

Minutes of the Plainfield Finance Committee
Meeting of 22 March 2017

Lew Robbins called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. in the Town Hall. Present were committee members Roberta Wooldrige, Lew Robbins, Tim Walter, Robert Baker, Sylvane Stockwell, and David Kramer. Committee member Bob Persing was absent.

Paula King was present for the entire meeting at the request of the committee.

Claude Dupont and David Alvord, of the Building Committee, were present to talk about their committee's budget. They expressed concern that level funding from last year's budget would be insufficient to cover expenses because of the need for a new furnace in the highway garage, which the town's energy grant might not cover. When it was pointed out that the furnace has been budgeted separately in the amount of \$8,000 (changed during the meeting to \$9,000), Claude and David were satisfied that funding at last year's level would be satisfactory.

It was suggested to Claude and David that the Building Committee draw up a schedule of capital projects for the next several years to inform their future budget requests. Paula King noted that such a process was already underway. There are several large projects such as replacing the furnace in the highway garage, including repair or possible replacement of the roof on the highway garage, renovation of the bathroom at the highway garage, and repair or replacement of the fire escape at the Town Hall.

The question whether mowing and snow removal on town properties should be put out to bid was discussed.

Claude Dupont and David Alvord left the meeting at the close of the discussion of issues related to their committee.

The finance committee then discussed the town budget, looking at amounts spent versus amounts budgeted in past years back to FY 2015. Lew suggested that level funding from one year to the next should not occur automatically. Rather, committees should justify their budget requests, particularly if the amount requested differs significantly from the amount spent—not budgeted—in prior years. Paula offered the caveat that budget lines, such as that for legal counsel, should have in them an amount sufficient to handle unexpected expenses, even if the requested amount is significantly greater than what was spent in recent prior years, because obtaining money during the year for a budget line beyond the amount budgeted would require a special town meeting.

The finance committee discussed the idea of contacting committee chairs whose budget requests were not sufficiently justified for further information. Also

discussed was the idea in future years of presenting committees with clarification on how they should justify their budgets.

Paula reminded the committee that before the annual town meeting, we will need to present our budget proposals to the select board and then hold an informational budget meeting for residents.

There ensued an informal discussion of school expenses. It was noted that the school budget is determined largely by the school committee.

The finance committee will meet on March 29 at 7 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.