

## **Minutes of the Plainfield Finance Committee Meeting of March 28, 2018**

The meeting was called to order by Lew Robbins at 7:00 p.m. in the Plainfield Town Hall.

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

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

Lew brought up the question of the level of annual increases to the tax levy and reported that he had discussed this issue at the March 27, 2018, Select Board meeting. The Select Board would like the Finance Committee to come up with guidelines for considering goals for limits on increases in the tax levy, tax rate increases, and overall spending by the town.

Dennis Thatcher arrived at 7:35 to discuss the Fire Department's budget. The committee was impressed with the meticulous preparation of the department's budget request. The Finance Committee approved the capital request for \$60,080 to purchase eight new self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBA) to supplement the five recently obtained through a grant. These SCBAs will replace units that are twenty-five years old. Dennis noted that a grant for the remaining eight is still pending.

There was a discussion as to whether Fire Department members should be paid for their services, and if so, on what basis. Dennis pointed out that the town has the option of offering firefighters a property tax abatement, but that such an abatement might not be justified for department members who seldom responded to calls. Another possibility mentioned was an hourly wage. Roberta Wooldridge pointed out that the training received in firefighting was itself something of value received by department members.

Also discussed was the issue of the demands made by Swift River Rehab on the town's emergency services and even the possibility that Highland Ambulance might be overwhelmed by requests for service.

An initial review of the budget showed a proposed tax levy of about \$2,395,000, which would represent an increase of about 17% over the FY 2018 levy. However, if such budgeted capital items as a dump truck for \$220,000, the above-mentioned eight SCBAs for \$60,080, and the highway garage roof for \$50,000 were removed from the tax levy by funding them through the stabilization fund, the total levy would come to about \$2,065,000, representing an increase over last year's levy of only 1%

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Minutes prepared by David Kramer, secretary