

Minutes of the Longmeadow Finance Committee
Wednesday March 22, 2006 @ 7:30 PM – Longmeadow Fire Department

Members Present:	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>
Judd Peskin - Chairperson	x	
Carla Gunn - Vice Chairperson		x
Mark Barowsky	x	
Steven Marantz	x	
Jerry Nolet	x	
Suresh Samant	x	
Deborah Wilson	x	

Also Present: Robin Crosbie, Paul Pasterczyk, Christopher Kulig, Scott Andersen,
Mary Vogel, Paul Santinello, Jim Nittoli

The Finance Committee met to field questions regarding the Fiscal Year 2007 budget in an Open Forum as mandated by the Town Charter. The Public Hearing was opened up for questions at 7:38pm.

The first question asked was why the School Department's level service budget differed from the Town Manager's level service budget. The Finance Committee referred to Town Manager Robin Crosbie, who explained the steps taken in her calculation as outlined on page 5 of the Town Manager's Budget Report.

The second question asked for a clarification on the modified waste disposal plan and how it would impact the budget. Again, Town Manager Crosbie provided an explanation. The new plan to be proposed by the Select Board would limit each household to one (1) 36-gallon container (with a maximum weight of 40lbs) per week with unlimited recycling pickup. Additional specially marked bags could be purchased at \$1.75 each, the price of which would cover the cost of disposal (i.e. "tipping fees"), which has increased from \$46/ton to over \$70/ton in the last 7 years. Conservatively, the Recycling Commission states that this plan would save the Town \$140,000 in waste disposal costs during FY07.

A follow-up inquiry questions the legality of this action by the Select Board. Ms. Crosbie explained that since waste disposal was not a legislative issue, there were no legal barriers to the Select Board implementing this policy.

Since there were no more questions to be presented, the Public Hearing was closed at 7:47pm and the regularly scheduled meeting of the Committee was opened.

The Finance Committee inquired of the School Department as to the progress on School building maintenance consolidation with the DPW as mandated by the Town Charter. Mary Vogel, Vice Chair of the School Committee, stated that the School Committee was "not opposed" to the consolidation and that it was "still proceeding". The major obstacle

that the School Committee was concerned with its potential legal action by the Longmeadow Education Association (LEA). Since the maintenance personnel at the School Department are protected by a collective bargaining agreement that runs through August 31, 2006, there is potential for legal action against the Town by the LEA. The School Committee has not discussed this policy with the LEA leadership and no discussions have taken place to date between the legal counsels of the Town, School, or LEA. Given that there would be no loss of pay or benefits, the job descriptions would remain the same, and the current reporting structure would remain intact, any lawsuit filed would not be harmful to the Town or Schools. The Finance Committee strongly encouraged the School Committee to have the consolidation completed and in place by July 1, 2006.

When asked whether the School Committee had taken action to reinstate the School Choice program for FY07, Ms. Vogel replied that the School Committee voted to affirm their above-level-service budget for FY07 at their last meeting, which does not include any School Choice funds. The Finance Committee reiterated their strong encouragement to the School Committee (from their March 15, 2006 meeting) to reinstate the program for FY07.

The Finance Committee then turned their attention toward the FY07 budget and voted as follows:

1. The Finance Committee voted unanimously (6-0) to endorse the Select Board's modified pay-as-you-throw waste removal plan.
2. The Finance Committee voted unanimously (6-0) that the Select Board should add the sum of \$222,141 to the FY07 budget of the School Department from either Free Cash or the Operating Stabilization Fund.
3. The Finance Committee voted unanimously (6-0) that the Select Board should transfer the sum of \$294,676 from the School Department's budget to the budget of the Department of Public Works to reflect the transfer of personnel (Building Maintenance Director Steve Carignan and 5 maintenance workers) involved with the consolidation of building maintenance as mandated by the Town Charter.

A Reserve Fund Request in the amount of \$8,500 was approved to replace a broken photocopier at Glenbrook Middle School.

The Finance Committee voted to endorse the following articles to be presented at the Annual Town Meeting on April 25, 2006:

- 3 – 8, 10 – 13, 17 – 19, 21 – 22.

The Committee took no position on Article #23 which proposes the creation of a Recreational Stabilization Fund for the purpose of funding capital improvement to the

Town's parks through a 2% surcharge to all Parks & Recreation programs having voluntary, paid enrollments.

The Committee also took no position on Article #41 (the adoption of the Community Preservation Act) until more information was made available to them. Finance Director Paul Pasterczyk stated that he would send information to them.

The Committee voted to accept the minutes from the following meeting as presented:

- March 1, 2006

The Committee voted to adjourn at 10:03pm.

Respectfully submitted

Christopher Kulig
Assistant Town Accountant