

Town of Hubbardston

Finance Committee – Meeting Minutes April 16, 2019

Meeting called to order: 6:33 PM in the Slade Building

Members present: Dave Conaghan, Shannon Erb, Joshua Lerner, Susan Rayne, and Chuck Reed

By invitation: Ryan McLane, Town Administrator, and Catherine Hansgate, Chair of the Agricultural Commission

- 1) *Discussions Regarding Review of Relevant Town FY20 Budget Line Items and Relevant Warrant Articles.* The Chair welcomed Ms. Hansgate, noting that the other invitees (Chair, Community Preservation Commission, and Director of Communications, Rutland Regional Emergency Communication Center) had indicated their inability to attend the meeting, and introduced the members of the Committee. At the Chair's request, Ms. Hansgate provided background for proposed Warrant Article 27, submitted by the Commission and seeking to amend Chapter XXXI, Section 2 of the Hubbardston General Bylaws (Right to Farm). The Chair asked whether, under the proposed amendment, the Commission was obligated to subject to agricultural restrictions any real property purchased or otherwise obtained by the Commission, and Ms. Hansgate indicated that she would get back to the Committee with an answer.
- 2) *Review of Town's Draft FY20 Budget and Proposed QRSD FY20 Budget.* Mr. McLane reported that the Massachusetts House of Representatives had voted on the Commonwealth's FY20 budget, which suggested some modest relief in the Town's FY20 assessment for the Quabbin Regional School District were that budget to be adopted, although not nearly enough to overcome the projected FY20 Town budget deficit of approximately \$190,000. Mr. McLane noted several line item changes from the draft budget previously presented to the Committee, including the change in wages proposed for the Library Director, given the current Director's retirement and the expectation that her replacement will be at a lower wage scale.

The Committee discussed the projected Town budget deficit further with Mr. McLane and explored ways in which the deficit could be eliminated. Following discussion, no vote was taken, but it was the Chair's 'sense of the meeting' that a recommendation of an increase of not more than 5% over the FY2019 QRSD assessment would be the outcome were such a vote to be taken. Mr. McLane agreed to prepare a new draft budget modeled on this increase and other modest proposed revisions to show a budget that was balanced or showed a slight surplus.

In related financial matters, Mr. McLane reported on various expense matters for FY2019, including the reconciliation and closing of several unused Town accounts and the expected savings resulting from the decision of the Town to migrate to VADAR's financial

management software for use by the joint accountant currently serving both the Town and Templeton.

- 3) *Approval of Minutes.* On motion made by Ms. Erb and seconded by Mr. Conaghan, the Committee unanimously voted to approve as submitted the minutes of the meeting of the Committee dated April 4, 2019.

In the course of review of those minutes, the Committee discussed the structural difficulties of the procedure used by the QRSD in calculating the member towns' assessments, namely, the variation in timing of the member towns' property reassessments and the method of determining the member towns' shares of the District's required local contribution, that produce widely varying and unpredictable increases in those assessments both over time and as among the towns. The Committee noted that while it was not possible to eliminate all unpredictability and variation, it appeared possible to mitigate them by aligning the towns' property reassessment schedules and changing the method of determining the per town required local contribution shares from the "statutory method" to the "regional agreement method" in which each town's assessment was based solely on its proportionate enrollment. On motion made by Mr. Lerner and seconded by Mr. Conaghan, it was unanimously

VOTED: To recommend to the Board of Selectmen that the Board propose to the QRSD member towns and the QRSD that the member towns (a) align the timing of the member towns' property reassessments such that they occur in the same fiscal year and (b) amend the QRSD Agreement to provide that the member towns equally fund the QRSD annual budget based solely on the percentage of their resident student enrollments.

- 4) *New Business.* Mr. McLane noted that proposed Warrant Article 22 pertaining to the raising and appropriation of \$1.75 million for the paving of Town roads was incorrect as written and will be revised to reflect the creation of a stabilization fund solely for that purpose, to be funded by a proposed override of Proposition 2 ½ (so-called) and having no time delimiter.

Mr. McLane also noted that the Town would establish new Gmail email accounts for use by Finance Committee members for Town business.

- 5) *Adjournment.* The Chair reminded the Committee of the next scheduled Committee meetings, notice of which will be given as required by applicable law:

- a) April 25, 2019
- b) May 13 (Joint with Planning Board and Board of Selectmen)

There being no further business, on motion duly made by Mr. Conaghan and seconded by Mr. Reed, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn.

Adjourned at 8:31 P.M.

Minutes submitted by: Susan Rayne, Clerk *Pro Tem*

Minutes approved by: Susan Rayne, Chair

Susan Rayne
Susan Rayne

Date: April 25, 2019