

Rowe Finance Committee
June 28, 2017
6:00 P.M.
Rowe Town Hall

Finance Committee: Loretta Dionne, Paul McLatchy III, Charles Sokol
Absent: Wayne Zavotka, Chair
Board of Selectmen: Chair Jennifer Morse, Selectman Dennis May, Executive Secretary Janice Boudreau
Audience of Citizens: David Dvore, Russ Jolly, Joanne Semarie, Police Chief Julie Shippee

Call to Order: In the absence of a chair, Ms. Dionne called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M., a quorum of the committee present.

Vacancy: The Finance Committee had requested a joint meeting to appoint a fifth member. Abi Phelps had indicated interest in filling the seat, however she has had to decline appointment at this exact time. She may be available in a few months if the vacancy still exists. Selectman Morse suggested that when the town does a call-around looking for volunteers for other positions, the Finance Committee be listed as well.

Financial Policies: It was agreed that rather than go over the policy handbook tonight, both committees take an opportunity to review the document in detail, and then meet jointly to address it.

Broadband: Municipal Lighting Plant (MLP) Manager David Dvore was present to discuss broadband financing. As of this meeting, the Finance Committee has not yet discussed a recommendation for funding. Mr. Dvore informed the group that \$220,000 from the state's portion of the project has come in, but can't be used just yet.

Mr. Dvore explained that as the MLP Manager, he is similar to a department head. However, the MLP itself operates more like a business. All MLP accounts roll over for each fiscal year. For more information, he referenced Chapter 164, Section 56 of the Massachusetts General Laws. The Board of Selectmen still have to sign off on bills, so there is a shared level of authority and a system of checks and balances.

Mr. Dvore wants to hire Westfield Gas and Electric (WGE) to manage the project, which would be in line with the regional WiredWest plan. The Board of Selectmen reviewed the contract and went over some details.

A memorandum of understanding will be needed in the near future to commit the town to hiring WGE to operate the network once it is up and running. While this is not a contract, it does limit the town to pursuing the WiredWest option so that they have a reasonable idea of how many towns will be part of this co-op.

For borrowing purposes involving State House Notes, Mr. Dvore reiterated that the amount financed has to be less than \$500,000 to avoid costly bond counsel. Assuming \$499,000 can be borrowed for the project, this leaves \$361,000 that will cover the difference. The town has already appropriated \$559,000 for the project, so some monies could even be returned to the general fund or stabilization. This decision will need to occur in the next few months.

The Finance Committee will discuss financing further in August.

Budget Schedule: The Assessors are looking at possibly sending out quarterly tax bills for FY19. We are currently committed to semi-annual tax bills for FY18. In reviewing the proposed budget calendar, it was agreed that preliminary budgets should be completed and in by the beginning of October or November, rather than the end of November.

Mr. McLatchy suggested having an elected officials forum prior to budget season, which was met with some enthusiasm from the Selectboard. At this point, nothing will be changed in regards to the health insurance percentages for FY18, but may be reviewed for FY19.

There was a question of having Board of Selectmen and/or Finance Committee involvement with the teachers' union contract negotiations, but nothing was decided at this time. There was also a question of what roles and responsibilities the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee would play. It seemed clear that the Finance Committee would play a larger role than it has in recent years, but the Selectboard would still be involved in crafting the budget.

Minutes: The minutes of June 19th were postponed.

Dam Business: Chief Shippee reported that a citizen living near the Mill Pond Dam has been changing the water levels at the dam seemingly whenever he feels like it, even to the point of having a "key" made up for the water level device. The Board of Selectmen signed a letter informing him that he needs to cease and desist any and all action regarding the dam.

Next Meeting: The following events are scheduled:

Monday, July 24th at 6:00 P.M. This will be the July monthly meeting of the Finance Committee.

Wednesday, July 26th at 2:00 p.m. This will be a joint gathering with the Selectboard to engage in a conference call with Gill Engineering to discuss highway projects. This is open for members to attend, but will not be an actual meeting with business conducted.

Adjourn: A motion was made by Mr. McLatchy and seconded by Mr. Sokol to adjourn. The vote was unanimous in favor, and the meeting was closed at 7:58 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Paul McLatchy III, Secretary

Attachments:

- Proposed Budget Calendar
- WiredWest Memorandum of Understanding

Paul McLatchy III, Secretary

Loretta Dionne, Member

Charles Sokol, Member