

FINCOM
Meeting Minutes – October 7, 2015

Members Present: Alice, Bruce, John, Steve, Laura, Don, Heidi, Rudy
Not Present: None
Others: Tim
Location: Hapgood Room, Old Library

Alice opened the meeting at 7:05PM.

Minutes: The Minutes of the September 16 meeting were unanimously approved after correcting two typos.

Meals Tax Discussion: Tim distributed data from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue indicating that the town could expect to collect approximately \$25,000 annually if we institute the state allowed ¾% local option meals tax. Many of our neighboring towns have this tax now (Acton, Ayer, Concord, Groton, Hudson, Littleton, Lunenburg, Maynard, and Shirley). We judge that a significant percentage of the estimated \$25,000 annually would come from out of town residents. It was moved and seconded that the Finance Committee support a Warrant Article at Town Meeting to institute a ¾% meals tax. This motion was unanimously approved. Alice will inform the Selectmen of our decision.

PILOTS Discussion: Tim distributed a six page list of all tax exempt parcels in town for our information. The vast majority of the line listings were for town-owned parcels. The largest assessed value tax exempt property owners are the town's churches, Fruitlands Museums, Bromfield Trust, Community Harvest Project, Harvard College (observatory), and the Village Nursery School. Tim noted that even if a payment in lieu of taxes were negotiated with one or more of these parcel owners, it will be difficult to force payment if their financial condition changes in the future and they can't afford to pay. We tabled further discussion until the Committee had time to spend with the data that Tim distributed.

Other FY17 Finance Committee Initiatives: We decided to add the need for a Facilities Manager to our list of priority initiatives. Tim noted that the need for this position is already being assessed and he will have more information in November.

Town Administrator Report: Tim informed the Committee that the state's budget ending June 30, 2015 is still in flux, and by law, must be finalized by October 31. Tim released the FY17 Budget request memo to all town departments and organizations on October 1. It was moved and seconded to approve payment of the \$176 annual dues to the MA Association of Town Finance Committees. The motion was approved unanimously.

Liaison Reports: John met with Joe Theriault, Chairman of the Historical Commission. They will be asking for a budget from the Town for the first time this year, and John reviewed the budget request and approval process with Joe. Laura reported that the Community Cable Access Committee is working on offering new programs and is developing the systems to support them. Bruce mentioned that the Historical Commission is considering adding the Hildreth House, housing the Council on Aging, to the historical district. Tim commented that the Hildreth House may not meet the criteria for inclusion as it cannot be seen from the main road.

Next Meeting: Our next Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, October 21 at 7PM in the Hapgood Room of the Old Library.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25PM.

Respectfully submitted,

John W. Seeley, Secretary