

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

The charge of the finance is to advise the select board and other officers in the prudential affairs of the town.

Town Budget

General Position: Once again the town administration, department heads, and select board have done an excellent job at preparing a fair and fiscally prudent budget. There is an increase in spending of almost \$100,000, but most of this is due to wage and insurance increases and skyrocketing fuel prices. A handful of items came to the table for consideration, but were scrapped in order to keep the budget as pared as possible.

Highway Department: A new truck is being purchased to replace the eight year old vehicle driven by the road agent. The truck being replaced has been repaired by the highway department on many occasions and the return on time and parts is no longer financially sound. The finance committee agrees it is time to purchase a new vehicle.

Highway Equipment Reserve Fund: As usual, the above highway vehicle will be purchased out of money from this reserve fund. This reserve fund, as most reserve funds, has been an important financial tool used to both make funds available when necessary and to lessen the impact on the tax payer by spreading the costs over a period of time. In order to perpetuate this fund and keep up with increases in equipment it is important to increase the amount of funding. A recommendation of a \$5000.00 increase has been agreed upon.

Library: Due to demand for more library hours, the increase in the number of patrons and computer users, and regular wage increases, salaries are up \$3600.00. The jump in fuel prices to heat the building is the other contributing factor in a total increase of \$5000.00. The committee continues to support the increase in expenditures of this community gem.

Fuel: As fuel price increases have driven up many of the budget increases, the finance committee agrees it is important that the town seek fuel cooperatives or price lock-in plans to at least guarantee prices for the up coming year. Plans are being considered at this time.

School Budget

General Position: The school board, SAU, and the administration put countless hours into the production of a final budget. The majority of the line items in the budget are predetermined by contracts, state education rules, or federal mandates. This leaves a much smaller portion that is under the discretion of the budget process. The board had the foresight to contract a fuel price for the year which saved the school a considerable amount. This group should be commended in its ability to bring in a budget with a modest 3.9% increase.

Article III: (Assistant Principal) The finance committee concurs that an assistant principal could greatly benefit the productivity of the school but is concerned that the administrative portion of the budget has become too large. It has been suggested by the committee in the past that the school board and administration investigate ways to reorganize the principal and SAU offices to make the position of assistant principal less of a financial burden to the community.

Article IV: (Tractor Purchase) The committee recommends the purchase of a new tractor for the maintenance of school paths, bus parking, and general maintenance of the school grounds.

Article V: (Building Maintenance Reserve) The committee believes, as always, it is fiscally prudent to keep reserve funds on hand for ongoing maintenance of the school building. We recommend the appropriation of \$30,000 for this reserve.

Article VI: (Benefits Payable Expendable Trust Fund) The committee approves of this article. This fund will be used to pay for upcoming shortfalls in the state's retirement plan.

The finance committee consists of six community members that are truly concerned about the budgeting and financial soundness of our town government and school system. The committee is only an advisory group and though we feel it is an important conduit between the members of the community and the budgeting process, we believe the community should be the real force behind the financial decisions in their community. It is because of this, we ask the people of this community to voice their opinions and concerns at town and school board meetings, to question spending during budget hearings and to speak out at annual meetings to support or reject items. Please take the time to see your tax dollars spent wisely.

Respectfully Submitted,

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