



FINANCE COMMITTEE,
TOWN OF BERNARDSTON
BERNARDSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
5 February 2024
Joint meeting with the Selectboard

Present for FinCom; Jane Dutcher, Brian Hervieux, Jody Coleman, Stephen Nestanpower and Tammy Powell.

Present for BOS; Stan Garland, Brian Keir and Ken Bordewieck.

Guests to present their budget and answer questions regarding them; Highway Superintendent Brian Minor and Police Chief Jim Palmeri.

Both Meetings called to order at 6:32pm.

A review of the Highway budget and the Transfer Station budget.

Mr. Minor would like to purchase a small sander for the pick-up truck purchased last year using monies from the snow and ice removal account.

Mr. Garland asked why the maintenance line has increased, Mr. Minor stated that was due to the Highway dept. now doing maintenance on all town buildings. As a result, Mr. Minor has requested an increase in Tool/Supplies account (up to \$2500) to purchase things that would help maintain those buildings.

Mr. Garland asked why the Equipment line was increased to by \$4100. Mr. Minor has stated he would like to purchase a Plate Compactor for when they blacktop or fill in potholes with coldpatch.

Ms. Dutcher has asked Mr. Minor to split and separate fuel costs to reflect what is being requested for gas, diesel, and propane. Mr. Minor was on board with that request and further explained that the increase on this line was due to the rising cost of all the corresponding fuels.

Ms. Dutcher asked why the increase in the Office/Education line. Mr. Minor explained it was for their continued education classes which are required to keep and maintain their different licenses. He further explained that more classes may be needed in the future as OSHA will require now that Municipalities must now follow OSHA guidelines, which they were exempt from in the past.

Ms. Dutcher asked what went into the Fleet Supplies line. Mr. Minor explained that line is what they need to maintain the fleet as well as hiring out to repair vehicles in the fleet.

Mr. Garland noted an overall 10% increase in the budget request and urged Mr. Minor to investigate ways to bring that increase down.

Mr. Keir moved that the BOS purchase a road plate using ARPA funds and was 2nd by Mr. Bordewieck, passing unanimously.

Ms. Dutcher wanted to discuss the custodial services and Mr. Minor indicated that a future discussion should be had about the time and hours required for this job. For now, it is a discussion to be had at a later date.

Ms. Dutcher has stated that she had a discussion with Mr. Minor about the fuel station for town vehicles. Leaving an indication that monies be moved from the various departments to a Fuel Account under the direction of Mr. Minor to better track which department uses what fuel and how much they use.

Mr. Minor told the Boards that the Town uses 8000 gallons of Gas and 6000 gallons of Diesel.

Mr. Minor in discussing the Transfer Station budget said the only significant change to that budget is the fee to get rid of non-lead/non-acid based batteries.

This completed the review of the Highway and Transfer Station budgets.

Welcoming Chief Palmeri to discuss the Police budget.

Chief Palmeri is looking to increase Officer Chabot's salary to \$65k per year with \$53,950k to be Bernardston's share. The increase is being requested so that we can retain officer Chabot, as it is getting increasingly harder to find officers. Chief Palmeri revealed we had lost an Officer to another town.

Ms. Dutcher informed Chief Palmeri that we are trying to streamline the Vehicle fuel account for all departments, and that it may fall under the direction of Mr. Minor.

A new police cruiser is on schedule to be purchased this year; Ms. Dutcher indicates there is enough in the Vehicle Stabilization account for this purchase. Mr. Keir has indicated he is opposed to this request, and later Mr. Garland voiced the same.

The Finance Committee has the opinion the Police Budget looks good as presented.

This concludes the review of the Police Department Budget and there was no further question for Chief Palmeri.

A review of the minutes from our meeting on 22 January 2024. It was moved by Mr. Hervieux and 2nd by Mr. Coleman and unanimously approved to accept those minutes as corrected.

A review of the Financial reports was conducted.

A review of PVRSD's E&D report was conducted.

A review of DESE's required contribution report was conducted.

A review of the budget worksheet was conducted without many changes. Ms. Dutcher has asked we review and let her know if we had questions or concerns.

A review of the future meeting schedule was had. Most appointments are confirmed with the exception of the Rec. Com. And the Library. Questions remain about the library budget with the announcement of the retiring of Karen Stinchfield. Ms. Dutcher will reach out to the Library's Board of Trustees to ask if they need to re-submit their budget.

A discussion of the 3-town meeting was had. Ms. Dutcher stated that Thursday evening works fine with Northfield, but she will reach out to Leyden to see if that works. A suggested date of 7 March 2024 for said meeting.

Ms. Dutcher informed us that on 8 February 2024 at 6pm in the High School library will be an FY25 budget hearing for PVRSD.

Our next meeting will be on 12 February 2024 in the Selectboard's office at 6:30pm. To present and review the budgets with the Tree Warden, Fire Department, EMS, Town Clerk, and the Planning Board.

Moved by Tammy Powell and 2nd by Jody Coleman to adjourn Finance meeting. Moved by Stan Garland and 2nd by Ken Bordewieck to adjourn the BOS meeting.

Both meetings adjourned at 8:47pm.

Respectfully submitted by Brian Hervieux.

