

**FINANCE COMMITTEE  
IPSWICH TOWN HALL, ROOM A  
25 Green Street  
TUESDAY, Mar. 1, 2016, 7:30 PM  
Accepted 3/15/16**

**FINCOM Members in Attendance:** Mitch Feldman, Chairman, Walt Hartford, Janice Clements Skelton, Rob White, Richard Howard, Jamie Fay, and Michael Schaaf. Ingrid Miles arrived at 7:58 pm, and Kevin Murphy was absent.

Call to order at 7:34 pm with 7 (seven) members present. The Chair announced that ICAM was recording, and Cindy Quinn, the Minutes Secretary, was present.

**Other in Attendance:** Robin Crosbie (TM), Jen Breaker (Admin. Asst. TM), (Carl Nysten (SC), Patty Ditullio (Library Director), Charlie Surpitski (BOS), and Bill Craft (BOS).

**Abbreviations used:** FINCOM Finance Committee, BOS Board of Selectmen, TM Town Manager, SC School Committee, ATM Annual Town Meeting, DPW Dept. of Public Works, FTE Full-Time Equivalents, OPEB Other Post Employment Benefits, STM Special Town Meeting

**Documents used:**

- Agenda 03/01/16
- FinCom Minutes from 02/09/16 and Tri-Board minutes from 1/20/16
- FY2017 Budget & Capital Plan from R. Crosbie, 2/22/16
- Handout on Budget PowerPoint by R. Crosbie.
- ATM Warrant from R. Crosbie by email 2/23/16
- Ipswich Reads 2016 from the Ipswich Public Library, 16 pgs.
- Ipswich Public School Dept. FY17 Budget Presentation from C. Nysten, 02/27/16
- Ipswich Ad Hoc Electronic Voting Advisory Committee report from M. Schaaf by email 2/21/16.

**CITIZEN QUERIES:** there were no citizen inquiries.

**REVIEW OF MINUTES:**

R. Howard moved to accept the Tri-Board minutes from 1/20/16 as amended, and R. White seconded the motion. Unanimous.

R. Howard moved, and R. White seconded, to accept the minutes from 2/9/16 FinCom meeting. The vote was unanimous.

**FY2017 BUDGET OVERVIEW AND PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF WARRANT**

TM Robin Crosbie highlighted the objectives and revenue funding sources in the budget. Then she reviewed the major fund/reserve balances and announced that the estimated increase in State Aid is \$0. This week, she will find out what the health insurance costs will be, and there was a discussion on health costs and plans. Hopefully in the next two months, Robin will hire a Finance Director.

For General Government, she commented on the election costs and the implementation of early voting for Presidential and State elections. Early voting details are incomplete, but the voting changes for this would be for every other year. There would management transfers for settled labor contracts. I. Miles arrived.

In some other budget areas, Robin noted there are decreases in spending such as the Police and Animal Control, but Fire Dept. spending will rise. For the DPW, fuel and energy prices have dropped, but trash, pavement management, sidewalks and safety, seasonal workers, and maintenance have risen. The lease-purchase of the phone system is complete, and that category will drop down.

Under Community and Cultural Services, the Council on Aging coordinator will increase her time by two hours a week, and Veteran Services has gone up. In the library, with the staff reorganization, some part-time positions will become full-time, and some part-time positions will be reduced.

There is a change in the amount budgeted for benefits for retirees and current employees. The debt service for bridge repair will go up but it stays within the levy limit. The schedule for bonding was on page 72. The budget is based on conservative revenue estimates and has no State aid.

There are issues with the water system—manganese and iron—and the possibility of having to dig a new well. Recently, there were new rates implemented for sewer and water. There was a conversation on water and the watershed in general. Kevin Merz (Treasurer/Collector) is on the committee, which will be looking at different scenarios, to study the debt.

Even though some of the FTE changes are minor, Jamie asked for an updated budget matrix. Richard asked for some goals and objectives from the departments, and the TM will send that information.

## **REVIEW OF CAPITAL PLAN**

Robin continued with the listing of priorities in the Capital Plan according to the policy adopted in 2013. \$857,000 from Free Cash will be utilized to fund this. After outlining the completed projects at the schools, DPW, library, Town Hall, public safety, sewer, and water, she focused on the recommended FY17 projects. Those include IT, school and town facilities, police and fire stations, and highway garage. For the Library stairs, the Library Trustees are raising an equivalent amount.

Then there is the equipment list for the DPW and Public Safety departments, and in particular placing security cameras in some key areas due to some trash, vandalism, and theft concerns. Other items on the listing include wayfinding signs, water and wastewater meters, a water system study, trucks for several departments, well upgrades, a water mixer, and SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) implementation for wastewater already in year two of five.

At the High School, Bill Hodge has identified some areas to consider such as the weight room and painting classrooms. Robin said that there is a need for an on-going general fund source dedicated to capital projects.

There are problems with the fire engines, and Ipswich may join some other cities and towns in filing a suit. Fire department radios will be repurposed for other departments when new ones arrive, and the Town uses the State bid list but is seeking cooperative purchasing opportunities.

At this point, the Town Manager went through some of the warrant articles. Article 11 would put some money back into the Waterways Improvement Fund, and Article 13 addresses infrastructure changes in Brown Square and Soffron Lane. Article 14 is about OPEB. There was dialogue on debt exclusions and the turf field as well as ways to fund the fields in a timely manner.

Concerning the citizens' petitions on the warrant, Article 21 is on climate crisis and the viability of the Essex County Retirement System. Article 22 is for restrictions on plastic bags and expanded polystyrene containers, and Article 23 and 24 would have the ATM and STM be on a Saturday. The demonstration of the electronic voting system is Article 25. The Town Manager will be reviewing the Whittier School stabilization fund and the Essex County Institute assessments.

There was a conversation on having an update from the School Building Needs committee at ATM, in the FinCom report, or in some other document. The last portion of the capital plan has some major capital projects under consideration such as Linebrook Road, Jeffrey's Neck Road, manganese remediation, Hammett Street parking, and the train station parking lot and safety issues, but these will have tax implications. Mitch suggested looking at the tax rate and the impact of each project as well as the long-term effects. J. Fay left the meeting at 9:53 pm.

### **BUDGET PRESENTATION LIBRARY**

The Library Director Patty Ditullio summarized the changes at the library and that it is well used. She is focusing on more efficiency, better procedures, and changes in some of the positions. There are books and music that are more downloadable, but she is redistributing the space better. Incoming phone calls now go through a phone tree, and she is utilizing staff scheduling software.

Some items have been updated, while others have been disposed of or given to other libraries. In many areas of the library, there are more workstations, and teen, children's, and adult programs have been expanded. Patty has been communicating with the libraries at all the schools and is looking at having a bus to bring families into the library. She is keeping some of the special collections especially if no other libraries have these.

She described the details on the new adult and teen programs—book groups, crafts, coloring programs, movie night, and cupcake decorating. There is a workspace for tutoring and quiet study areas. More digital and electronic books, music, and magazines are available, and EBSCO has been very generous to the Town and schools.

### **NEED FOR BEAN COUNTING/2 OR 3 SC MEETINGS**

Carl Nylen (SC) proposed having two nights for the FinCom to review the School budget instead of three because there is a new format and a busy meeting schedule, especially for the School Building Needs process. There was discussion on the current format and its parts as well as the

proposed one. There is more predictability in the budget this year, and the FinCom believes that the detailed dialogue with the principals helps the FinCom understand the budget.

If another night is needed, the two committees could consider March 21<sup>st</sup> at the High School Ensemble Room as the BOS are holding a warrant hearing in Room A on the same date.

M. Schaaf moved to adjust the schedule to March 15 and 16 for a 2-day presentation starting at 7 pm and maintain the 21<sup>st</sup> as the third night in the Ensemble Room and to return to three-night program next year. I. Miles seconded the motion, and the vote was 7-0.

Carl will deliver the budget information earlier, and if there are any other suggestions to let M. Feldman know. Some of those topics include SPED, Choice, test score trends, the budget for the next four years, grant funding, and what did the override provide in the schools.

There is a request from the BOS to eliminate Bean Counting, an open forum between the three boards. Some traditional topics covered that day may need to be expanded or revised to deal with other issues, and there is no agreement on OPEB.

With the BOS warrant hearing March 21, there was discussion about the need for a FinCom warrant hearing on March 22. Usually it is after bean counting, and the FinCom could use April 12. Without a town accountant, parts of the budget may not be complete, and the group considered how to make Bean Counting more effective.

J. Skelton moved to retain the 2016 Bean Counting on Saturday, April 9. The motion was seconded, and the vote was unanimous.

## **ELECTRONIC TOWN MEETING REPORT**

M. Schaaf reported on the electronic voting and how only one company does this. Only a few towns participate. This type of voting supposedly would shorten town meetings, and there would be secret votes. After reviewing their research, Michael noted it did not speed up the meeting.

He looked at the costs--\$15,000 to \$17,000 per meeting plus more for each night. Some critical factors are that the company must be on-site for several days prior to the meeting and the affect this equipment would have on the wireless networks. It would be necessary to train monitors. R. Howard suggested that the committee make a recommendation. There was a discussion on whether these could be used for town elections, and this would have to come through the Secretary of State's office.

**NEW BUSINESS**—there was no new business.

It was moved, and seconded, to adjourn at 11:21 pm. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by

Cynthia D. Quinn  
Minutes Secretary