

Minutes of the Plainfield Finance Committee Meeting of March 21, 2018

The meeting was called to order by Lew Robbins at 7:10 p.m. in the Plainfield Town Hall.

Present were committee members Robert Persing, Lew Robbins (chair), Tim Walter, Robert Baker, and David Kramer. Absent was Roberta Wooldridge.

The minutes of the February 21, 2018, meeting were approved.

Lew noted that the calendar 2017 Bureau of Labor Statistics national urban inflation rate was 2.1%. This statistic will be the basis of the committee's recommended cost of living salary adjustment.

We then proceeded to a review of updated F2019 budget submissions.

When it was noted that some of the submissions were incomplete, Lew stated that he would fill in missing data where possible and contact those responsible for submissions for any required additional information. He noted especially that large increases in line items and all salary increases require an explanation.

Lew reported that he had attended this morning's Select Board meeting, at which one of two candidates for conducting a town jobs and salary review was interviewed. The other candidate will be interviewed in a few weeks.

A discussion of the Highway Department's operating, salary, and capital budgets commenced at 7:33 p.m. with the arrival of the departmental supervisor, Merton Taylor Jr. Mert remarked that the expenses for winter snow removal, sanding, and salting have regularly exceeded the budgeted amount and that the department was therefore asking for a significant increase in its operating budget. He also noted that the expense and difficulty of repairing and maintaining aging equipment become more and more burdensome and that he has submitted capital requests for a new (or perhaps used) grader and dump truck. He will amend his capital request to prioritize the grader.

Lew pointed out that the highway department's budget is the most variable among all town budgets because of weather differences from year to year and that the Plainfield citizenry should be made aware that in many years, the stabilization fund will need to be accessed for unusually costly highway expenses.

There was a discussion of whether dirt roads should be paved. Mert opined that the combined cost of paving dirt roads and then maintaining them was prohibitive. The Finance Committee decided to defer further consideration of this issue until after Town Meeting in May.

A motion was made and passed that the Finance Committee recommend to the Select Board that it coordinate with other towns in lobbying the state government to take over maintenance of Route 116, including repairs and snow plowing.

The planned meeting with representatives from the Council on Aging (COA) on their budget was canceled. David Kramer was appointed as the Finance Committee's representative to the COA to help them in formulating their plans for seeking to become a town board and to return their base of operations to Hathaway Hall.

Meetings were scheduled for the next four weeks: March 28, April 4, April 11, and April 18.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Minutes prepared by David Kramer, secretary