

Minutes

Town of Norwich Finance Committee Meeting Thursday, February 17, 2009 Tracy Hall, Norwich, Vermont

Members present: Alvin Converse (Chair), Stephen Lajoie (Vice-Chair), Stephen Flanders (Secretary), Karen Kayen (4:45), and Fred Crawford.

Members absent: Cheryl Lindberg

Also Present: Roberta Robinson, Robert Gurwitt

Chairperson Converse called the meeting to order at 4:31 PM.

Agenda Items Discussed

1. Review/Approval of Minutes:

Flanders reviewed the minutes of the meeting of January 29, 2008. A discussion ensued.

- Several editorial items were suggested.

Motion: Kayen moved and Lajoie seconded that the minutes be accepted as amended.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. Public Input: There was no public input.

3. Financial Report:

In her briefing to the committee Robinson made the following points.

- \$365K is due today. Last year \$362K was outstanding.
- Delinquent taxes are currently \$54.9K.
- The Vermont League of Cities and Towns reports that the last payment of the VT gas tax is still in doubt. Robinson is confident that the state contributions from gas tax receipts will be paid at least at a reduced level.
- Salt and sand expenses remain uncertain.

Converse distributed a memo from Roberta Robinson, entitled "RE: Meeting on 1-29-09," which addressed salary and benefit increases and the estimate of the Undesignated Fund Balance (UFB).

- Converse wanted to know how much money the new health-care package saved. Robinson referred to the memo, which shows that the saving would be about \$18K for FY08-09. The savings for FY09-10 is estimated to be \$14K.

Robinson distributed a summary of Proposed Budget 2010 Wages and Benefits, which result in a budget reduction of \$14K.

4. Planning for Town Eating Day (TED), Sat., Feb. 28:

Converse introduced this topic first. Town Eating Day representative and session moderator, Gurwitt, identified 1100-1150 as the time for the NFC. He explained the background of "Town Eating Day." TED provides a forum for discussions on town issues and volunteer committees. Part of the goal is to make town issues readily understandable to all present with a minimum of technical jargon.

- The TED assignment for the NFC should be more directed towards town finances, especially the town tax burden, over the next few years.
- Explaining past positions on town and school budgets are welcome.
- Converse noted that the NFC usually emphasizes the importance of using the income sensitivity provision for paying property taxes.
- Converse mentioned the Norwich school bond issue, which will result in a slight increase in property tax rate.
- Typically there have been five to six attendees at the NFC break-out session.

5. Planning for Town Meeting, Monday, March 2, '09:

Converse recruited presenters for the Town Meeting. Kayen noted that the Dresden meeting will be at the High School on February 26.

- Converse had hoped that Flanders would present the town budget and Lajoie would do the school statement. In Flanders' absence, Converse will present the town budget statement from the NFC.
- Kayen suggested that her vote against the town budget was adequately covered in the town report.
- Kayen will do some public recruitment at the town meeting and will explain the transition to having no elected auditors.

6. Methodology to set Budgetary Guidelines:

This topic was deferred for the next meeting.

7. Discussion of future agenda items:

The following items were deferred for the next meeting.

- Detailed Delinquent Tax Report as of 12/31/08
- Building & Grounds assessment to Norwich School District
- Expense Reimbursement Policy
- Insurance Reimbursement Policy
- Management Letter Comment - Grant Accounting

- A capital assets management and investment plan
- Modification of budgets to show total salaries and total benefits.

Lajoie suggested adding a Statement of Purpose for the NFC.

8. Other New Business:

Definition of town roles.

- A discussion ensued about whose role it should be to set the town tax rate. The consensus was that's a role for the town manager. Kayen praised Neil Fulton's past success in this area.
- It was suggested that the NFC could contribute certain graphs to the town report and comment on the financial figures in the town report.

Fred Crawford expressed his admiration for the work of the committee. Flanders thanked outgoing members, Kayen, Converse and Crawford.

9. Adjournment

Motion Flanders moved and Lajoie seconded that the committee adjourn.

The vote was unanimous. Adjourned at 6:00 PM.

Next meeting date: Tuesday, March 17, 2009 at 4:30 PM in Tracy Hall.