

Finance Committee Minutes for 6:30, Friday, March 12, 2021

Via: Zoom Teleconference due to Covid

Link to recording of the meeting:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/DkQ5GeeS5OgXF_Rsj3yYDp3Hj3wFRS4DkzQ6wYEBHp9w6mTeih9jUa_8nl6yKGrB.eP_5MZ_CVlta4nO8 Passcode: x\$D9h4.N

1. Call to Order at 6:32. Those present included members Deb Andrew, John Redeker, Jackie Walsh, and Jim Burnham and Town Moderator Roland Giguere
2. Postponed approving minutes from Feb. 11 and 13 to next meeting
3. New Business:
 - a. Welcomed new member Jim Burnham and Town Moderator Roland Giguere
 - b. Updates on recent meetings and from liaisons:
 - 1.) Senior Center Expansion Committee: Jackie, who serves as the liaison to this committee, reported that the plans to expand the existing Senior Center on Main Street are on hold. The committee has proposed creating a Senior Services District, as it needs a body that would buy the building and oversee the renovations. Currently there is no such body. The new district would not change the way the three towns involved -- Shelburne, Buckland and Ashfield -- run and pay for the center. The Ashfield Selectboard has written a letter opposing the new district, so the Expansion Committee will not be asking voters from the three towns to vote on it this spring. That postpones a vote on the actual funding of the project at least until 2023.
 - 2.) Selectboard met with the assessors about that department's budget: Jackie attended that meeting and reported that the assessors' budget has no major new expenses or reductions.
 - 3.) Meetings initiated by our committee with the Mohawk district Finance Committees: Jackie reported that members of the committees met via Zoom in January. Shared concerns include the Mohawk budget, which amounts to more than 50 percent of the towns' annual budgets, and sharing resources such as police, fire and ambulance service. The committees met with Mohawk school reps and Franklin County Tech School reps on Feb. 9 and 11. Minutes have been submitted to the Shelburne Finance Committee and will be approved at its April meeting. Drafts are available for the public.

c. Todd Dubreuil spoke with the Committee about filling an empty position on the Finance Committee.

Todd lives on Little Mohawk Road and has lived in that neighborhood for 30 years. He and his wife, Julie, have three sons, and Todd's interests include fishing, hunting, and coaching soccer and baseball. He works for the USGS as an ecologist and is working on a project looking at brook trout. He oversees grad students working on the research. Todd said he wants to be on the committee in part to give back to the community. He would like to work on finding a really good balance between getting things the townspeople need and being fiscally responsible. His interests relevant to being on the board include public safety, the highway department, and the schools. He has done committee work before, including the safety committee overseeing animal care in his lab at UMass.

d. Jason Cusimano spoke with the committee about filling an empty position

Jason lives on Mechanic Street with his wife Dana. They have raised nine children together. He owns several businesses, including Bath Fitter. Jason served on the Mohawk School Committee and was chair of its budget committee and served on the building and personnel subcommittees. He has experience running businesses and overseeing the financial side of things. He has a construction supervisor license and owns three buildings in Shelburne. He would like to see more services in town. For example, he wishes the former Mole Hollow candle factory and shop had become a community space. And he loves that Greenfield has a skate park. He would love to hear other ideas people have for improving town. Yet he is cognizant of the difficulty faced when taxes go up, especially for people on fixed incomes.

e. Discussion of the two people interested in Finance Committee

Members focussed on the strengths of both candidates. Roland Giguere will appoint the new member and will contact that person and the board about the appointment.

f. 2022 School Budget.

Our school representatives, Leiha Maldonado and Julie Debreuil, spoke about the proposed school budget. Leiha reported that the school committee had very little input on the budget, which was put together by the superintendent and business consulting group, TLS. There was no line-by-line review by the committee, and Leiha believes there hasn't been that for a decade.

The entire budget will be rising 3.65 percent, according to the proposal.

The amount Shelburne is being asked to pay is rising 4.9 percent.

Since school spending is half of Shelburne's budget, and we are limited to increasing our entire budget to 2.5 percent, giving the schools that percentage increase would mean zero increases for other departments, the committee members discussed.

The committee is going to ask to meet with TMS and the superintendent about the budget.

g. Meeting with police rep's and selectboard rep's

We are invited to the Franklin County Selectboard's meeting at 6 p.m. on Thursday, March 25, with police representatives. The focus is the state's proposed police reform. While supporting the spirit of the reform, our police chief, Greg Bardwell, is very concerned about added training requirements for our part-time police that will be very expensive and will make it unlikely that those trained will be willing to work in Shelburne as we offer few hours and, he said, lower wages than other possible jobs.

The link is on the calendar on the town website.

h. Next meeting date: We will wait to hear from the school superintendent and the business consultant to see when they can meet. We will also make a separate date to meet in April via email.

i. Adjournment at 9:45 p.m.