

DRAFT

Minutes of the Plainfield Finance Committee Meeting of April 18, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. in Town Hall. Present were Lew Robbins (chair), Robert Baker, Robert Persing, Tim Walter, David Kramer, and Roberta Wooldridge.

The minutes of the April 12, 2018, meeting were approved.

It was reported that the town accountant and the treasurer were of the opinion that there is no limitation on how much money can be kept in the stabilization fund and in free cash, though they were unsure whether such was the case. The committee discussed the proper size and use of the free cash and stabilization fund. No agreement of full understanding was reached. Bob Persing offered the opinion that excess funds from last year that had been moved into free cash should be used for this year's expenses to reduce taxes, since such funds were recently raised.

There was a discussion on the respective roles of the Finance Committee and Select Board regarding oversight of departmental budgets and performance. The Finance Committee believes that while it has the task of making judgments on the affordability of requests and keeping an eye out for excessive requests, it is ultimately the Select Board that is responsible for oversight of the departments under its purview, such as the Highway Department.

Next up for discussion was approval of the FY2019 budget. The operating expenses requested for FY2019 are similar to those of last year, but the special articles for capital expenditures, which include a large sum for a new grader, are much higher than those of last year.

The committee put off for future discussion the question of how free cash and stabilization should be used, for example, as reserve funds for capital expenditures planned over the longer term.

Lew reported that the town accountant had recommended that \$80,000 be taken from free cash for the coming fiscal year. It was the sense of the committee that a larger amount than that should be taken, because the amount in free cash seems excessive. There was disagreement as to whether the purchase of a used grader at \$220,000 should be paid for in cash or financed. While opinions varied among the committee, the committee ultimately agreed to a compromise whereby \$100,000 of the grader cost would be financed.

A motion to approve the budget, including financing \$100,000 of the grader and taking \$125,000 from free cash and \$151,000 from stabilization, leading to a net levy increase of 2.5%, was approved.

A motion was passed to recommend that there be no increases in stipends and salaries pending the upcoming salary survey other than the recommended 2.5% COLA.

A motion was passed that the Finance Committee inform the Select Board that it would like all town positions, including all volunteer positions without stipend or salary, to be included in the salary survey.

The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be a public informational session at 6:30 p.m., April 25, 2018, in Town Hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Submitted by David Kramer, secretary