement weather. He reports the department having three Crown Victoria cruisers left. Ms. Raymer questioned why the department is leasing the K-9 vehicle. Chief Fox and Mr. Brougham stated that this vehicle is not driven as frequently. Mr. Brougham indicated that the Police Department used to purchase three cruisers each year.
- Chief Fox proposed building a police garage, as well as a new speed trailer as the current one is approximately 12 years old. He said that a new speed trailer costs about \$7,050.

#### **New Business – Department of Public Works**

- Mr. Williams discussed the condition of the roads, indicating that much of the problems are due to deferred maintenance rather than weather. He said that the town had depended on Chapter 90 funds previously, but it does not go as far now due to increased materials costs.
- Mr. Williams discussed the Green Communities certification and that it means that the town has reached a 20% reduction in usage. He also indicated that the repair costs for the town buildings increase with their age.
- As to vehicles, Mr. Williams stating that there are increased maintenance costs due to the age of the fleet, cost of auto parts, and severe weather.
- Mr. Williams reported that he calculated the snow removal budget based on a ten year average snowfall. He explained that it is typically best to underfund the snow removal, but within reason. Ms. Panto explained that if the snow removal budget is reduced in the future, then they are not permitted to deficit spend if needed. Mr. Williams stated that there have been about 80” of snow this year, but the normal snowfall is about 62”.
- Mr. Williams stated that the additional material costs requested are for guardrails and catch basins. As to hired services, he stated that there is extra tree removal needed. The DPW had done corrective pruning with federal/state reimbursement, but now the trees are suffering decay and rot. He stated that there has been little replanting.
- Mr. Williams discussed the funds needed for police services. He explained that they had been trying to use DPW services to flag, but it is becoming more difficult as traffic increases.
- Mr. Williams stated that there has been a ten percent increase in transfer station usage. The wastewater treatment plant may need to supplement with taxation and increased rates. He stated

that the electricity costs have increased. He said that new discharge permits were required from the federal government and that they will need to update the plant and that it is currently near the technological limits. They had to pay \$30,000 this year that was not budgeted and they anticipating paying an additional \$15,000 in FY17.

- Mr. Williams requested an additional full time laborer, as well as two seasonal employees. He stated that the DPW is shorthanded in the highway division as there are ten on staff, of which two are supervisors and two are mechanics. He said that the addition of the seasonal employees would allow for a change in the allocation of staffing to send out repair crews.
- As to capital, Mr. Williams requested a new dump truck body for the 1998 truck, indicating that the vehicle would probably be in use for an additional five to ten years. He also requested funds to remove the communications tower at the Whitlock complex, though he stated that this is for the good of the community rather than for the DPW. He also requested a generator for the old EMS building, stating the existing generator is antiquated and that this building houses the radio equipment for emergency services. He also requested a new lawnmower as the current is 12 year old. He requested to redo the parking lot for Lawrence Memorial Hall to double the parking. He also requested a new air compressor for DPW as the current is original to the building. He also requested the funds for demolition of the old wooden playground as he reports it is a safety hazard. Mr. Williams requested a new large dump truck, which would be approximately \$200,000 to replace. He also stated that Old Town Hall is in need of a new boiler. Ms. DeCou asked which items are of priority. Mr. Williams stated that the larger dump truck, the one ton dump truck, the boiler, and the air compressor are priorities.

### **New Business – Family Center**

- Ms. Allen presented regarding the Family Center. She stated that the usage of the center is up to 93 families and that their third fundraiser is upcoming. She stated that the alarm has been installed, but they need a landline telephone. She also stated that they need a handicap ramp and that if maintenance built it, the cost would be about \$1,000. She stated that there is no running water to the sinks in the boys' bathroom which would cost \$240 to fix.
- Ms. Allen stated that the Collaborative budget is being cut, but they do not know of the impact of those cuts on the grant to the Family Center. She stated that the Collaborative represents about half of their annual funding.
- Ms. Allen requested \$5,000 for utilities, repair the access to the building, and for plumbing repairs. She indicated that she is speaking with the School Department about contributing half of the funds.
- Ms. Aldrich indicated that the idea of split funding between the town and the School Department is interesting, particularly as the center serves as a bridge to Kindergarten. Ms. DeCou asked about the discussion of this funding option. Ms. Aldrich stated that the talks have been informal. Mr. Aponte asked Ms. Panto if this funding is included in the draft budget total. Ms. Panto indicated that this request was new to her as of today. Ms. Allen stated that she had met with Richard Fritch and that the funds were not provided for in the School Department budget draft.

- Ms. DeCou asked about the space itself and the prospects of the Family Center remaining at the former Franklin School. Mr. Brougham stated that a year ago the town was talking about not funding the center at all and the building was going to be sold and now there is a budget proposal. He stated that there have been no productive conversations about alternative locations or funding.
- Ms. Allen indicated that the Collaborative has been cut \$40,000 for each of the next three years and that there are 17 family centers that they fund. She stated that they have been approved for funding for transportation from the center of town to the Family Center two days each week.

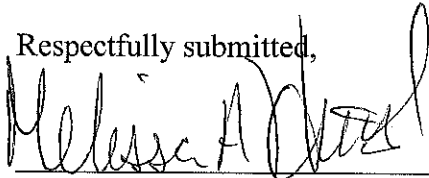
**Other Business**

- Ms. Raymer asked about the remaining interest and debt for FY16. Ms. Panto stated that it is for the Belchertown High School, Police/Senior Center, Chestnut Hill Community School roof, and fire truck.
- Mr. Aponte asked about the doubled mandatory charges for the cherry sheet offset. Ms. Panto indicated that it is school choice money that goes directly to the school side of the budget.
- Ms. Panto stated that there is \$346,990 in free cash currently, but there are deficits from the school snow removal. Ms. Panto stated that there may be some additional funds available from some departments. She tentatively estimated that free cash would be about \$220,000.
- Subsequent meeting with the schools scheduled for Thursday, March 26, 2015 at 7pm.
- Additional Finance Committee meeting scheduled for Monday, March 30, 2015 at 7pm.
- Ms. DeCou announced that she would be resigning after Annual Town Meeting as she will be relocating out of Belchertown.

**Adjournment**

- Meeting adjourned at 9:32pm.

Respectfully submitted,



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Melissa Hurst, Clerk

FINCOM Town of Belchertown (Endorsed by majority)



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Kate DeCou, Chair



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Lynne Raymer, Vice Chair



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Melissa Hurst, Clerk

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Steven Rose

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Edward Boscher