

**MINUTES OF JOINT MEETING OF SPENCER BOARD OF SELECTMEN AND SPENCER FINANCE COMMITTEE-TUESDAY 4/2/2019- MIRIAM MCOURT SOCIAL HALL- LOWER LEVEL SPENCER MEMORIAL TOWN HALL**

**Finance Committee Members Present:** Bill Shemeth (ex-officio), Mary Braney, Nancy Tame, Tom Parker, Dennis O'Leary, Ed Sproul, Paul Bouvier, Chris Bowen, Bill Wall, Chris Woodbury, and Paul McLaughlin

**Board of Selectmen Members Present:** Gary Woodbury, Ralph Hicks, and Tony Pepe (remotely) Town Administrator Tom Gregory

Chairman Braney called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 7:12 PM.

Chairman Woodbury called the Board of Selectmen meeting to order at 7:14 PM

Chairman Woodbury noted that the Board of Selectmen had one member Tony Pepe participating remotely in accordance with Regulation 940 , CMR 29.10 of the Open Meeting Law

Motion by Chris Woodbury and seconded by Ed Sproul to accept the minutes of the March 29<sup>th</sup> Finance Committee meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Mary Braney noted that the Town will be undertaking a 5 year financial study plan process after the annual town meeting and that question relating to future department operational needs may be asked in anticipation of this process.

**Spencer Rescue Squad Presentation**

Al Morin and Arnie Arsenault presented on behalf of the Spencer Rescue Squad Board of Directors. Pat George had previously submitted the budget request with backup materials. They noted that this was the third three year contract request for the Spencer Rescue Squad to provide services to the Town of Spencer. They noted that the first two 3 year contracts remained at the original annual amount of \$150,000 per year which had been funded by an override. Two full time advanced life support ambulances and one basic ambulance for one shift a day are currently provided. The Spencer Rescue Squad is requesting an additional \$75,000 per year to defray costs. One major financial challenge facing the Spencer Rescue Squad is that with Spencer's growing elder population, the Squad is unable to collect the full value of any ambulance runs which are covered by Medicare or Medicaid. There is over \$1.4 million in these contractual write offs. Only \$50,000 per year is taken in with the annual subscription drive which with the \$3,000 cost of the mailer, and coverage costs of subscribers nets only \$17,000 in annual revenue. The squad is obtaining a newer ambulance at the end of the month. A new ambulance costs between \$160- \$165 thousand. Monthly average calls are increasing. Selectman Hicks noted that it was not cost effective for the town to take over the ambulance operations. The squad is willing to consider a vehicle leasing program in the future.

**Spencer Council on Aging Follow Up Presentation**

Chris Woodbury and Gary Woodbury excused themselves from the discussion and left the meeting room.

Pam Woodbury, COA Director and Chris Mancini, COA Vice-Chair presented on behalf of the Spencer Council on Aging. Pam had submitted the formula grant paperwork and a description of the COA fee

structure and how the funds are spent. There is an established revolving account for the Council on Aging. Spencer currently receives funds for 2484 seniors based on the last federal census. Spencer actually has 3100 seniors. The senior center is currently open 27 hours per week. The ideal would be for the senior center to be open 32 hours per week with both the senior center director and the outreach worker positions at 32 hours per week. Funding of an in house cook and clerical support may also be helpful in the future. Selectmen Hicks noted he would like to see the Senior Center hours increased by 2 hours per week each year until the 32 hour figure is reached.

#### Treasurer/Collector Presentation

Chris Woodbury and Gary Woodbury rejoined the meeting. Treasurer/Collector Rebecca Forand presented on behalf of her department. There are no major changes in the request for this year. If the town hall were open all day on Thursdays plus one evening a week, there would still be a need for an additional 3-4 hours per week beyond the hours currently existing for the department staff to meet all of their paperwork requirements.

#### Sewer Commission Presentation

Commissioners Larry Dufault and Frank White along with Jim LaPlante (Sewer Plant Director) presented on behalf of the Spencer Sewer Department. The commissioners noted that there is a substantial sewer rate increase this year in order to fund upgrades needed to meet DEP and EPA standards. There will be no new capacity to add users to the system allowed even after these upgrades have been completed. The upgrades are required to meet new permit requirements. The increase to the average user is \$135 per quarter or \$1000 per year. The commissioners recommended that the boards contact the legislative delegation to seek funding of at least a portion of the work required for the upgrades to the sewer plant and system. The state suggested that sewer commission simply enact a 290% rate increase and fund all improvements at once. The commission is completing the work in phases.

#### Water Commission Presentation

Water Commissioner Eben Butler presented on behalf of the Water Department. There was a 3% increase in the water rates. The Water Department is undertaking a looping project which will improve the Greenville Street and Paxton Road lines. The debt service for this project needs to be revoted.

#### Highway Department Presentation

Highway Department foreman Eben Butler presented on behalf of the Highway Department. The highway department currently has 9 workers. In 2014, the department had 11 workers. The optimum number of workers would be 14. The highway department initial request included the building and grounds lead position which was not funded in the general town budget request. Some funds are in the highway department budget to create a rotation of funding leases to replace highway department vehicles and equipment. Funds for Year 1 repair to Sugden Dam are included. The town maintains two other dams (Whittemore Dam and Muzzy Dam). Muzzy Dam needs a lot of work as well.

### Utilities and Facilities and Transfer Station Presentation

Highway Foreman Eben Butler presented on behalf of the Utilities and Facilities and Transfer Station budgets. There are minor budget increases. The engineering aide is very useful to moving projects forward. Street lighting costs may be reduced in the future if the LED streetlight capital project is funded. There is a modest increase in the snow and ice removal budget. There is no change in the traffic light budget request. There is a slight increase in the gasoline and diesel fuel budget request. There is a slight increase in the transfer station budget request.

Any action on the potential override ballot question for the Spencer Rescue Squad will be postponed to Monday when the board hopes to have all members present.

Ralph Hicks moved to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting. Motion was seconded by Gary Woodbury. Roll call vote- Ralph Hicks-Aye Gary Woodbury-Aye and Tony Pepe- Aye. Board of Selectmen meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM.

There was no finance committee correspondence.

Chris Woodbury noted that the capital planning committee will meet on Wednesday April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Chris Woodbury reported that the economic development committee met last Thursday. The committee is focused on the August 24<sup>th</sup> Spencer street party event. The committee hopes to hold a similar event for the fall. The Economic Development committee is also focused on gateway improvements. Gateways are where one enters Spencer on a major route from another community.

The town administrator reviewed the draft warrant with the Finance Committee and answered questions.

Motion to adjourn by Tom Parker and seconded by Chris Bowen. Meeting adjourned at 9:55 PM.