

Town of Brunswick, Maine

**Town Finance Committee
Thursday, June 16, 2016 ~ 3:30 PM
85 Union Street – Town Council Chambers**

Meeting Minutes (Approved 7/21/16)

Committee Members Steve Walker, Jane Millett, Alison Harris

Staff: John Eldridge, Julie Henze, Ken Brillant

Others: Richard Fisco, Heather Osterfeld

1. Acknowledgement that Meeting was Properly Noticed

JH confirmed that the meeting was on the Town Calendar

2. Adjustments to agenda / Public Comment

No adjustments to agenda.

Public comment:

Richard Fisco – Town organizational chart should be re-designed to indicate that the Town Council is over the school department. The budget process did not allow time/opportunity for public analysis of requests for tax dollars. Feels decisions were made prior to the public presentations. In the future please provide a clear/detailed presentation of school department salaries and benefits.

Heather Osterfeld – Asked if the Committee will be discussing 946 Mere Point Road. Recommends that the Town review the 15 properties with water access, and improve the facilities the Town already owns. Perhaps use funds from the sale of 946 MP Rd. for this purpose. Will send the Committee the list of properties.

3. Approval of meeting minutes from 4/11/16

Alison Harris moved, Jane Millett seconded, to approve the 4/11/16 Finance Committee Meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Ambulance Fees

JH presented item as part of ongoing review/update of the Town's fees. Ambulance fees were last updated in 2009, and based on a comparison with 5 other municipalities with similar billing structures, staff is recommending an increase of fees as follows:

BLS: from \$380 to \$525, an increase of \$145

ALS1: from \$530 to \$750, an increase of \$220

ALS2: from \$690 to \$1,000, an increase of \$310

Mileage: from \$11 to \$12, an increase of \$1

Non-transport: no change

Paramedic intercept: from \$265 to \$300, an increase of \$35

Chief Brillant described the data collection process, and the reasons for the recommendation. Responding to questions, he explained the billing categories and the different medical procedures which distinguish BLS, ALS1 and ALS2.

Discussion/explanation of Medicare reimbursement rates and ratio of write-off amounts. Currently the Town writes off approximately 25%-30% of total billings, mostly due to amounts 'not allowed' by Medicare, and sequestration. The write-off amounts by billing category are as follows:

BLS: billed \$380, allowed \$365.56, sequestration \$5.85, write-off \$20.29

ALS1: billed \$530, allowed \$434.10, sequestration \$6.95, write-off \$102.85

ALS2: billed \$690, allowed \$628.31, sequestration \$10.05, write-off \$71.74

Mileage: \$11, allowed \$10.97, sequestration \$0.18, write-off \$.21

Discussion of costs associated with providing ambulance service. Because Brunswick has a full service Fire Department, and all firefighters may staff the ambulances, it is not straightforward to isolate the ambulance service costs. JH described the work done on this, and the different ways of looking at the calculation. The Committee decided that this was not a useful exercise for the purpose of determining fees.

Committee was supportive of staff recommendation, with request for more detailed analysis/comparison with other nearby and comparable municipalities.

5. Finance Report

a. May expenditure & revenue reports

JH presented the monthly budget reports. Total expenditures are expected to be within budget, with the exception of a few lines. JH noted a few lines: Worker's Comp within Risk Management, R&M Facilities (an HVAC repair) at Emerson Station, disposal costs within Refuse Collection (this represents tipping fees on curbside-collected refuse), and R&M Vehicles in PW Central Garage. Others include the grant to Family Focus within Social Services, Growstown School and the Town Commons within Promotion and Development, Riverside Cemetery within Cemetery Care. AH noted PW General Maintenance line is under budget – due to light winter. In the revenues, excise tax is trending higher than budgeted, anticipating \$100K over at year end. JH also noted that Passports revenue is up, with 494 passport applications to date compared with 380 budgeted.

b. Year end

JH described the process of anticipating remaining expenditures in preparation for the June 23rd Town Council meeting. At that time the Council will review and authorize budget transfers as needed to cover unanticipated overages in specific budget lines.

6. Tax Acquired Properties

JE provided the Committee with a memo and the list of properties currently determined to be sold, with the final re-acquisition date set for June 30, 2016 and the sale date set for August 1, 2016. JE directed attention to the last paragraph of the memo, which referred to the tax acquired property at 946 Mere Point Road. Based on the Council meeting on 6/6/16, he is requesting a recommendation from the Committee regarding this property. For more information, he described the "quiet title" process (and expense) which the Town would need to pursue if the Council decides to retain the property.

JE also pointed out the Town policy and past practice which allows the Town Manager to accept full payment from the previous owner at any time before the Council makes a determination on whether to retain or sell a property. Upon receipt of all outstanding obligations, the Town releases the property back to the original owner by means of a quit claim deed. At this time JE is also requesting direction on whether to suspend this option for a period of time.

Committee discussed the possible outcomes for the property, with input from Ms. Osterfeld. Concerns include: water access, opportunity for low impact recreational use, topography not suitable for mooring field or sailing school, not ideal for swimming, additional property maintenance/monitoring burden on Town staff, valuable property for tax purposes, potential for land trust involvement.

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council that the property be retained temporarily (60 days), to allow time for Town committee and departmental review. During this time, the original owner will not have the option to redeem the property by paying all outstanding obligations.

7. Finance Committee meeting calendar 2016-17

JH presented a draft meeting calendar for the 2016-17 fiscal year. The meetings are at 3:30 PM on the third Thursday of the month. Also included are three additional workshops for CIP review. There are no budget workshops included. It is anticipated that the Committee will discuss the budget process in their July meeting, and when planning the schedule will discuss the role of the Finance Committee.

8. Adjourn