

**TOWN OF KINGSTON
MASSACHUSETTS**

FINANCE COMMITTEE

**Minutes
11 February 2010**

Chairman Elaine Fiore opened a meeting of the Finance Committee at 7:04 PM on 11 February 2010 at the Kingston Town Hall. Also present were Mathew Hamilton, Lawrence Hunt, Jason Lelio, David Lofstrom, Paul Ricci, and Claire Soares. Town Administrator Jill Myers and Town Moderator Janet Wallace also attended.

The Town Administrator reported that representatives from the Department of Revenue have been meeting with the Town's financial departments' personnel to review their compliance with accepted policies and procedures and will issue a report on their findings in April. She said the DOR offered to host a workshop on how the tax rate is set. Receiving the Advisory Committee's favorable response, Ms. Myers said she would ask that a workshop be held in Kingston in the summer.

The Committee considered how to approach town departments about possible budget cuts that may be required while it is still unknown how much local aid will be received from the state. A range of percentage cuts was discussed.

Library Trustees Brian McWilliams, Spencer Clough, and Valerie Spence, together with Library Director Sia Stewart, joined the Committee for a discussion of an overall view of the Library's certification requirements, services, and revenue-raising ability. The Committee advised the Librarian and Trustees that it wished to fully understand the library's operation prior to making any recommendation. It advised that needed cuts would not be across-the-board cuts for all departments as in the past, but would be based on a comparison study with area departments and with a goal of eliminating the 2 ½ per cent tax increase that annually has been assessed Kingston taxpayers..

Ms. Stewart and the Trustees—

1. provided information on the services the library provides to Kingston residents and, through the Old Colony Network, other community members;
2. said reducing hours would reduce time now used servicing the community;
3. reported staffing reached its maximum in 2004 and has remained constant since;
4. noted the increase in library use and circulation since 2004;
5. reported the library raised \$21,000 in 2008 and \$15,000 in 2009;
6. reported its new foundation consists of nine members who are setting goals now but doesn't expect to raise more than \$15,000 in 2010;
7. reported the Friends of the Library raise small amounts of money, some of which is used to provide free passes to museums for residents;
8. reported she has discussed possible cuts with staff whose members indicated they would prefer to cut hours rather than losing people;
9. said she currently considers services provided to people even more important than books, especially computer services aiding people searching for jobs;
10. defined various tasks and the hours spent accomplishing them including maintaining the library's website;
11. estimated volunteers contribute 160 hours per month

12. said she would not be averse to exploring combining with neighboring communities to create a regional library for greater efficiency;
13. reported regional libraries expect a 28 per cent cut in FY2011 which could affect distribution;
14. stated OCLN membership benefits the Town by saving money for books;
15. reported having already made cuts in community participation and extension programs and that it's possible cuts could be made in program planning;
16. advised that peak hours are in the evening and Saturdays when schools are in session, that computer use has escalated as people use them for research and job searches, that some use is diminished in the summer although summer reading programs, story time, and computer use remain popular.

She questioned whether the library could join the town for computer service and maintenance as a possible economy and a discussion followed over the benefits and disadvantages of leasing computers. Ms. Fiore reported the Technology Committee is looking into town-wide networking.

The Committee noted that Hull was not given a waiver of the requirements for certification. Ms. Stewart reported the refusal was because the state board found the town had made disproportional cuts in that library's budget.

Mr. Hamilton suggested that Ms. Stewart contact Representative Thomas Calter to ask if he can file a bill proposing that the use of CPA funds be allowed for library expansion. She reported the library is working on a design plan for expansion for use when such expansion is feasible. Mr. McWilliams said the original building built by A T & T has 15,000 square feet of empty floor space which can be used for expansion.

Mr. Clough reported the Library Trustees are elected, and their duties include hiring the library director and overseeing the library operations.

The Library Trustees and Director left the meeting following the discussion.

Upon motion made by Paul Ricci and seconded by Matthew Hamilton, following discussion, it was unanimously—

VOTED: To authorize payment of \$7.86 to W. B. Mason for file folders.

The Committee reviewed the Town Treasurer's projected FY11 revenues and operating numbers and —

- proposed cutting from his revenue column \$567,512 which represented the estimated amount that could be collected if taxes were increased 2 ½ per cent, the use of which had been propose earlier for capital items and/or projects;
- corrected his projection of the cost of employee benefits from \$3,825,634 to \$3,925,634;
- estimated an 18 per cent increase in health benefits and increased the FY11 requested amount of \$2,050,229 to \$2,199,336, a difference of \$149,107;
- confirmed that \$125,000 will be available from overlay surplus to increase revenue numbers;
- confirmed they will not be recommending applying hotel and meal taxes to increase revenue numbers;
- noted the Kingston Elementary School budget is level funded as of now.

After reviewing the numbers, there was discussion that some departments may be able to be cut more than 3 per cent, possibly as much as 5 -5.5 per cent, to eliminate a 2.5-per cent tax increase.

Upon motion made by Matthew Hamilton and seconded by Paul Ricci, following discussion, it was unanimously—

VOTED: To accept the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2010 as submitted.

Upon motion made by Jason Lelio and seconded by Paul Ricci, following discussion, it was unanimously—

VOTED: To recommend a Moderator's budget of \$100 for personal services.

Upon motion made by Matthew Hamilton and seconded by Lawrence Hunt, following discussion, it was unanimously—

VOTED: To recommend a Revaluation budget of \$15,000.

Upon motion made by Jason Lelio and seconded by Lawrence Hunt, following discussion, it was unanimously—

VOTED: To recommend a Legal budget of \$104,500.

Upon motion made by Claire Soares and seconded by Lawrence Hunt, following discussion, it was—

VOTED: To recommend a Tax Title budget of \$15,000.

Jason Lelio and Paul Ricci opposed the motion; all other members supported it.

Upon motion made by Jason Lelio and seconded by Paul Ricci, following discussion, it was—

VOTED: To recommend a Rent Control budget of \$0.00.

Claire Soares opposed the motion; all other members present supported it.

Upon motion made by Jason Lelio and seconded by Matthew Hamilton, following discussion, it was unanimously—

VOTED: To recommend an expense budget of \$810 for the Green Energy Committee.

Upon motion made by Jason Lelio and seconded by Paul Ricci, following discussion, it was unanimously —

VOTED: To recommend an Open Space budget of \$0.00.

Upon motion made by Matthew Hamilton and seconded by Lawrence Hunt, following discussion, it was unanimously—

VOTED: To recommend a personal services budget of \$7,059 and an expense budget of \$758 for a total budget of \$7,817 for the Sealer of Weights and Measures.

The Committee deferred consideration of the KEMA budget pending receipt of more information about Entergy's underwriting of that budget.

Upon motion made by Matthew Hamilton and seconded by David Lofstrom, following discussion, it was unanimously—

VOTED: To recommend an expense budget of \$270 for the Plymouth County Cooperative Extension Service.

Upon motion made by Lawrence Hunt and seconded by David Lofstrom, following discussion, it was unanimously—

VOTED: To recommend an expense budget of \$291 for the Historical Commission.

Upon motion made by Claire Soares and seconded by Paul Ricci, following discussion, it was unanimously—

VOTED: To recommend an expense budget of \$41,400 for Street Lighting.

There being no further discussion or vote, the meeting was adjourned at 9:16 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Miriam MacInnis, Secretary