

TOWN OF NORTH BROOKFIELD

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Approved
4-13-09

Minutes of the Meeting of March 30, 2009

Present: James Baird, Frank Hubacz, James Lovett, Chet Lubelczyk, and Robert Smith

Guest: James Foyle, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen

1. The Meeting was Called to Order at 6:02 PM by Mr. Lovett, who chaired the Meeting.
2. The Minutes of the Meeting of March 16, 2009 were presented. A Motion was made by Mr. Hubacz, and seconded by Mr. Lubelczyk, to approve the Minutes as presented. The Motion was unanimously approved.
3. Mr. Baird informed the Committee of his intention to resign from the Finance Committee. He will advise the Selectmen of his decision in writing in the next week. The Committee thanked him for his service to the Committee and the Town of North Brookfield.
4. The Committee continued its review of FY 10 spending requests from Town Departments and noted that all Departments had made the requested bottom-line cuts requested to the extent possible. No unusual requests were noted after a second review by the Committee. It was agreed that additional information was needed from the Police Department however, to better understand its needs in the coming year in the areas of full-time and part-time personnel, overtime, and various other line items. It was also noted that although a new cruiser might be needed in the coming Fiscal Year, and would represent approximately 3% of the spending request, no provision was made in the FY10 request for a lease/purchase. The Committee agreed to invite Chief Thomasian to attend its next Meeting to discuss his spending request in detail to see if funds can be re-allocated in the current request for a new cruiser.

It was also noted that Mr. Smith would meet with the Town Accountant to attempt to identify carry-over funds from prior years which might be used to balance the FY 09 budget. A report will be made at the next Meeting.

Differences between the March 5 preliminary draft, and the March 9 revised draft of the budget analysis were noted. These were the result of special appropriations in FY 09 or previous years which were eliminated for purposes of comparing FY 09 line items with FY 10 line item requests. An updated analysis will be presented at the next Meeting.

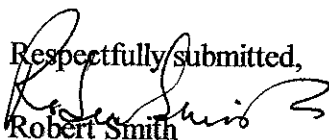
5. The Committee discussed the School Department's FY 10 request, and noted that, as submitted, it was 3% over the FY 09 budget, and did not reflect the reductions made by other Departments. As a result, the FY 10 School Department request was approximately \$633,180 over net-school spending, a major reason why the Town's FY 10 budget estimates were approximately \$731,000 out of balance. It was agreed that at the Joint Meeting with Chairman Hicks and other members of the School Committee, and Superintendent Nosek, planned for 7:00 PM, the Finance Committee would ask how the School Department FY 10 request could be significantly reduced. The cost of transportation, estimated at \$564,000, would be a topic of discussion. The Committee agreed to inquire about any faculty or staff raises which may have been included in the spending request. Members of the Committee also briefly discussed media reports of how other cities and towns were reducing School Department costs, and agreed to inquire whether any of these measures were under consideration by the School Committee.

6. The Committee again reviewed a second request from Chief Thomasian for payment of a \$75.00 'lock up' fee from the Reserve Fund. After discussing the request, a Motion was made by Mr. Lovett, and seconded by Mr. Hubacz, not to approve the request. The Motion was unanimously approved. The Committee would recommend to Chief Thomasian that the expense be charged to the Police Department 'Office and Firearms' line item. Attachment.

7. At 7:00 PM the Committee met with School Committee Chairman Hicks, three other members of the School Committee, and Superintendent Nosek. Mr. Foyle also attended the Meeting. Mr. Smith provided members of the School Committee with the Finance Committee's net-school spending calculation, which previously had been given to Mr. Hicks and Superintendent Nosek, as well as estimates of revenues and expenses for FY 10. Mr. Lovett explained that the purpose of the Joint Meeting was to discuss the School Department's FY 10 spending request in relation to the Town's projected revenue shortfall. He noted that the request was 3% over the FY 09 level, not a reduction. Mr. Hicks noted that the spending plan submitted for consideration was a 'level service' budget and that an attempt would be made to reduce the bottom line. He suggested that

\$100,000 in costs could be eliminated. Superintendent Nosek indicated that \$50-60,000 in Federal 'stimulus' funds might be available to the School Department to further reduce the bottom line. Members of the Finance Committee asked if any other measures were being considered to further reduce the budget request, and if not, that efforts by other cities and towns should be reviewed. In reply to another question, Mr. Hicks and Superintendent Nosek said that the FY 10 request did contain approximately \$350,000 in salary increases. Members of the Finance Committee also asked if those raises could be deferred, given the serious financial problems facing the Town. They cited 'wage freezes' which had been introduced in other towns. Mr. Hicks said that the School Committee would discuss the matter. The question of \$564,000 in transportation costs was raised by members of the Finance Committee. Could this expense be significantly reduced, and how? It was observed that other towns had consolidated routes and taken other measures to limit transportation expenses. It was generally agreed that until the Massachusetts House releases its budget during the week of April 15, current estimates for local aid and school aid would remain estimates, and might be reduced in FY 10. The Finance Committee urged Mr. Hicks and the School Committee to review their FY 10 spending request to identify areas in which major savings might be achieved. The Finance Committee also recommended that since all other Town department budget requests were below FY 09 levels, the School Committee should consider a 'salary freeze' for FY 10. It was agreed that another Joint Meeting would be arranged to discuss reductions in the School Department's FY 10 request. The Joint Meeting concluded at 8:06 PM. Attachments

8. Following its Joint Meeting with the School Committee and Superintendent Nosek, the Finance Committee met to entertain a Motion to adjourn. A Motion was made by Mr. Baird, and seconded by Mr. Hubacz, to adjourn the Meeting. The Motion was unanimously approved. The Meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Smith